

Adrian Henri and the Merseybeat movement:
performance, poetry, and public in the Liverpool scene of the 1960s

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For, and because of, my parents.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Helen Louise Taylor, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

THESIS ABSTRACT

Adrian Henri and the Merseybeat movement: performance, poetry, and public in the Liverpool scene of the 1960s

The thesis focuses on the Merseybeat movement and its manifestations in Liverpool in the 1960s, with particular emphasis on the work of Adrian Henri. The Merseybeat movement – centred upon Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten – was a site-specific confluence of the alternative avant-garde and the British populist tradition of art, and deserves exploration as both a literary and a cultural phenomenon. The thesis argues that the dismissal of Merseybeat as ‘pop poetry’ has come from using the wrong critical tools: it is better viewed as a ‘total art’ movement, encompassing not only poetry but also visual art, music, comedy, happenings, and other forms of artistic expression.

The thesis is primarily concerned with the performative and collaborative aspects of Merseybeat. As well as considering this particular movement in terms of oral performance and audience communication, this research also contributes to our understanding of the dissemination of this poetry – particularly how its audiences experienced live poetry alongside other artforms and media. I have used the term ‘crossmedia’ to refer to the way in which a piece can blend media and to explore how a piece can be performed in different ways to suit different occasions, appropriating elements from various artforms to create a unique performance instance.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters in order to consider, first, the movement’s origins (in the city of Liverpool) and suggested antecedents (in the American Beat scene), and second, its three most important facets: live readings, performances with music, and visual art practices. The work draws on literary geography, performance studies, and visual art theories, and I have also undertaken much new archival research and interviews with both performers and audience members in order to present a ‘thick description’ of not only the events but also the context in which they arose.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- TLS* Edward Lucie-Smith, ed., *The Liverpool Scene* (London: Rapp & Carroll, 1967)
- TMS1* Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *Penguin Modern Poets 10: The Mersey Sound* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)
- TMS2* Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *Penguin Modern Poets 10: The Mersey Sound Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974)
- TMS3* Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *The Mersey Sound Revised Edition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983)
- TMS4* Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *The Mersey Sound Revised Edition*, Penguin Modern Classics edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007)
- A* Adrian Henri, *Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971)
- C* Adrian Henri, *City* (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1969)
- NFA* Adrian Henri, *Not Fade Away: Poems 1989-1994* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1994)
- PA* Adrian Henri, *Penny Arcade* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983)
- Selected* Adrian Henri, *Selected and Unpublished Poems 1965-2000*, ed. by Catherine Marcangeli (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007)
- TAN* Adrian Henri, *Tonight at Noon* (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1968)
- MCP* Roger McGough, *Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2004)
- PSP* Brian Patten, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2007)

Things that have influenced me

Hammitt's steady. (This is tomorrow)
Carlyle Guy Ex. 1960. Cambridge
Opium 17. Admire articles in
'Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences' (Yves)
'School of the West'
Yoko's book. Evergreen or Jammy ©
Logue. Peter Brown R. McG. Kapranos
Ning in N.Y. 'All News' or 'Happens' 1961
Yves Klein show @ Gallery OTR.
Rothko 2th. Whitehead. Reinhardt
ICA. Museum of Modern Art. 'Freedom',
South/early Denny/R'Key + John ex's

Adrian Henri's notebook list of 'things that have influenced me'

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
Henri C 1/8.

INTRODUCTION: PERFORMANCE, POETRY, AND PUBLIC

Adrian Henri: ‘painter-poet’;¹ ‘poet/writer/singer/painter’;² ‘poet, painter & performer’;³ ‘notebook poet’;⁴ ‘poet, writer, painter, event-maker, arts organizer and catalyst’.⁵ These various labels attached to Henri, which come from a number of different sources, show the diversity of his practice. Henri’s notebook page, reproduced on the facing page, headed ‘things which have influenced me’ (Henri C 1/8), shows the same diversity in the inspirations for his practice. Henri described himself in the 1960s as a ‘painter/poet’ (*TAN*, 77), and also as someone ‘concerned with communication’, ‘trying to remove the barriers between performer and audience wherever possible’.⁶ He was, along with Roger McGough and Brian Patten, ‘three thirds of a little red book back in 1967’.⁷ The book was *Penguin Modern Poets 10: The Mersey Sound*, which disseminated the work of these poets to a national audience. But before 1967, from the very beginning of the decade, these poets were active in Liverpool. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the ways in which Henri and the Merseybeat poets did indeed remove traditional barriers – fostering direct connections with the audience, utilising various media, and placing importance on the live event as a mode of dissemination. It also explores the context from which that 1967 collection emerged.

This movement is named here as Merseybeat to highlight the two most important sources and inspirations for these poets in this decade: the city of Liverpool, represented by ‘Mersey’, and the American ‘Beat’ poetry scene. I am using the term ‘Merseybeat’ in the full knowledge of the ‘Mersey Beat’ or ‘Mersey Sound’ music scene, in part because it demonstrates the links between these different artforms – they not only share a name but also a place and a time – but also because I believe it is the most accurate signifier for this movement. There have been and will be other ‘Liverpool Poets’, but the naming of volume ten of the *Penguin Modern Poets* series as *The Mersey Sound* was significant. None of the other books in this series had a generic title. Memos preserved in the Penguin Archive show the thought process: ‘we really do want to give this individual title a lift and a chance of

¹ George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in the 50s and 60s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 131-2.

² Mike Davies, ed., *Conversations* (Birmingham: Flat Earth Press, 1975), p. 1.

³ *Words on the Run* publicity material, McGough/7/18. References to the Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives (for Henri I and II, McGough, and Patten) appear in this format throughout. For finding aids and short catalogue descriptions, see <http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/colldescs/henri.html> [accessed 20 May 2013].

⁴ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, May 2012.

⁵ Archive clipping, Henri K/6, review of *Environments and Happenings* from *British Book News*, October 1974.

⁶ Adrian Henri, in *The Art of Adrian Henri, 1955-1985*, ed. by Josie Henderson (London: Expression Printers, 1986), p. 45. Article originally published in *Sphinx*, autumn 1964.

⁷ *The Wellingborough Bootleg* Audio Cassette, Patten/9/1/14.

selling better than other volumes in the series'.⁸ The commercial possibilities are also recognised in the original cover brief. The 'analysis' section takes a particular marketing angle, referring to the 'three "Pop" poets from Liverpool', with the 'treatment' requiring: 'something very different from present PMP style. Something alive and rowdy and pop.'⁹ Whether the title and cover design helped or not, this volume sold forty thousand copies in the first year, being reprinted eight times in seven years, with the 'revised and enlarged' edition appearing in 1974, and another 'revised edition' alongside *New Volume* in 1983, not to mention the rebranding of the volume as a *Penguin Modern Classic* in 2007.¹⁰ 1967 also saw the publication of Edward Lucie-Smith's anthology *The Liverpool Scene*, and, later that same year, *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene* LP, produced by Hal Shaper. The LP was recorded in 1967 at a session organised after the London launch of *The Liverpool Scene* at the Institute for Contemporary Arts. Shaper describes his motive on the back cover of the LP: after watching 'the Liverpool Poets' on *Look of the Week* in March 1967, he 'recorded Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Andy Roberts simply because they had something to say that had meaning for me.'¹¹ Shaper's text emphasises a shared background and the importance of communication between poet and audience – it is because they 'had meaning for me' that he became interested in the group. The LP was directly inspired by Lucie-Smith's book, via the BBC programme, copying its cover art. Shaper's back cover also states that: 'This album is deeply personal to Liverpool but even more personal to the three young men who have set their city down and recorded it in its own language.'¹² Interestingly, the three men here are Henri, McGough, and Roberts – not Henri, McGough, and Patten, the three chosen for the Penguin Modern Poets series.¹³ As well as these collective works, there were also solo collections by all three in that same year. And, of course, the following decades would see all three poets produce collections of adult and children's poetry and other literary works, as well as taking part in countless readings, tours, and media appearances.

⁸ Internal Memo, 'GF to AR', 4 November 1966 (Penguin Archive at Bristol University, DM 1107/ D 103).

⁹ Cover Brief, 3 October 1966 (Penguin Archive at Bristol University, DM 1107/ D 103).

¹⁰ Booth specifically cites *Penguin Modern Poets 10* as an example of a high-selling volume, pointing out that 'reprinting for Penguin does not mean an extra few hundred copies', so popularity of the volume was significantly high (Martin Booth, *British Poetry 1964 to 1984: Driving through the barricades* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985], pp. 11-2, 64). It remains the best-selling poetry anthology of all time.

¹¹ Hal Shaper, back cover of *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene* LP, prod. by Hal Shaper (CBS, 63045, 1967).

¹² Shaper, *Scene* LP.

¹³ The LP does not include other poets who were promoting *The Liverpool Scene*: Andy Roberts recalls Spike Hawkins and Pete Brown being present for the BBC event, but not Brian Patten (Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012). Whilst this thesis focuses on Henri, with McGough and Patten, the Merseybeat movement included many others.

THE ORIGINS OF MERSEYBEAT

The Merseybeat movement began in the early 1960s as a response to the poetry-and-jazz movement brought to Liverpool by Pete Brown and Michael Horovitz. Anecdotal history states that Patten's first encounter with the poetry scene in Liverpool was the result of reading an advert in the *Liverpool Echo*: 'MEET PETE THE BEAT AT STREATE'S'.¹⁴ Patten was at the time fifteen, had just left school, and was working as a cub reporter. McGough recalls:

Halfway through a reading one night in November 1961 Pete Brown told me there was a journalist I should meet, a guy from the *Bootle Times*, so I went upstairs expecting this hard-bitten forty year old who'd come along to write the usual 'Beatnik Horror!' piece, and instead met this hard-bitten fifteen year old who'd come along to read his poems.¹⁵

The Merseybeat poets would soon distance themselves from the poetry-and-jazz scene, looking for their own place to explore what live poetry in Liverpool should be. Horovitz has said that Merseybeat 'was more pop poetry, whereas we were more bop poetry.'¹⁶ This distinction is important, as bop, or jazz, was felt by Patten to be 'still exclusively university and middle class',¹⁷ whereas:

Our evenings had more humour and folk orientated music, plus sketches etc. I think except for Christopher Logue's *Redbird* EP none of us rated poetry and jazz – it seemed a jarring mix. We were creating our own scene and I've a feeling it was more down to earth.¹⁸

Horovitz and Brown had begun combining music with poetry by reading alongside jazz bands in London around 1960. However, this was not seen by those within the Merseybeat movement as a successful combination. For Andy Roberts (who would become the guitarist for Henri's band The Liverpool Scene, and one of his major collaborators), the notable error in these events was that the jazz bands played their own music and the poets read their own poems without any thought as to the links between the two.¹⁹ For Roberts, the music should be 'a carpet for the poem to walk on', adding to it without intruding on the work.²⁰ Likewise, Henri said he was 'never much of a fan of poetry-and-jazz – certainly not the Horovitz

¹⁴ Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 46.

¹⁵ Roger McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* (London: Random House, 2005), p. 150.

¹⁶ Michael Horovitz, in Jonathon Green, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground, 1961-1971* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 21.

¹⁷ Brian Patten, cited in Bowen, p. 48.

¹⁸ Interview with Brian Patten, June 2012. This is the same Logue recording that McGough mentions in connection with Ginsberg, in Chapter Two.

¹⁹ Whilst this is not true of artists such as Pete Brown, whose work over many decades has linked poetry and music (writing lyrics for the supergroup Cream and his own bands as well as consistently performing his poetry), other groupings were less successful.

²⁰ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

brand, it just didn't seem to gel.'²¹ The poetry-and-jazz nights in Streate's were soon rejected by the Merseybeat poets in favour of their own nights: Patten's statement above that their scene was 'folk' and 'down to earth' (as well as 'our') is key to this rejection of jazz. Horovitz's labelling uses 'pop' to mean something inferior, rather than 'the popular' (as in 'of the people'), which was central to this movement.

When Brown claims, in his autobiography, that 'it was really Spike [Hawkins] who started the whole Liverpool poetry scene, and he had never received the credit for it',²² what he is referring to is these poetry-and-jazz nights, brought in by poets from outside of the city. The London-centric poets who 'started' the scene were all interviewed for Jonathan Green's *Days In The Life*, and their attitudes are jarring. Green's collection of interviews recounts a meeting at the Beaulieu Jazz Festival where Byrne, Hawkins, Horovitz, and Brown decided to 'split the country', as Johnny Byrne recalls:

Hawkins and Byrne would have everything north of Stafford, and Horovitz and Brown would have everything south. And we would set up these readings. So Hawkins and I went straight back to Liverpool to set up the first of these readings at a place called Streate's Coffee Bar.²³

Horovitz also describes Brown and himself taking 'a troupe of musicians to Liverpool', and remembers that they 'did the first jazz-poetry in the north at the Crane Theatre in Liverpool and at the Manchester ICA'.²⁴ His recollection is of Henri, host of the after-party, saying 'Oh this poetry stuff is all right, I think I'm gonna start doing it', and although he does concede that McGough 'had read with us in Edinburgh' before this, his attitude towards the native talent in the city is condescending: it is difficult to imagine Patten sitting in the front row 'trying to hide his school cap' as Horovitz suggests, as he had in fact left school by this time for his job on the *Bootle Times* – it is also unlikely that Patten would have worn a school cap at Sefton Park Secondary Modern School.²⁵

Byrne did indeed start the first weekly poetry readings at Streate's with Hawkins. He relates that:

The first poetry readings we had were a couple of local jazz musicians, and us mainly reading from poems in the *Evergreen Review*. We made trips to Better Books

²¹ Adrian Henri, cited in Bowen, p. 47.

²² Pete Brown, *White Rooms and Imaginary Westerns: on the road with Ginsberg, Clapton, and Cream*, (London: JR Books, 2010), p. 47.

²³ Johnny Byrne, in Green, p. 20. This sounds more like gangland bosses agreeing on territory than poets.

²⁴ Michael Horovitz, in Green, p. 20

²⁵ Michael Horovitz, in Green, p. 20-1. See also Brown, pp. 47-53, on the start of the Liverpool scene in 1960 and readings at the Edinburgh Festival of 1961.

in London to get it. The following year, which was about '62, it was decided that we would extend our activities further because Brown and Horovitz had come up to Liverpool and there was the beginning of a community.²⁶

It is this idea of the literary community being brought in from the outside that I disagree with. But whilst Byrne does include 'local' jazz musicians, his admission of reading from *Evergreen Review* and even more specifically that they brought the material in from a bookshop in London, as well as the idea that *these* poets 'decided' to 'extend' *their* activities, gives this history a sense of cultural imposition on Liverpool. This is exactly the sort of literary endeavour that McGough reacts against:

Other poets in these clubs were writing about American landscapes. Although they'd never been there it seemed OK to write a poem in beatnik jargon about getting into a yellow cab and going down 43rd Street.²⁷

It is almost certainly this grouping that Anselm Hollo refers to in his introduction to the Pocket Poets 1963 *Jazz Poets* anthology, when he says that 'even Liverpool' responded to 'word of the so-called Poetry and Jazz Revival in the United States'.²⁸ His introduction describes 'readings with jazz, or readings combined with jazz concerts',²⁹ implying the kind of event that Roberts describes above, where poets and musicians present their own, separate, works. The American-influenced poems which McGough remembers have not survived, which either indicates that they have not stood the test of time as the Merseybeat poets' works have done, or that what he actually recalls is Byrne and others reading the words of American poets in *Evergreen Review*, widely cited as a source of Beat poetry for both the Liverpool and London-based poets discussed here. Perhaps Henri did make that off-hand comment which Horovitz remembers, but, in contrast to Horovitz, whose 'analogy was with bop' and 'related to the beat poets',³⁰ the Merseybeat poets:

didn't do it like the Americans did it, you did it like you would do it; so you didn't pretend you were coming from San Francisco or New Jersey, when you actually came from Birkenhead or Bootle. So you did it with your own voice, not theirs. And that was the great breakthrough.³¹

The reaction against Streate's was to do with inauthenticity, and emphasis was placed instead on the local and the participatory. The poets began reading at Sampson & Barlow's on a Monday night:

²⁶ Johnny Byrne, in Green, p. 20.

²⁷ Roger McGough, cited in Bowen, p.48.

²⁸ Anselm Hollo, ed., *Jazz Poets* (London: Vista Books, 1963), p. 7.

²⁹ Hollo, p. 8.

³⁰ Michael Horovitz, in Green, p. 20-1.

³¹ Adrian Henri, cited in Bowen, p. 47.

right from the start we'd hit on an 'anyone-can-join-in' set-up ... Some would read poems, sing, or take part in sketches McGough and others had written. Many were regular contributors, and we knew almost everyone there by name.³²

These evenings had begun that 'removal of barriers' which was so important to Henri and his work. This is a 'total art' movement, encompassing not only poetry but also visual art, music, comedy, happenings, and all forms of artistic expression, and as such all must be considered in order to fully understand the work of these poets.

THE CRITICAL RECEPTION

Despite – or perhaps because of – the mass appeal and popularity of the poets, critics have often dismissed the movement.³³ Yet even as he labels the Liverpool and Newcastle poets as 'clowns, entertainers, mild satirists, with various degrees of public skill', Anthony Thwaite (writing in 1978) does admit 'one positive credit' to the 'pop' movement:

it did help to create an audience, which for a time seemed unusually large, prepared to listen to poetry as an activity as normal and enjoyable as listening to music. Since about the mid-1960s very many poets have benefited from this, and not only ones of a 'pop' persuasion.³⁴

The idea that poetry might be something to be used and enjoyed in a communal manner is the issue. Thwaite says that 'live performance is the essence of what they do',³⁵ and he is right, if one considers that the 'live' in live performance means that an audience is present to be communicated with. To be labelled as an 'entertainer' should be a positive description – and was, indeed, one which the Merseybeat poets reclaimed for themselves.³⁶ And Thwaite's assertion that the poets (grouping Henri, Patten, and McGough together with Tom Pickard and Barry MacSweeney) were not successful at this is undermined by his own admission of their having created an 'unusually large' audience. Other critics have also picked up on the importance of live performance. For example, Grevel Lindop, whose essay in *British Poetry since 1960* centres on the Liverpool poets, cites the reasons for their success as having: 'their

³² Adrian Henri, 'Pub Poet', *Punch*, 15 October 1986, p. 12.

³³ Some reactions are based on a London-centric view which is harmed by a lack of knowledge of the loco-specificity of the movement. For example, in his *British Poetry 1964 to 1984*, Booth states twice that the Liverpool poets appeared in 1967 (once in relation to Lucie-Smith's anthology creating the movement [Booth, p. 112] and once in relation to Henri's poetry coming from The Liverpool Scene [Booth, p. 139]), as well as claiming that they 'came out of the cultural explosion ... spawned by the Beatles' (Booth, p. 133), due to the fact that national attention only appeared after they were published, even though the scene had existed in Liverpool from the very early 1960s.

³⁴ Anthony Thwaite, *Twentieth Century English Poetry* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 124.

³⁵ Thwaite, p. 124.

³⁶ In a number of interviews and press clippings preserved in the Archives Henri states his position on this, such as: "My readings are entertainment," Adrian Henri told me. "After them you should feel as if you have just been to a concert and the kind of audience I have always had is the sort who like good pop music" (Archive clipping, Henri K/11, 'Pop poet Adrian is so versatile', n.d.).

own significance for an understanding of the relationship between poet and audience, a matter to which most of the self-consciously “anti-establishment” poets attach great importance.³⁷ However, Lindop ‘confesses’ that he has not heard Henri read, and that this ‘may conceivably have affected my estimate of his work’.³⁸ This shows that even those critics who have praise for the movement are still not fully aware of the aims.

The ‘pop’ tag which both fellow poets such as Horovitz and critics of this time often attach to the poets could be taken to mean either ‘popular’, referring to its use of popular culture, or ‘populist’, in that it talks to the people. Whichever definition one takes, the result is much the same: these poets used everyday language, imagery, and allusion, to talk to ordinary people and engage them with poetry. Jonathan Raban’s critique of the poetry takes issue with this, claiming that the poetry is ‘an attempt to get a local, private, dispossessed language into verse, to talk straight, bypassing poetic convention, to the audience.’³⁹ What I am arguing is that the result is not, as Raban suggests, ‘whimsically impoverished speech’,⁴⁰ but rather a deliberate utilisation of everyday speech and common cultural referencing to do exactly what Raban criticises: to ‘talk straight’, to engage the audience, to foster a direct connection. Raban believes that the Merseybeat movement uses literature:

as if no literary form had ever existed before; as if we had only voices in the street to go on, and the cumulative experience of tradition amounted to merely a collection of dusty files in the cellars of the academy.⁴¹

I disagree with Raban’s critique (of the Merseybeat poets, and also of Adrian Mitchell, Michael McClure, Tom Pickard) in part because it is clear to me that they do not ignore what has gone before them (this thesis explores the avant-garde, European, American, and British sources for the movement) but also because, if they are using ‘only’ the ‘voices in the street’, it is part of a deliberate act of communication. When Peter Barry refers to ‘patter and poetry, chat and verse’,⁴² he is not dismissing the use of everyday registers but recognising that these go hand in hand with the more literary references in order to create a bond with the audience.

³⁷ Grevel Lindop, ‘Poetry, Rhetoric and the Mass Audience: The Case of the Liverpool Poets’, in *British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Survey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop and Michael Schmidt (Oxford: Carcanet, 1972), pp. 92-106, p. 93.

³⁸ Lindop, in Lindop, p. 94.

³⁹ Jonathan Raban, *The Society of the Poem* (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 116.

⁴⁰ Raban, p. 116.

⁴¹ Raban, p. 133.

⁴² Peter Barry, *Contemporary British poetry and the city* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 138.

Barry provides an in-depth analysis of Raban's critique in his discussion of poetry in Liverpool in *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*. Barry emphasises 'a distinct linguistic mobility', the poets writing 'across registers' in a way which is 'often more culturally complex than Raban suggests.'⁴³ In fact, Raban himself refers to Henri's voice as that 'of a child who skips in his reading from *Batman* comics to the manifestos of European surrealism and post-expressionism',⁴⁴ something which I see in a positive light.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Barry recognises Henri as being:

closely tuned in to European and American artistic avant-gardism, looking back to Dada and Surrealism, to Duchamp, to major modern artists like Jasper Johns and Kurt Schwitters, and to contemporary 'happenings'; to the activities of political groups like the Situationists, and to conceptual art generally.⁴⁶

Many of these will appear in this thesis as important sources for the work. The movement combines, to use Barry's phrase, 'linguistically implied elements of cultural sophistication'⁴⁷ with the everyday.

A survey of some of the major poetry anthologies of the last half century also demonstrates how these poets have often been excluded from the mainstream British poetry tradition – for example, neither *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (1982), edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion, nor *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse* (1980), edited by D. J. Enright, includes these poets. Al Alvarez characterises the 'pop movement in poetry' as 'diluted near-verse designed for mass readings and poetry-and-jazz concerts.'⁴⁸ He also rejects their aim as being 'not to innovate but to popularize, to seduce an audience which is interested in poetry simply as an assertion of Bohemian non-conformity.'⁴⁹ In his 1962 anthology *The New Poetry*, Alvarez cites cinema and television as forms of mass/popular culture which are 'usurping the power of high culture', and which are, therefore, behind that 'diluted near-verse'.⁵⁰ He sees the language of these visual arts as being taken across into poetry. This language does indeed, as Alvarez states, function in a different way to that of traditional print media. However, Alvarez then claims that: 'the pop

⁴³ Barry, p. 139.

⁴⁴ Raban, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Furthermore, Raban's accusation that the poets depend on 'public clichés' (Raban, p. 116) is an idea which I shall return to in Chapter Three, in a positive sense, as Henri in particular reclaims such language.

⁴⁶ Barry, p. 143.

⁴⁷ Barry, p. 140.

⁴⁸ Al Alvarez, 'Modernism', from *Beyond All This Fiddle: Essays 1955-1967* (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 19-20.

⁴⁹ Alvarez, 'Modernism', p. 19-20.

⁵⁰ Al Alvarez, 'On Pop Poetry', in *British Poetry Since 1945*, ed. by Edward Lucie-Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 392-3.

poets do nothing more radical than model their verse on the lyrics of pop songs'.⁵¹ I agree that popular forms of communication have been appropriated by these poets, but I disagree as to the result. To utilise modern forms might indeed 'seduce' the audience, but this does not make it a poor literary mode.

It must also be noted here that Horovitz, in line with his comments about 'bop' mentioned above, did not include the Merseybeat poets in *Children of Albion* – neither the mainstream nor the underground would anthologise them, it seems. Horovitz called McGough and Henri 'out-spokenly pop artistes', rejecting them from the selection for having been 'marketed via the guillotine channels of the pop industry', and, by this association, comparing them unfavourably to 'the hard core of working "public" poets'.⁵² This is attacking not *their* work (his comment on their role as 'pop artistes' adds that they are 'very good ones') but the industry's appropriation of them.⁵³ In fact, Horovitz wrote to Henri with praise for his poem 'Metropolis' (to be printed in the *New Departures* double issue of 1975), and also, significantly, recanting his earlier dismissal of the Merseybeat poets:

I'm cutting out the entire 'Afterwords' with silly put-down of you & McGough for populism, on which I'm now with you all the way. Will probably write a brief new Preface of humble pie on this & other scores.⁵⁴

Other letters from Horovitz in the Henri Archive praise his work, such as realising 'just how MUCH beauty there is in yr writing, & real vision – I'd kind of taken it for granted, liking yr paintings, that there'd be vision in yr poems too; now the strength of it's come home to me', and referring to Henri's 'tremendous achievement' in 'combining the perfect professional poem object & public noise & at the same time projecting such clarity of perception of everyday & ultimate beauty'.⁵⁵ This reappraisal is significant. I would argue that the cynicism with which Alvarez and Horovitz view the audiences or marketing of the group can be countered by the reports of those who experienced it firsthand. Arthur Adlen, who grew up in Liverpool and saw these poets perform, told me that what the Merseybeat movement showed him was that: 'poetry could be about real life ... poetry in Liverpool to me was about real life but expressed beautifully'.⁵⁶ Thwaite's comments, quoted above, on the 'unusually large' audience for this kind of poetry is also telling: if this were only for a time, if the audience members were simply using poetry as 'an assertion of Bohemian non-

⁵¹ Alvarez, 'On Pop Poetry', p. 392-3.

⁵² Michael Horovitz, 'Afterwords', in *Children of Albion: the poetry of the Underground in Britain*, ed. by Michael Horovitz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 328.

⁵³ Michael Horovitz, 'Afterwords', p. 328.

⁵⁴ Letter from Michael Horovitz to Adrian Henri, n.d., Henri M/3/18/2(a).

⁵⁵ Letter from Michael Horovitz to Adrian Henri, n.d., Henri M/3/18/2(c).

⁵⁶ Interview with Arthur Adlen, January 2011.

conformity', then surely we would not still see the crowds McGough and Patten continue to draw almost fifty years later. For Eric Mottram, writing about the British Poetry Revival, the performances 'showed that there could be an audience for poetry outside the study, the university and the tradition-bound classroom.'⁵⁷ Stephen Wade obviously believes that the audience for this scene was significant enough to warrant questions such as: 'How many modern poets can say that they began their writing careers with a clear sense of audience and a regular acquaintance with those same people within a local culture?'⁵⁸ The fact remains that Merseybeat poetry was one of the groupings of the 1960s which pushed for poetry to be relevant, to be public, to be used.⁵⁹

Peter Barry and Robert Hampson have noted 'patterns of exclusion' in mainstream contemporary poetry anthologies, drawing attention to the 'narrowness of poetic taste' in selections such as *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, and that one of the areas particularly lacking in this anthology is the British Poetry Revival of the 1960s and 1970s, which was aided by small press and little magazine publications.⁶⁰ In contrast, the Merseybeat poets were published by Penguin as part of a major series. Edward Lucie-Smith also included Henri, McGough, and Patten (as well as other poets who feature in *The Liverpool Scene*, such as Henry Graham and Spike Hawkins) in the 'New Voices' section of his *British Poetry since 1945* (1970).⁶¹ The introduction sets out Lucie-Smith's aims for the anthology: 'to present a clear, concise and coherent picture of what has been happening in English poetry.'⁶² He states that the reason why some 1960s English poetry has escaped critical recognition is due to the 'decentralization of the poetic community' and 'the tendency for poets to reject the academic world'; he rightly sees the 'network of little magazines and little presses' as keeping 'experimental writers in touch with one another all over the world', bypassing London as the creative centre.⁶³ He goes on to observe the 'return

⁵⁷ Eric Mottram, 'The British Poetry Revival, 1960-75', in *New British Poetries: The scope of the possible*, ed. by Peter Barry and Robert Hampson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 15-50, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Stephen Wade, *In My Own Shire: Region and Belonging in British Writing, 1840-1970* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), p. 148.

⁵⁹ Philip Larkin was Librarian at Hull and the warden of McGough's Hall of Residence when McGough was at Hull University. He wrote to McGough in 1980 that: 'I was certainly impressed by the condition of our copies of your books: they show signs of a good deal more wear and tear than mine do. Congratulations!' (Philip Larkin, cited in McGough, *Said*, p. 97).

⁶⁰ See Peter Barry and Robert Hampson, 'Introduction: The scope of the possible', in Barry and Hampson, pp. 1-11, pp. 4-7.

⁶¹ In order to place this 'New Voices' section in context, which also includes others such as Jeff Nuttall and Tom Raworth, it is worth mentioning that the other sections either cover particular movements, such as 'The Group' (including Lucie-Smith himself), or are labelled with descriptors, such as 'Dissenters' – which is comprised solely of Christopher Logue and Adrian Mitchell.

⁶² Lucie-Smith, *British Poetry*, p. 27.

⁶³ Lucie-Smith, *British Poetry*, p. 31.

of poetry to its prophetic role’ whilst discussing the ‘dissenting voice’ which accompanied this decentralisation:

Poets suddenly found themselves the spokesmen of a real community – a community which took its standards from the art schools rather than the universities, which identified itself with a kind of political protest which rejected politics, with the new music of the groups ... and which was eager, it seemed, for more wholly radical attitudes than the poets themselves could provide.⁶⁴

The emphasis on politics explains Adrian Mitchell’s inclusion in this section of the anthology, but this dissent is also relevant for a description of the Liverpool poets, with the importance of community to their scene. In the introduction to the ‘New Voices’ section, Lucie-Smith, also an art critic, refers to the movement’s links with pop music but notes that, ‘on reflection’, he now sees ‘the commitment to modern art’ as being more important, as ‘the alliance between modern poets and modern painters has been of special significance to modernism as a whole.’⁶⁵ In this respect, his subsequent reference to Henri as the ‘theoretician’ of the group makes perfect sense: ‘a poet-painter who is trying to relate what he writes to his experience of modern art’, referring the reader on to Henri’s ‘Notes on Painting and Poetry’ in *Tonight at Noon*.⁶⁶

THE THESIS

Whilst Henri, McGough, and Patten would go on to work in different fields, and have distinct writing styles, what binds them together in the 1960s is an emphasis on live performance, both for the expression of poetry and for a connection with the audience. The thesis has been divided into the following five chapters in order to deal with, first, the origins and antecedents of the movement, and second, its three most important facets or manifestations. The thesis includes much original archival research and interviews with both performers and audiences alongside the analysis of the works in an attempt to create a ‘thick description’ of the movement.⁶⁷ I argue that to look at only one facet of the movement – the printed works – is to ignore much of what the poetry can do. It is only within the totalising experience that the full impact of these works can be appreciated. I am using the term

⁶⁴ Lucie-Smith, *British Poetry*, p. 31-2.

⁶⁵ Lucie-Smith, *British Poetry*, p. 337-8.

⁶⁶ Lucie-Smith, *British Poetry*, p. 348.

⁶⁷ See Clifford Geertz, ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 2nd. edn. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 3-30. A ‘thick description’ (originally proposed by Gilbert Ryle) is used in social anthropology to mean the process of describing not only an aspect of human behaviour but also its context (and what might be called ‘background information’). Geertz states that ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun’, and a ‘thick description’ is one which considers ‘the stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures’ around an act, ‘the sort of piled-up structures of inference and implication through which an ethnographer is continually trying to pick his way’ (Geertz, pp. 5-7).

‘crossmedia’ to refer to both the way in which a piece can blend different media and the way a piece can change and be performed in different ways to suit various occasions: where Dick Higgins’s term ‘intermedia’ implies total fusion,⁶⁸ ‘crossmedia’ works by appropriating elements from different artforms to create a particular performance instance. A single work can exist in various formations with links between each instance. So, Henri’s ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’ is a poem, a poster poem, a musical performance piece, and a painting, with each artform informing and relating to the other creative instances but also existing each in its own right. Each interpretation is a separate work but forms a constellation of works across a range of media.

Communication is paramount. The poets achieve this in three main ways: performance, music, and visual arts practice. Accordingly, the last three chapters examine the verbal, vocal, and visual aspects of the movement’s work. I will also draw on a number of different disciplines – sociology, literary geography, performance studies, and visual art – to discuss this diverse body of work.

The first chapter looks at the city of Liverpool, and its role in the formation of the Merseybeat movement but also as an inspiration for other people through its history as a port, a hub, a crossroads. Henri was born in Birkenhead, but lived in the city (and, more specifically, in the postcode area of Liverpool 8) all his adult life. Both McGough and Patten moved away from the city after the 1960s, but it is always there, as a background to their work. The role of Liverpool 8 – today’s Toxteth – is of primary importance to these poets, the place in which they lived and worked in the decade I am focusing on. More than this, it is emblematic of their social scene: place becomes space as their poetry claims the wider area outside of the official postcode boundaries. Chapter Two considers the influence of the American Beat movement on the Merseybeat poets. In seeking to re-evaluate Allen Ginsberg’s visit to Liverpool in 1965, I argue that the links between the Americans and the Liverpoolians is not as clear-cut as some would have it. What these poets took from Ginsberg and the Beat movement was not a model to imitate but, as it were, *permission* to continue what they were already practising before Ginsberg arrived: doing it in their own voice, poetry of everyday experience, with an emphasis on live performance.

Live performance and the oral expression of poetry are the subjects of Chapter Three. Through regular live readings in Liverpool in the early part of the decade, and also further afield by the end of it, Henri, McGough, and Patten fostered connections with their audience

⁶⁸ See Dick Higgins, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), pp. 15-6 and 24-5.

and utilised the energy and atmosphere produced to create a unique location for each creative work: circumambient orality, the specifics of the milieu, and the fleeting nature of spoken language all come together to create one instance of performance. It is in the sum of these instances – those mentioned in this chapter and the next two – that the work is realised. I consider collaboration as an essential part of the live event, and explore issues surrounding control and authorship, informed by theories of orality and performance. Chapter Four focuses on music, which is a different area of creative collaboration to that of the previous chapter. All of the poets had involvement in more than one sphere of the arts, and this chapter demonstrates the importance of different performative aspects of the movement to show that Merseybeat poetry must be considered as more than the printed artefacts. In Chapter Five, I look at the importance of visual arts: both visual culture surrounding the movement and the importance of the look of the words on the page. Dada and Surrealism are important influences here, particularly in relation to performance, alongside Pop Art and Happenings, which Henri called ‘Events’. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how Henri and the Merseybeat poets linked words, music, and the visual in order to present the audience with a totalising experience.

CHAPTER ONE: LIVERPOOL

The creative life of the city is wide-ranging, from Gerald Manley Hopkins to Levi Tafari, via the Pre-Raphaelite collection of the Walker Art Gallery and the Beatles' Cavern. In the 1960s, one of the most important literary and cultural phenomena of the city emerged: the poetry movement called Merseybeat. Liverpool is central to this movement and both the external effects of this on, as well as the poets' internal engagement with, the city need to be recognised. Liverpool owes its economic life to the Mersey, and it is from the Mersey that creative life flows into the city; it could not exist without it. Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten used Liverpool in their work over and over again to place themselves within the city but also to claim it. The district with which the Merseybeat poets most often identify is Liverpool 8. This is the postcode area east of the city centre, leading up from the south docks, around the Anglican Cathedral, and, more importantly, the Art School. The area has been known as Toxteth since the thirteenth century, but, as J. Hillis Miller tells us, 'names are motivated',¹ and by using the name 'Liverpool 8' the poets claim their area. 'Space', for Michel de Certeau, 'is a practiced place',² and this physical geographic place is transformed by the poets into their social space by detailing their relationships with and within the area as well as with the wider city, port, and river.

This chapter includes the work of Henri, McGough, and Patten alongside other writers in order to provide a wider sense of the city in literature. The first half of this chapter will consider experiences of both the docks and the city by a range of writers, of poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction. There have been countless visitors to the city over the centuries, and by detailing and analysing some of their thoughts here I will show what 'Liverpool' has meant to them. The second half of this chapter will explore the specific literary geography of this movement, utilising human geography and cultural studies theories.³ I believe that discussion of the city itself is paramount to providing a background to the movement, as Merseybeat was both externally affected by, and actively attempted to have an effect on, the Liverpool landscape.

¹ J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 4.

² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 117.

³ This is in line with my 'thick description' approach, as stated in the Introduction: 'What Cultural Geography teaches us is that if the world around us shapes our lives, we also make the world around us over in ways that embody and embed our thoughts, imaginings, ideals, and meanings.' (Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction* [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], p. 12.)

THE RIVER AND THE CITY

Liverpool Poets 08 an anthology, edited by Alan Corkish (and published by his small press, erbacce), was produced as a counterpoint to the official publications surrounding Liverpool's naming as the 2008 European Capital of Culture, and includes many poems by local poets and residents. It understandably includes many poems about the Mersey, the docks, and dock life, such as 'The Mersey' by John Blackall, which opens:

Let me tell you of the river.
It has the same rhythm as our being,
It seeps into our seething lives,
Once in a while catching our breath with its presence.⁴

The most obvious way that the river 'seeps' into the lives of the citizens is by human interaction. Due to fire regulations prohibiting sailors from sleeping on docked ships, in the nineteenth century the area around the docks developed into a 'Sailor's Town' to cater for the large numbers of men requiring food, shelter, and entertainment whilst in port. *Redburn*, the Herman Melville novel inspired by his own first voyage, describes stepping on shore to be led to 'a narrow lane, filled with boarding-houses, spirit-vaults, and sailors' where he will find a boarding-house and eat with his crewmates.⁵ In this way the sailors entered the life of the town, but the natives also entered the life of the docks, working on the dock (classed as casual labour), in bonded warehouses, or in clerical positions that the busy mercantile heart required.

From Liverpool one could sail to almost anywhere in the world, and this is visually represented for Melville by the ships themselves:

all the forests of the globe are represented, as in a grand parliament of masts. Canada and New Zealand send their pines; America her live oak; India her teak; Norway her spruce; and the Right Honourable Mahogant, member for Honduras and Campeachy, is seen at his post by the wheel. (*Redburn*, 234)

Writing of her travels only a few years after Melville, in 1854, Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), uses the same trope to describe the bustling life of the port: 'We are in a forest of ships of all nations; their masts bristling like the tall pines in Maine;

⁴ From Alan Corkish, ed., *Liverpool Poets 08 an anthology* (Liverpool: erbacce-press, 2008), p. 62. Further references appear after quotations in the text as 'LP'.

⁵ Herman Melville, *Redburn* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 194. Further references appear after quotations in the text as '*Redburn*'. For a discussion of the autobiographical nature of *Redburn*, see William H. Gilman's survey *Melville's Early Life and 'Redburn'* (New York: New York University Press, 1951).

wall which ‘splits the docks from the dock-road’ (*Seaport*, 22), separating the port from the city:

Some eighteen feet high and proportionally thick, they are pierced at intervals by heavy wooden gates which slide with precision along iron guide rails deep into the walls themselves. The gates when closed fit into slots cut in the stone surface of the towers which stand like keeps guarding the portals of this nineteenth-century stronghold. Having a sense of humour Hartley introduced a touch of whimsy in the finish of these features; for false arrow slits, Tudor-arches, postern gates and deep cut spirals on the stone spires underline the simile.¹⁰

Nevertheless, for the mid-twentieth century inhabitants, there was still a great awareness of the river and the docks as a part of the city, seen from one of the ferries, the Pier Head landing stage, or from the Overhead Railway. As Hughes observes, ‘one could at least peer into the fortress from an elevated railway which ran the length of the docks from the Dingle to Gladstone’, which ‘afforded a magnificent view of dockland’ until it closed at the end of December 1956.¹¹ Indeed, the company itself marketed the railway to tourists as ‘the best way to see the finest docks in the world and the gigantic ocean liners’ (fig 1.1).

Adrian Henri’s first experiences of Liverpool would have been via the Pier Head landing stage as he came ‘over the water’ from Birkenhead. ‘Mrs Albion You’ve Got a Lovely Daughter’, discussed in the following chapter, anthropomorphises the city as ‘Albion’s most lovely daughter’ who ‘sat on the banks of the Mersey dangling her landing stage in the water’ (*TMS1*, 55). For Henri, the port appears early in his 1971 collection *Autobiography*, where ‘Part One’ tells of his Birkenhead childhood:

looking out of the kitchen window
seeing the boats on the bright river
and the cranes from the dockyards (A, 12)

Although the opening of *Autobiography* is set in Birkenhead, it is significant that the opening lines look over to the city of Liverpool, making this the initial focus, as it would become Henri’s home for the rest of his adult life. Thus, early in *Autobiography*, he recalls trips on the ferry:

being taken over the river to see the big shops at Christmas
the road up the hill from the noisy dockyard
and the nasty smell from the tannery you didn’t like going past (A, 11)

¹⁰ Hughes, *Seaport*, p. 37.

¹¹ Hughes, *Seaport*, p. 39. See pages 64-5 for photos of the Overhead Railway itself, and page 30 for a photo of the Aquitania viewed from one of the cars to give an idea of perspective and proximity.

The premodifying adjectives here heighten the senses – the shops are ‘big’ (both to him as a child and also literally as they are the department stores of the city centre), and the docklands area is not only ‘noisy’, but has also impressed on his olfactory memory. This sets the tone for Henri’s use of the city in his work, as he never mentions a specific place without giving it an emotional or personal aspect. Henri’s recollection of childhood gives the reader a very different kind of poem to Hampson’s, which uses what Peter Barry terms ‘incorporated data’¹² – literary sources and official material which are layered up throughout *Seaport* to give an account of the city firmly placed within the wider sociohistorical context.

Everyday scenes, such as those included in ‘Part One’ of *Autobiography*, highlight the importance of the port in the early lives of the Merseybeat poets, and can also be seen in the writings of others involved in the wider scene. Mike McCartney’s autobiography opens with a chapter entitled ‘The making of Liverpool’:

Along with the first George came the first dock ever built in England, and by the 1920’s there were eighty-seven docks covering six hundred acres, including the Gladstone, the largest of its sort in Europe. Even as far back as 1905 Liverpool was among the four greatest ports in the world. She also had the largest cathedral and floating platform in Great Britain, and the largest warehouse in the world (*not*, I may add, above the Cavern).¹³

As with Henri’s memory of ‘big shops’, within a few lines of prose, McCartney has used ‘largest’ three times, setting up the importance of the docks in his life, which are placed in the book even before his account of his own childhood.

Poems about the docklands often make a connection to a specific person – such as Henri’s ‘Uncle Bill’ who would ‘roll home once a week/ watched by the Birkenhead moon’ (*NFA*, 61), or Jamie McKendrick’s ‘Banana Boat’ where the porter Pat Cassidy is described as ‘an old hulk/ moored to a sandbank on the river’ (*LA*, 94) – reminding the reader of their direct personal or familial connection with this place. Brian Patten associates the maritime past of his city with his grandmother in ‘Tattoos’: ‘On her biceps/ The sails on the three-decked galleon’ (*PSP*, 160). Sail power had been obsolete for over a century before Patten’s childhood, but he elaborates on the subject of his grandmother with specifically maritime vocabulary:

Ageing, the colours faded,
And her world shrank to a small island in the brain,

¹² Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 159.

¹³ Mike McCartney, *Thank U Very Much: Mike McCartney’s Family Album* (London: Arthur Baker, 1981), p. 1.

A tumour on which memory was shipwrecked
Till finally that galleon came to rest
One fathom down beneath Liverpool clay,
Its sails deflated, the blue-bird mute,
The rose gone to seed.

(PSP, 160)

‘Making Arrangements’, from Matt Simpson’s collection of the same name, recognises the pull of the docks, and the family’s involvement in them, more explicitly:

Look at the map. The streets where I grew up
move in a direction hard to resist,
lines of force that drag down to grey docks,
to where my father spent his strength.¹⁴

Similarly, Lindop’s introduction to his selection of poems in *Liverpool Accents* tells of the effect of living in a house overlooking the Garston Docks: ‘having that window, literally, onto the river and the sounds of shipping by day and night, gave me a sense of being up close to the city’s reason for being: the river itself’ (LA, 90). The poem also refers to ‘that hush, the slow decline of trade’ (LA, 96), the aural opposite of the ‘bustle’ commented on by earlier visitors.¹⁵ An early poem by McKendrick, entitled ‘The Sound of Things’ references other noises:

dead dog lobbed from the posh promenade,
the pampered butt of peremptory commands
in one of those wide-windowed residences
...
did the dog guard the adjacent docks,
his ear adjusted to foghorn and crane,
his bark answering the watchman’s known tread (LA, 96)

McGough felt that these dockyard noises were so much a part of his childhood that he actually chose the sound of Liverpool tugs as one of his Desert Island Discs.¹⁶

THE PORT ITSELF

Liverpool was not only a port city, but an important one; not only an important one, but a pioneering one. This was initially due to King John, whose charter of 1207 conferred upon the people a freedom which was to be the making of the town:

¹⁴ Matt Simpson, *Making Arrangements* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1982), p. 50.

¹⁵ See fig 1.2 for a chart of the independent reoccurrence of certain words and phrases in public and private writings about Liverpool and her port.

¹⁶ *Desert Island Discs: Castaway Roger McGough*, broadcast 10 April 1994, BBC Radio 4 (see www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs/castaway/e16b4a6c [accessed 22 March 2011]).

Know ye that we have granted to all our loyal subjects who shall take burgages in Liverpul that they shall have all the liberties and free customs in the township of Liverpul which any free borough on the sea has in our land.¹⁷

Whilst this was a self-interested move, as John needed Lancastrian support to conquer Ireland – Chester, which was already at this time a functioning trade port, was ‘too much under the control of its powerful and independent earl’¹⁸ – the freedoms detailed in the Letters Patent allowed Liverpool to become a hub of travel and commerce. At one time, the city rivalled London as the most important city in the British Empire. As early as 1393 Liverpool was a ‘self-contained and self-governing community’,¹⁹ and John Leland’s *Itinerary* of the 1530s reports that Irish merchants frequent the port because: ‘At Lyrpole is smaul custome payed, that causith marchantes to resorte thither. Good marchandis at Lyrpole’ (*BS*, 11). Fifty years later William Camden would write in his *Britannia* that ‘Litherpole, commonly called Lirpole’ was the ‘most convenient and most frequented passage to Ireland’ (*BS*, 14). The importance of the port at this time is also clear from a small reference in a play circa 1590, *Fair Em, the Miller’s Daughter of Manchester, with the Love of William the Conqueror, a Pleasant Comedie*, which refers to ‘our King, who is that daie landed at Lirpole’ (*BS*, 12) – Liverpool must have been well known as a port in order to be referenced in this way.

Yet the real life of the port was still to come. Several acts of Parliament in the eighteenth century can be used to chart the growth of the port: in 1709 for a wet dock, in 1738 to improve the tidal basin, in 1785 to implement another wet dock for ships in open harbour, and two further dock pleas in 1799. Perhaps the most important act was that of 1762, whose preamble stated that:

The two wet docks and dry pier, already constructed, are not sufficient for the reception of the ships resorting hereto; that vessels, especially His Majesty’s ships of war, stationed at the port, are obliged to lie in the open harbour, exposed to the rage of tempestuous weather and of rapid tides and currents in imminent danger of shipwreck.²⁰

It is surely clever of the Liverpool businessmen to make their plea in terms of national security rather than their own desire to increase trade. Even before these new docks were built, Daniel Defoe, on his *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, called Liverpool

¹⁷ Letters Patent, cited in *Both Sides of the River: Merseyside in Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Gladys Mary Coles (West Kirby: Headland, 1993), p. 7. Further references appear after quotations in the text as ‘*BS*’.

¹⁸ Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1907), p. 16.

¹⁹ Muir, p. 40.

²⁰ 1762 Parliamentary Act, cited in Francis E. Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: An Economic History of a Port 1700-1970* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), p. 74.

‘one of the wonders of Britain’ (BS, 22). If the five Acts of Parliament over 100 years are not enough to show the rapid growth of the town, Defoe also comments:

the town was, at my first visiting it, about the year 1680, a large, handsome, well built and encreasing or thriving town; at my second visit, anno 1690, it was much bigger than at my first seeing it, and, by the report of the inhabitants, more than twice as big as it was twenty years before that. (BS, 22)

Such increase shows the prosperity that the port’s trade was bringing to the town, but this is still not the whole story. Not satisfied with ‘the first wet dock erected in the modern world’,²¹ completed in 1715, specialisation of the docklands was occurring even before the Industrial Revolution took hold; Ramsay Muir dates the first tobacco shipment as 1648, and, whilst the first dedicated on-dock tobacco warehouse was not built until the 1790s, the first sugar refinery was built in 1668, which in turn greatly encouraged businesses connected to the sugar trade to trade in the town.²² Furthermore, the Lancashire climate was ideally suited to spinning cotton, and Liverpool’s port was perfectly placed for trade with Ireland and beyond – and with the advent of the Manchester & Liverpool Railway in 1830, convenience of onward trading was added to the luck of geography. Nathaniel Hawthorne, American Consul to the city 1853-57, had first-hand experience of the city’s ways of working from his office ‘on the corner of Brunswick-street’, and describes the docks as: ‘the very busiest bustle of commerce, rumbling wheels, hurrying men’.²³ But whilst this era saw the port thriving, a major part of this commerce came from a rather less innocent source.

The trade for which Liverpool is most famous – or perhaps infamous – is the transatlantic slave trade, the so-called ‘triangular trade’ which saw ships leaving Liverpool laden with cheap goods, trading these goods with African tribes for slaves, heading to America to trade this human cargo for other goods, and then returning to Liverpool with West Indian and American produce to be processed dockside and then sold on to the rest of the country.²⁴

²¹ Muir, p. 176.

²² See Hyde, pp. 75-6, and Muir, pp. 138-9, on tobacco and sugar industries. Henry Tate’s sugar empire began in Liverpool in 1869, merging with Abraham Lyle & Sons to become Tate & Lyle, and expanding to London’s East End docklands. The Liverpool plant closed in 1981, and Tate Liverpool – part of the gallery foundation named after the same Henry Tate – opened seven years later. An industry which had provided jobs in the city for a century returned as part of the regeneration project in the form of high culture.

²³ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks 1853-1856*, ed. by Thomas Woodson and Bill Ellis (Ohio State University Press, 1997), p. 4. The US President Franklin Pierce made Hawthorne American Consul to Liverpool in 1853, as a reward for writing his campaign biography, *The Life of Franklin Pierce*.

²⁴ This clearly very important topic is beyond the bounds of this thesis, but see, for example, Roger Anstey and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the Africa Slave Trade and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research*, rev. edn. (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1989), and David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007). Both collections of essays deal

Queen Mary on 19th July 1927. The completed dock was ‘an enormous asset to the port’,²⁸ for it allowed access to and service of the huge transatlantic liners which were at that time becoming the norm.

Liverpool has long been host to a shifting population connected to the port – not just the seamen but those casual workers such as Roger McGough’s own father, ‘a stevedore (Mum preferred that to “docker”)/ And landlubbered all his married life’ (*MCP*, 14), and all the trades which accumulate round the life of a port. Tony Lane’s two works on the city – *Gateway of Empire* and *City of the Sea* – emphasise the cosmopolitan nature of this shifting population by enumerating the nationalities found in Shipping Office logs:

the Chinese, the West Africans and handfuls of Yemenis, Filipinos, Malays, Somalis, Indians and West Indians ... Swedes, Norwegians, Germans and Spaniards ... smaller numbers of French, Dutch, Belgians, Italians and North Americans.²⁹

Similarly, *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Irish Slummy* by Pat O’Mara, born in 1901, devotes Chapter Two to telling his readers of ‘Negroes, Chinese, Mulattoes, Filipinos, almost every nationality under the sun, most of them boasting white wives and large half-caste families’ who ‘were our neighbours, each colour laying claim to a certain street’.³⁰ The role of Lascar seamen – who ‘made excellent seamen’ (*Redburn*, 241) – on British ships has been recorded as an important aspect of the cosmopolitan nature of many ports.³¹ Lane also tells us that 40% of the seamen who signed on in Liverpool in 1891 were foreign nationals.³² Some sailors would have been residents, returning to Liverpool, others would have only been stopping off on shore leave before continuing onwards. In fact, with the Sailors’ Home, various boarding houses, and entertainment provision for this mutable population in the streets emanating from the docklands, it is no surprise that Carl Gustav Jung interpreted the name Liverpool to mean the ‘pool of life’ (*BS*, 160).

Arthur Adlen, a near contemporary of the Merseybeat poets who grew up near the docks, says that ‘you’d hear not just different accents but different languages’,³³ and in ‘Limestreetscene ’64’ McGough picks up on the resulting diversity of the inner city, where:

²⁸ Ken Longbottom, *Liverpool and the Mersey: Vol. 1 Gladstone Dock and the great liners* (Peterborough: Silver Link Publishing, 1995), p. 46.

²⁹ Tony Lane, *Liverpool: City of the Sea*, rev. edn. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 87.

³⁰ Pat O’Mara, *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Slummy* (Bath: Cedric Chivers, 1972), p. 11.

³¹ See, for example, Michael Herbert Fisher, ‘Working across the Seas: Indian Maritime Labourers in India, Britain, and in between, 1600–1857’, *International Review of Social History*, 51(2006), 21–45, and the website www.lascars.co.uk [accessed 22 March 2011].

³² Lane, *City of the Sea*, p. 87.

³³ Interview with Arthur Adlen, January 2011.

Outside the Chinese cafes
like buddhas bouncers stand
lest a band
of teds or sailors
or drunken Viking whalers
should seek to violate the chow mein
and trample on the waterchestnuts (TLS, 15)

McGough picks up on various social and cultural types for comic effect, linking contemporary Teddy Boys and early Vikings explorers in the same breath to create an extreme illustration of the cosmopolitan nature of the city.

The sheer quantity of trade – in terms of both goods and people – passing through Liverpool throughout the nineteenth century comes through in contemporary reports: there are certain words and phrases which appear over and over again. A chronological catalogue of my findings can be found in the Appendix (fig 1.2), but a few examples are worth presenting here to give an idea of the comments made by both visitors and natives. The report of Zangara, a freed slave writing in 1849, speaks of ‘astonishment’ at the scale of the port, ‘The immense buildings, and the perpetual *bustle*, almost bewildered my senses’.³⁴ Two German visitors also independently use this word: J. G. Kohl wrote in 1842 that ‘the noisy, *bustling* scene became a source of amusement and pleasurable excitement’ (MM5, 57), and Julius Rodenburg, ten years later, believed that ‘Nowhere can one get a better picture of the *bustle* of a port than here’ (BS, 85). When Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote of her experiences in this period she devotes much space to describing the ‘energy’ of various occupations, ending: ‘All is *bustle*, animation, exultation’ (MM1, 9-10, my italics throughout).

Beecher Stowe perfectly evokes the busy-ness of the nineteenth century port in her diary. Long sections are quoted in the *Mersey Minis* series, in the volume titled *Landing*, full of similar extracts from private letters and published works.³⁵ The extract from which I quote above is placed in *Landing* just after a piece from Paul Du Noyer, reproduced from his key recent work on music in the city, *Liverpool, Wondrous Place*:

Down by the Pier Head, at the foot of the Liver Building, the city *sips* at a river the colour of tea. At the landing stage the Mersey Ferry boats *bob*, *tenderly* crushing fat tractor tyres slung from rusty chains. Evening will arrive any minute now and it will

³⁴ From *Mersey Minis Volume 5: Leaving*, ed. by Deborah Mulhearn (Liverpool: Capsica, 2007), p. 90. Further references appear after quotations in the text as ‘MM5’.

³⁵ The *Mersey Minis* series consists of five volumes (alliteratively divided into Landing, Living, Longing, Loving, Leaving) and was published in 2007 to ‘celebrate Liverpool’s 800th anniversary’, as the back cover blurb to *Living* tells us. The books reproduce quotations from and about Liverpool, and are very much geared towards the Heritage Industry. This chapter quotes from both this series and Coles’ *Both Sides* as anthologies which have given me access to a wide range of public and private sources.

crown the whole scene with a huge tangerine sky. The cares of the day will be carried out to sea on a six-knot *ebb-tide*. Already you can hear a pub juke-box kick into life. Liverpool lights are coming on. And if the old are going home, the young are just getting started. The music is growing louder, and the first girl's shriek is about to pierce the *misty* air. This is a party town, and nothing gets in its way.

(*MM1*, 8-9, my italics)

Du Noyer is writing after the economic decline of the port, when the industry so admired by Beecher Stowe had disappeared all but completely. The word choices he makes ('sips', 'bobs', 'tenderly') emphasise the gentle nature of the river, while the calmness of this landing stage contrasts with the bustle which Beecher Stowe highlights.³⁶ This difference is even more obvious in the latter half of the passage where the quiet port is contrasted with the violence of the music scene, as in Du Noyer's choice of verbs such as 'kick' and 'pierce'. The bell which in the 1800s was 'always tolling' has here been replaced by music, 'growing louder'.

By contrast, there are also plenty of reports of both locals and visitors enjoying the docklands as a tourist attraction – in the nineteenth and early twentieth century it was the actual business of a functioning port which drew sightseers, rather than the modern incarnation, which has a Tate gallery and other attractions to draw crowds today. For example, Sarah Alice Scott, from Chester, records in her 1875 diary that she 'Went to Liverpool to see the docks & shipping', describing the 'wonderful sight' as 'a regular forest of ships' masts' (*BS*, 98).³⁷ John P. Reid, from Liverpool, remembers that the 'most exciting of our Sunday airings were undoubtedly those to the Landing Stage' (*BS*, 155), marking the docks as an attraction in themselves. Another visitor, the Reverend Francis Kilvert, writing in his diary for 20th June, 1872, similarly sees the Mersey as: 'almost crowded' with:

ships, barques, brigs, brigantines, schooners, cutters, colliers, tugs, steamboats, lighters, 'flats', everything from the huge emigrant liner steamship with four masts to the tiny sailing and rowing boat. (*BS*, 96)

The sheer diversity of the ships is figured by the Czech writer Karel Čapek, in a 1924 letter home:

there was something worth seeing ... puffing steam ferries, tug-boats, like pot-bellied, black hogs rocking on the waves, white Atlantic liners, docks, basins, towers, cranes, silos, elevators, smoking factories, stevedores, barks [barques], warehouses, wharves, casks, packing-cases, tubs, bales, chimneys, masts, rigging, trains, smoke, chaos, yelling, clanging, clattering, panting, rent bellies of ships, smell of horses, of sweat, of foul water and garbage from all parts of the earth.

³⁶ In fact, the word 'tender' itself perhaps suggests this tension, meaning gentle but also being a name of a type of tugboat that tends to larger ships.

³⁷ This forest trope is also mentioned on pages 22-3.

(MM1, 25)

Čapek's letter goes on to say that 'if I were to go on heaping up words for another half an hour I should not prove a match for that sum-total of quantity, confusion and extent which is called Liverpool' (MM1, 25). This layering of words on the page is used to represent a sense of the magnitude of the port and its ships. Such lists are also present in non-fiction works, such as Hyde's simple list of imports and exports,³⁸ Lane's extensive report on the uses of these by the companies of the docklands,³⁹ and Muir's explanation of the 'triangular trade'.⁴⁰

The ancient poetic device of lists to describe crowding, crowded themselves, occur frequently in writings about Liverpool, as in McGough's 'What does your father do?':

In dreams, I hear him naming the docks he knew and loved.
A mantra of gentle reproach: *Gladstone, Hornby, Alexandra,*
Langton, Brocklebank, Canada, Huskisson, Sandon, Wellington,

Bramley Moor, Nelson, Salisbury, Trafalgar, Victoria. (MCP, 16)

The 'mantra' of dock names is supplemented by a string of significant military terms. Gladys Mary Coles' 'Liners' works in much the same way, the alliterative 'liners, Liverpool leviathans' with their 'attendant tugs' are straightforwardly listed, the names emphasised visually by the use of italics again:

fleets of Cunard and White Star:
Carmania, Carpathia, Ascania,
Georgic, Britannic, Majestic.
Sea palaces, floating towns
with floating populations.
Graceful ocean greyhounds –
Mauretania, Media, Parthia,
Duchesses, white Empresses
*of France, Scotland, Canada.*⁴¹

Lists of ships and produce clearly show the extent of the reach Liverpool had in its heyday.⁴² Indeed, Hughes terms Liverpool 'a world city', looking out across the Atlantic as well as to the Eastern routes and the Pacific via its trade links, 'not parochial and introvert like the Yorkshire towns.'⁴³ Liverpoolians were used to exotic produce and souvenirs brought back

³⁸ See Hyde, pp. 2-3.

³⁹ See Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), pp. 42-3.

⁴⁰ See Muir, pp. 193-4.

⁴¹ Gladys Mary Coles, *Liverpool Folio* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1984), p. 21. The names of Cunard Line vessels always ended in the suffix 'ia' or later 'a'.

⁴² Lists are also important in Henri's work, as shall be discussed in Chapter Five, p. 188-91.

⁴³ Hughes, *Seaport*, p. x.

by sailors for their families long before the rest of the country would have been able to afford them. Kevin Male remembers one such specific item:

I had a mate of mine whose dad went away to sea, and he was mostly on the far eastern run, and he brought back a transistor radio. One day he came up with this thing, and I said what's that and he said it's a radio, and I was looking round for the plug, and I said if it's a radio where do you plug it in? He said it runs on batteries! ... It was like a caveman being shown fire! Must have been a year, two years, before I saw them in the shops.⁴⁴

John Cornelius also remembers that 'lots of kids' Dads were sailors', the contracted seamen who would return 'like a conquering hero, laden with presents': 'Smelling-things for the Mum, African masks, bamboo whistles that didn't whistle, all packed into that long bag slung over the shoulder.'⁴⁵ But the quotidian cultural life of the city was also strongly influenced by a particularly transatlantic phenomenon: one particular trade route is of more interest to the creation of the Merseybeat movement than any other.

THE CUNARD YANKS

The Liverpool waterfront has been linked to America by its architecture: the Dock Board Offices, the Cunard and Royal Liver Buildings are described by J. B. Priestley 'as if Liverpool had had so many peeps at New York's water-front that it felt it must do *something*'.⁴⁶ Priestley here implies that the city is looking outwards across the Atlantic, rather than inwards to the rest of the county and country. Indeed, the *dockfront* would have been the entrance to the city in its heyday, rather than the orientation which many will experience today, arriving via rail at Lime Street Station at the opposite side of the central city area. Many American companies used Liverpool as a terminus port or as a gateway to Europe, just as British companies shipped out from there to the rest of the world. There is not the negative implication of Matt Simpson's line 'The streets drag down to docks',⁴⁷ but rather, as Richard Passmore dryly notes, 'Whatever I had learned in my Latin class, in Liverpool all ways led to the Pier Head' (*MM5*, 37). The American liners, such as those of the Inman Line, would have taken over Princes Dock as their home (although today US container ships mainly dock at Royal Seaforth). The landing stage of the next door Pier

⁴⁴ Interview with Kevin Male, January 2011.

⁴⁵ John Cornelius, *Liverpool 8* (London: John Murray, 1982), p. 13-4.

⁴⁶ From *Mersey Minis Volume 2: Living*, ed. by Deborah Mulhearn (Liverpool: Capsica, 2007), p. 25. Further references appear after quotations in the text as '*MM2*'.

⁴⁷ Simpson, p. 50.

Head was, by the time of the childhoods of the Merseybeat poets, mostly reserved for ferry trade, and so perhaps the place most likely to have frequented by them.⁴⁸

For the people of Liverpool, the links to America were visually apparent in another way. The young men who worked on the transatlantic liners (mostly passenger ships) had direct contact with Americans, who, in the post-war period, were 'envied as being modern and stylish', and Lane notes that: 'American fashions were copied by Liverpool tailors from clothes brought by seamen on the Eastern seaboard of the USA'.⁴⁹ These men became known as 'Cunard Yanks', so-named after the major British shipping company and the specific influence of the cultural centre of New York as a major destination for the liners. For most of the UK, the cinema was the only link to American culture, but for those in ports such as Liverpool, what was happening on the big screen could be accessed in other ways by this audience.

There was a 'long-standing direct link' between Liverpool and the US through seamen who 'deserted, worked ashore on the waterfront in New York or Boston' and then signed on to a return voyage to their home city.⁵⁰ Pat O'Mara also mentions clothes as one particular influence of the American trade.⁵¹ He describes himself wearing his 'very English "American tailored" suit' and looking forward to getting across the sea to 'New York! New York of the plentiful, of the *real* American suits (not the preposterous Liverpool imitations he now wore), of the dance, of every thing he claimed to like best'.⁵² Working-class dandyism is an important trend in post-WWII culture, as a kick against tradition and traditional styles, and in a port city such as Liverpool access to such sartorial statements would have been common.⁵³ But there was also another phenomenon which the Cunard

⁴⁸ Aside from being a means of getting between Liverpool and Birkenhead, the ferries were also popular because of the bar on board. Once the ferry had left shore, it could not be raided, and so was often used as a place where one could reliably drink underage. The Philosophy in Pubs Members commented on this 'end to the night' in my interviews with them on 13 January 2011, in Liverpool.

⁴⁹ Lane, *Gateway of Empire*, p. 108.

⁵⁰ Lane, *City of the Sea*, p. 81.

⁵¹ Interestingly, Melville represents the opposite side of this transatlantic principle operating in the Victorian period, as *Redburn* tells us he would fall into 'reveries' about 'how I would bring home with me foreign clothes of a rich fabric, and princely make, and wear them up and down the streets, and how grocers' boys would turn back their heads to look at me' (*Redburn*, 45-6). Perhaps this indicates the shift in cultural power which occurred in the nineteenth century, from the British Empire's prominence to the USA's standing post-WWII.

⁵² O'Mara, p. 243, 293.

⁵³ See, for example, Robert Elms, *The Way We Wore: A Life in Threads* (London: Picador, 2006). Throughout his memoir Elms links music and fashion, discussing group identity formation and youth culture's use of fashion as a reaction against both the Establishment and other subcultural groups. In his introduction, he describes meeting a Liverpool lawyer at a party: 'We weren't just talking clothes, we were running through our shared youths, our communal experience of growing up as working-class urban boys in a culture where what you wore determined who you were' (Elms, p. 6).

Yanks brought back before it was available in the rest of Britain: the popular music. The musical side of Merseybeat will be dealt with in Chapter Four, but this phenomenon deserves exploration here.

Michael Brocken, in *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s*, believes that 'much hot air has been expended concerning the role of Cunard Yanks in the history of Liverpool's musical development',⁵⁴ especially by the producers of the film *Cunard Yanks*, whose synopsis states that these seamen 'were the direct link between the history of the Liverpool sound and the Beatles'.⁵⁵ Whilst this statement undoubtedly overstates the effect of the liner trade, much anecdotal evidence does exist for their influence. To suggest that this link is more than just 'hot air', *Cunard Yanks* incorporates original 8mm film shot by seamen in Liverpool and New York, including live music footage, showing what was actually available to – and consumed by – these men. The *Cunard Yanks* undeniably provided an important social link with American goods and attitudes, bringing their experiences directly to their families and friends back home. John McNally of the Searchers remembers that 'most people in Liverpool had some relation who went to sea and could bring record imports in',⁵⁶ and Country singer Charlie Landsborough (born in Birkenhead in 1941) says that 'My brothers were all sailors ... Apart from the guitars and all the music, they brought home gifts from all around the world'.⁵⁷ The Beatles connection may come from the fact that both John Lennon's and George Harrison's fathers worked on the liners. Indeed, Du Noyer believes that Jimmie Rodgers' 'Waiting for a Train' was 'among the records that George's seaman Dad brought back from New York – along with the machine to play them on – and it led the boys to take up guitar'.⁵⁸

Paul Farley appropriates the voice of one of the American sailors themselves in 'The Colonists', which gives one side of the story:

I had orders to land at Liverpool
and find dockside shebeens so the boys
could trade our shiny, ocean-worn 45s⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Michael Brocken, *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool's Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 111-112.

⁵⁵ *Cunard Yanks*, dir. by Dave Cotterill and Ian Lysaght, (Souled Out Films, 2007).

⁵⁶ Spencer Leigh, *Let's Go Down the Cavern: The Story of Liverpool's Merseybeat* (London: Vermillion, 1984), p. 30.

⁵⁷ Charlie Landsborough, cited in Sara Cohen, *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 84.

⁵⁸ Paul Du Noyer, *Liverpool Wondrous Place: From the Cavern to the Capital of Culture* (London: Virgin Books, 2007), p. 60. It must be noted, however, that John Lennon had little to do with his father whilst he was growing up.

⁵⁹ Paul Farley, *The Boy from the Chemist is Here to See You* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 18.

Farley's 'ocean-worn 45s', a reference to the EP record format (phased out in the 1960s but still popular with the Beatles), bring music to the foreground, and the poem continues:

each click was formed within a tilting swell,
each drizzle patch describes a squall of spray;
every disc is playing something else
beyond its backbeat and its middle eight ⁶⁰

With the benefit of hindsight, Farley gives the poem a twist at the end, referring to the Mersey Beat phenomenon of the 1960s which came from the influence of the '45s':

I told them how
a sound would fan out from this port one day,
how there'd be sea-lanes of bluejeans bound
for Minsk and Kiev, how records would burn
like bibles. But they only laughed.
One even asked if I'd take a *polygraph*.

I smiled – his use of that word in itself
meaning our B-movies were having some effect. ⁶¹

The idea that 'records would burn/ like bibles' probably refers (as this poem was written decades after the period it invokes) to Lennon's oft-quoted statement that the Beatles were bigger than Jesus and the subsequent burning of Beatles' records in the US. The last line here clearly references the cinema which, as mentioned above, was mainly how American culture infiltrated British society.

For Patten, in 'There Is A Boat Down By The Quay', it is the seamen themselves he recalls as part of this exchange, rather than what they brought back:

I knew its crew once,
Those boys manacled to freedom
Who set sail over half a century ago
And were like giants to me. (PSP, 163)

He is 'A solitary child in awe of oceans', who 'longed to be among them' (PSP, 163), even while he recognises the paradox of being addicted to this freedom. The poem continues:

I longed to be a part of them –
Those ghosts who set sail in my childhood,
Those phantoms who shaped me,
That marvellous crew for whom
I have stretched a simple goodbye
Out over a lifetime. (PSP, 163)

⁶⁰ Farley, p. 18.

⁶¹ Farley, p. 18-9.

The last couplet stretches that farewell metaphor into his relationship to Liverpool, the city he left quite early in his career but has not been able to divorce himself from.

As the Cunard Yanks and other merchant seamen shaped Patten's childhood, so too did they shape that of many Liverpudlians mid-twentieth century. www.cunardyanks.org is a website devoted to recording the stories of these generations of young men, and the memories here often refer to the clubs in New York and the music heard there. Importantly, they also record 'coming home to the local dance and regaling all the boys with exploits'.⁶² A 1998 BBC programme about the music scene in 1960s Liverpool – *Whole Lotta Money*, presented by Zoot Money, which McGough contributed to – makes this link explicit. Money tells the audience that: 'Liverpool's merchant seamen were the first to bring back jazz and blues records from America. The passenger liners and cotton trade saw to that' (McGough/13/2/55). This is backed up in print by George Melly's reference to British jazz musicians who 'had heard bop live in New York during their shore leaves while serving in Geraldo's navy ... Geraldo, a pre-war band leader, had the contract to supply bands for the transatlantic liners after the war.'⁶³ References to the music of the time usually cite the American connection, as in Hampson's 'st thomas st: requiem & blues':

irish
country & western

black music
brought back
from america

(*Seaport*, 49)

The poem has another period indicator in the title, '1. another mirror: 1962-65', as well as the apparent instruction that the poem is 'for guitars and harmonica' (*Seaport*, 49), further heightening the music's importance and tying it to a particular phase of music-making in Liverpool.

Tony Crane of the Mersey Beats talks in the Zoot Money programme mentioned above about buying records to learn how to cover them, to play at the dance halls, records 'by small independent American labels which you couldn't get in anywhere else in the country. It's because it was a port and they were coming in off the ships' (McGough/13/2/55). There were other ways, however, in which the city's port acted as a musical stimulus. Many American performers started their British tours in Liverpool, either simply because that was

⁶² Jackie Samuels, <http://www.cunardyanks.org/Tall%20Tales6.htm> [accessed 22 March 2011]. It must be noted that the Cunard Yanks website has named the memoir section 'Tall Tales', implying they might not be entirely believable.

⁶³ George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in the 50s and 60s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 24.

where their ships docked or because they were contracted to entertain the US airmen at Burtonwood. Similarly, Liverpudlians also had access to the American Forces Network radio. What is significant about the anecdotes mentioned above is that the American products that were available to them would not have been so readily available for their contemporaries elsewhere in the UK.

Whilst Spencer Leigh's study of Mersey Beat bands' cover versions of American music found that (contrary to Tony Crane's memory quoted above) the songs they used were available in the UK,⁶⁴ it does not make the Cunard Yanks' involvement any less real or important in the day-to-day life of Liverpudlians. The Country & Western musician Les Johnson thinks that 'There must have been a market for this stuff – the Cunard Yanks were supplying a real need ... bringing things that were already known but might be a little difficult to get your hands on.'⁶⁵ The suggestion here is that it was more a case of the Cunard Yanks shipping to order rather than bringing in the vinyl equivalent of the exotica Cornelius remembers (mentioned above). In fact, it was almost certainly a combination of the two aspects, especially as communal listening between neighbours was prevalent in the city.⁶⁶

The obvious visual presence of the Cunard Yanks came too from their clothes. 'st thomas st: requiem & blues' tells the reader 'how hip/ we were' (*Seaport*, 49), showing a self-conscious concern for style. The self-awareness is also evident in the tales of the Cunard Yanks. One recalls 'the gear', a Scouse idiom for clothes:

Every colour and shade in the rainbow, stripes, checks, herringbone, if it wasn't in New York it didn't exist. Shirts, I remember pressing my nose against Harry Cotler's window, full of just shirts, every shade of blue, pink, yellow, grey, red, oh yes, and white ones too. Tie City, 1000's of ties, cuff links. With our mohair suits, pin-tab or Mr B shirts (remember them?) Slim Jim ties, Ox blood moccasins, Thom McCann's of course, we thought we looked like Sinatra or Curtis, okay so we could dream, but dressed up in Yankee gear we were halfway there.⁶⁷

Specific clothes and music are also given precedence in 'you can't dance to art', which Hampson subtitles '(merseybeat 1962-64)'. After evoking the 'chord/ A minor' played via a:

tiny amp
Vox AC30
(amp &

⁶⁴ See Spencer Leigh, 'Growing up with the Beatles', in *The Beat Goes On: Liverpool, Popular Music, and the Changing City*, ed. by Marion Leonard and Robert Strachan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), pp. 28-42, p. 35.

⁶⁵ Les Johnson, cited in Brocken, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Music, both in Liverpool and for this movement, will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

⁶⁷ Unnamed correspondent, <http://www.cunardyanks.org/Tall%20Tales.htm> [accessed 22 March 2011].

speaker
combined) (*Seaport*, 48)⁶⁸

His short poem then turns to fashion, with the guitarist wearing a ‘collarless/jacket’ and ‘cuban-heeled/ boot’ (*Seaport*, 48), a style which marks the subject of this poem as belonging to this specific era. Hampson’s ending comments on ‘the simplicity’ (*Seaport*, 48) of both the music and the fashion, although this line could equally refer to his content and to the rendering. The poem clearly evokes a particular period of time, but the short lines and the fine line breaks mean that each word or phrase appears as equally important on the page.

‘Poem’ by Mike Evans (who was a member of the Mersey Beat band The Clayton Squares and Henri’s The Liverpool Scene), begins by evoking the industrial side of the port in the city:

The black-walled streets
will never be
the same
 again
the oily rains
that wash
the pavements
from Pierhead to Central
anoint me (*TLS*, 53)

Like ‘you can’t dance to art’, the love poem continues with precise references to the fashions and music of this specific time and place:

Now I wear
a button-down
 heart
with her love
 on the
 inside
and a beat
 you can
 twist
to. (*TLS*, 53)

Button-down shirts were an American invention mainly used by sports players until the 1950s when the casual style came into fashion in America (and then subsequently

⁶⁸ The AC30 was actually designed by Vox as a more powerful version of the original AC15 (15 watt) amplifier. The AC30 weighed 60.94 lbs, standing 21.25” tall, whereas the AC15 weighed 47.62lbs, and was 17.32” tall. It is likely that Hampson has confused the two, using the name of the later amp when meaning the earlier, more portable, version. (Source: www.voxamps.com/customclassic/ac30cc/ and www.voxamps.com/customclassic/ac15cc/ and technical support contact [accessed 22 March 2011].)

Liverpool), and the heartbeat probably refers to a dance which was banned in some Northern dance halls for being too provocative.⁶⁹

The ‘smart-suited, style-setting Cunard Yanks’⁷⁰ were also a source of other popular cultural items to Liverpool, such as comic books. American freight runs often included bales of comics as ballast on the journey to Liverpool, or carried orders placed by the American servicemen and their families stationed at bases such as Burtonwood. During the first half of the twentieth century there was a marked difference between American comics and British ones. The contemporary terminology highlights this: we have American ‘comic books’, versus British ‘funny pages’. In America, it was the Golden Age of superheroes, and – unaffected by paper rationing during the Second World War – they were usually full colour and included advertisements for all manner of exciting products alien to British shores.⁷¹ Patten recalls the American comics as having ‘the intensity of stained glass windows’ against which ‘*The Beano* or *The Dandy* seemed insipid to me’.⁷² Kevin Male particularly cites the advertisements as a draw: ‘I think the best thing about them was the adverts, these amazing things they seemed to have in America’.⁷³ Typical ads changed little over the period relevant here, although in the 1950s a Comics Code curtailed excessive advertisements and controlled what could be printed, leaving two main categories, ‘first, toys, gadgets, and trinkets that one could obtain through the mail ... second, there were correspondence courses’.⁷⁴

For the Merseybeat poets, whose poems are full of vivid visual imagery, these comics were a normal part of their childhood as well as later becoming ironised and ‘cool’. In addition, the Batman image was circulated in Liverpool itself outside of the comic book realm, as a result of the Adam West TV show. For example, the image was appropriated for a variety of everyday advertisements, such as for Cousins’ pies: ‘ABC TV’s Batman cometh with Steak

⁶⁹ ‘The Twist’ dance came from the song of the same name, originally released by Hank Ballard in 1959, but popularised by Chubby Checker the next year.

⁷⁰ John Belchem and Donald Macraid, ‘Cosmopolitan Liverpool’, in *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 311-92, p. 388.

⁷¹ See two facsimile collections of advertisements are Miles Beller and Jerry Leibowitz, *Hey Skinny! Great Advertisements from the Golden Age of Comic Books* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995), and Kirk Demarais, *Mail-Order Mysteries: Delightful Treasures from Vintage Comic Book Ads* (San Rafael: Insight Editions, 2011). Steve Conley also has an online collection of old advertisements, including ‘testimonials’ from members of the public listing what they themselves remember: www.steveconley.com/comicads.htm [accessed 22 March 2011].

⁷² Brian Patten, ‘Extracts from Memoir’ in *The Reader*, 46 (2012), pp. 19-24, p. 23.

⁷³ Interview with Kevin Male, January 2011.

⁷⁴ Jean-Paul Gabilliet, *Of Comics and Men: A Cultural History of American Comic Books* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010), p. 135. This chapter (pp. 134-138) also includes a chart describing the evolution of the number of advertisement pages in comic books 1938-1943.

and Kidney pies, one of Cousins' meaty tasty hot lines' reads the advert in a shop window which Henri and McGough are nonchalantly leaning against in *The Liverpool Scene* (fig 1.3), and both wrote poems about this superhero, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Jeff Nuttall includes comic books in his list of what he deems popular culture: 'original comic-book super-heroes, of SPLAT and BAM and ZOWIE'.⁷⁵ Patten's 'Little Johnny's Confession' contains no KA-POWs, but the police report does ask:

Have you seen him,
He is seven years old,
likes Pluto, Mighty Mouse
and Biffo The Bear (TMS1, 96)

This is, tellingly, a mix of American and British comic book characters, all of whom Patten himself would have been aware of as a seven year old in Sefton.⁷⁶ The bundles of comics which the transatlantic ships used for ballast ended up discarded on the dockside, abandoned for anyone to take, but the popularity of these American comics was also made into a business opportunity for one Lodge Lane newsagent, as Kevin Male remembers:

There used to be this newsagent at the top of Lodge Lane and he used to sell all the American comics – the Superman, the Green Lantern... I think he had a son or he knew people who went overseas, they'd bring shelf-loads of these things back, they were in no particular order but you didn't care. You know you'd maybe buy one January 1961 and the next one May 1962, but you didn't really care, you just wanted superheroes.⁷⁷

It didn't matter that they were often out of date, out of sequence, and had the price in cents on the cover; these comics were part of the childhood of many children in the dockside and Toxteth areas.

For Patten, comics, the cinema, and US TV imports are representative of childhood innocence, and he is conscious that those 'celluloid companions', met in the 'sixpenny childhood seats' (TMS1, 97), have deserted him now as an adult:

We killed them all simply because we grew up;
We made them possible with our uneducated minds
And with our pocket money⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 23.

⁷⁶ Disney's Pluto is Mickey Mouse's dog; Mighty Mouse an American cartoon, and was later part of a comic strip; Biffo the Bear featured in the British comic *The Beano*.

⁷⁷ Interview with Kevin Male, January 2011.

⁷⁸ Brian Patten, *Little Johnny's Confession* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), p. 21. Further references appear after quotations in the text as 'LJC'.

‘Where are you now, Batman?’, which appears in *The Mersey Sound*, exists alongside ‘Where are you now Superman?’, printed in his first solo collection *Little Johnny’s Confession*. The ‘Superman’ poem also appears, with very minor differences, in *The Liverpool Scene* anthology, published the same year as *The Mersey Sound*. The themes are clearly important enough to Patten, in the mid-1960s, to have produced two similar works.⁷⁹ Patten is much younger than the other two Merseybeat poets, being 21 in 1967 compared to 30 and 35, as McGough and Henri were respectively. His childhood was closer to him, much fresher in his memory than that of the other two, who had both been to university and been in employment, placing some distance between themselves and their childhood selves. In fact, when introducing ‘Where are you now, Batman?’ for the Penguin Audio Cassette, Patten sets the poem up as being connected to the cinema of his youth, by saying: ‘At the top of the street in which I lived as a kid, there was a cinema called The Magnet. I’d go there every Saturday morning to watch the serials. This is a poem remembering that time.’⁸⁰ Patten also fuses comic book and cinema characters in his works, remembered from his childhood, whereas McGough and Henri (in ‘Goodbat Nightman’ and ‘Batpoem’, discussed in Chapter Four) use a specific representation of Batman which they experienced as adults, rather than recalling characters from their own childhood period.

Patten’s opening question – ‘Where are you now, Batman? Now that Aunt Heriot has reported Robin missing’ (*TMS1*, 97) – is interesting. Robin’s aunt is called Harriet in the ABC TV series. This misnaming could be a mishearing or a misremembering. However, the sense in both poems of removal from such childhood characters suggests a deliberate misnaming (especially as the ABC TV series was contemporaneous to the time of writing). He ponders here ‘Must all be deaf... or dead...’ (*TMS1*, 97), subtly changed in ‘Superman’ to simply ‘Must be all dead’ (*LJC*, 20): whilst the first example is tempered by the indecisive use of the ellipsis, the second example gives a real sense of finality, cutting the ties between his childhood companions and his adult self.

Childhood characters are also used to represent lost innocence in ‘Bang’ by Mike Evans, printed in *The Liverpool Scene* anthology:

⁷⁹ The differences are that the *LJC* version contains no breaks, presenting the poem as one unit instead of the four stanzas in *TLS*. Superman fails to find new ‘roles’ in *LJC*, ‘parts’ in *TLS*. In *LJC*, ‘we believe’ the adult world is more real, whereas in *TLS* ‘we are convinced’ it is so (*LJC*, pp. 20-1, *TLS*, pp. 26-7).

⁸⁰ Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *The Mersey Sound*, prod. by Richard Carrington (Penguin Audiobooks, 0140865357, 1997).

And I never stopped
 running
 from the day they told me
 the cowboys and indians
 at the
 bottom
 of my garden
 were all
 dead.

(TLS, 34)

There is a link here between the Country music which is so important in the musical development of the city (see Chapter Four) and the cinematic trend of the 1950s for Westerns, which were shown in Liverpool cinemas, as well as the traditional children's game of 'Cowboys and Indians'. The idea of the speaker running also recalls Patten's 'Little Johnny' sequence, as Johnny is a fugitive on the run from the police due to his actions. The police report of 'Little Johnny's Confession' mentioned earlier cites his favourite cartoon characters, while the poem 'Little Johnny takes a trip to another planet' is evocative of Flash Gordon's adventures, a serial shown at the Saturday matinee.

For *The Liverpool Scene*, Edward Lucie-Smith made the editorial decision to place the three poets' superhero poems one after another: Patten's accusatory 'Where are you now, Superman?' is followed by McGough's parody 'Goodbat Nightman', culminating with the political challenge of Henri's 'Batpoem'. This superhero imagery also appears on the front cover of *The Liverpool Scene* – see fig 1.4. The cover briefs for the original edition of *The Mersey Sound*, mentioned in the Introduction for their marketing strategy, which are held in the Bristol Penguin Archive Project, also pick up on the superhero theme, specifically wanting 'something alive and rowdy and pop' which refers to the 'highly popular' images the team see in the poets' work: 'Batman, the Liverpool scene, suspender belts, etc.'⁸¹

Marketing aside, what the use of superheroes and comic books shows is that, as shall be seen throughout this thesis, the Merseybeat poets are drawn to images and ideas which they can share with their audience in the full knowledge of the audience's recognition and understanding. And more than this, the real importance of the Batman and Superman image is that it is representative of the crossmedia urge. Henri, McGough, and Patten all take inspiration from characters originating in comic books or on the screen, and use these within their own work, be it literary or musical, to further new ideas. Henri's poem 'Batpoem' exists as a printed work, but also is transformed into a more obviously politically nuanced piece through use of a contemporary – iconic – American TV series figure as a

⁸¹ Cover Brief, 3 October 1966, Penguin Archives at Bristol University, DM 1107 / D 103.

representative of America. McGough's parody of the same comic book superhero also aligns his poem with the TV version but also contrasts this contemporary TV show with traditional English nursery lullaby form. Patten's poem works visually on the page to represent the same techniques as comic book letterers, as well as conjuring up a very specific set of screen icons. There is also an ironic engagement with the ABC TV show as contemporary popular culture, which functions as a comment on the display of Americana brought into the city by the Cunard Yanks and through television and cinema.

Thus, while Liverpool has long been a stopping-off point for a wide spectrum of transient visitors, immigrants and emigrants, it is particularly the seamen who docked and spent time (and money) in port who had a clear impact on the city. However, of all the sailors, it was the Cunard Yanks who have had the greatest impact. John Belchem uses the term 'cultural implant'⁸² to refer to the goods which the Cunard Yanks brought back. The clothes and the music were two very obvious indicators of a person's social identity. Paradoxically, the emphasis here is on local identity achieved through transatlantic borrowing: these were local working-class men bringing home new material goods and also a stance appropriated in the more socially informal cities of North America. However, as Sara Cohen suggests, although the Cunard Yanks were important, there were plenty of other ways in which Liverpoolians had access to American popular culture.⁸³ The AFN and Burtonwood base, as mentioned previously, are the most important in terms of musical integration of the two cultures, but there was also the cinema, newspapers and magazines, and the post-World War Two influx of American advertising. These were also ways in which the entire country began to encounter American culture. Nevertheless, in Liverpool the impact was on the streets, in the people, on a quotidian level. In fact, in the aptly-titled *Gateway of Empire*, Lane recognizes that the importance of the idea of the sailor is 'hard to exaggerate': in a city 'saturated with port activity it is not so surprising that the idealized seafarer should come to be regarded as the ultimate expression of what it meant to be a man'.⁸⁴

LIVERPOOL 8

Whereas Henri grew up in Birkenhead, Patten was brought up in the city itself, in Wavertree and Sefton, leaving school aged 15 to work on the *Bootle Times*. At 17, in 1963, he moved to an attic in Canning Street, Liverpool 8, and it was from here that he became a crucial part

⁸² John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool Exceptionalism*, rev. edn. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 61.

⁸³ See Cohen, *Decline*, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁴ Lane, *Gateway of Empire*, p. 10.

of the poetry scene of the 1960s. The attic appears in some early Patten poems, such as ‘After Breakfast’, where he has:

... coffee and a view
Of teeming rain and the Cathedral old and grey but
Smelling good with grass and ferns (TMS1, 99)

His new status, suggested by him having his own room with a view, is also reflected in the reference to ‘coffee’, which was still rare in Liverpool at this time, and is associated with a certain kind of lifestyle, that of bohemians and students.⁸⁵ McGough tells the reader of this lifestyle, referring to the ‘the young Beats in the city’s coffee bars’, explicitly stating that the ‘most exciting’ coffee bars:

were the ones that stayed open late and catered for students, artists and the beatniks who were appearing on the scene, the Masque, the Picasso, the Basement, run by a local painter Yenkel Feather, and best of all, Streate’s.⁸⁶

Whilst Liverpool as a whole is clearly a contributing factor to the creation of the movement, it is the specific area around this social scene which influenced the poets. This area, east of the city centre, was – and is now officially – called Toxteth (from the parkland which can be seen on thirteenth century maps), but the poets consistently use the contemporary postcode term to claim and create their own space.⁸⁷

The built environment of Liverpool 8 was a ‘district of beautiful, fading, decaying Georgian terrace houses’ (TLS, 13) when the Merseybeat poets experienced it, but owed its creation to rich shipping magnate families during the early nineteenth century. As we have seen, the city is bound up with the port: it is money from shipping that built it and shipping that sustained it. Quentin Hughes’s 1969 survey describes Canning Street, where both Henri and Patten lived in the 1960s, as ‘typical of many once-fine Georgian streets which stretch across the hillside east of the Anglican Cathedral’.⁸⁸ Considering the date when this book was published, it is perhaps inevitable that Hughes continues:

This is the famous Liverpool 8, once peopled by rich merchants and now the flats of artists, poets and students – a variegated cosmopolitan area of some character. The pattern continues along Percy Street (No. 28), Huskisson Street, Catherine Street,

⁸⁵ McGough’s ‘first cappuccino’, in ‘El Cabala, a glass-fronted, airy café on Bold Street’, is considered a significant moment, both because of its novelty and for what it represents of this lifestyle (McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* [London: Random House, 2005], p. 142).

⁸⁶ McGough, *Said*, p. 142-3.

⁸⁷ See fig 1.5 for a 1965 map of the area, with postcode boundaries, and fig 1.6 for Cornelius’s sketch of the area, with certain important places marked.

⁸⁸ Quentin Hughes, *Liverpool (City Buildings Series)* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), p. 49.

Falkner Square and Upper Parliament Street to eventual oblivion in the twilight zones.⁸⁹

The last comment is telling. The ‘twilight zones’ are the crowded peri-urban streets which make up much of the postcode further away from the city centre. In recent critical writings, the area has been quite clearly labelled as a ‘bohemian, multicultural district’,⁹⁰ ‘the bohemian district’,⁹¹ and even a ‘mythologised bohemian quarter’.⁹² Phil Bowen’s first reference to the area in his biography of the scene is that: ‘in the fifties, with the exception of Soho, the place for any Aspirational painter, poet, musician, bohemian or “bon viveur” on a tight budget was Liverpool 8’.⁹³ Henri states that: ‘the reason I moved back to Liverpool in 1956 was because it was an artists’ town, cheap to live in’, and, although it did have ‘a thriving bohemia based on the inner-city Georgian/Victorian area’ of Liverpool 8, it was primarily socioeconomic factors which led him there on his return from Art School in Durham (*LA*, 35). The two factors feed off each other: the area is cheap to live in, and near to the Art School, so attracts artists, which creates a certain scene; then because there is a certain scene, more artists are attracted to it. Liverpool 8 was incredibly important for the Merseybeat poets, as Henri says: ‘I cannot imagine what it would have been like to be a poet and not live here; or, indeed, whether I would have become a poet at all’ (*LA*, 38).

One of the reasons that Liverpool 8 was so important was that the poets not only lived but also performed there. Most of the pubs, clubs, and cafés they socialised in were within ‘their’ quarter, or easily accessible in the city centre which abuts this district. Henri, who has many poems with similar titles to ‘Poem for Liverpool 8’, links the social aspect of the area with the local geography. He is:

drunk jammed in the tiny bar in The Cracke
drunk in the crowded cutglass Philharmonic
drunk in noisy Jukebox O’Connor’s (A, 31)

As the poem continues the reader also encounters ‘drunken lintels falling architraves/ Georgian pediments peeling above toothless windows’ (A, 32) which automatically link the

⁸⁹ Hughes, *Liverpool*, p. 49.

⁹⁰ Jon Murden, “‘City of Change and Challenge’: Liverpool Since 1945’, in Belchem, *800*, pp. 393-487, p. 426.

⁹¹ Sam Gathercole, ‘Facts and Fictions: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde in the late 196-0s and 70s’, in *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Christopher Grunenberg and Robert Knifton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 134-155, p. 136.

⁹² Darren Pih, ‘Liverpool’s Left Bank’, in Grunenberg and Knifton, pp. 112-133, p. 114.

⁹³ Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 35.

architecture back to the social practice of the earlier section. Yet these venues are not in Liverpool 8, despite Henri's title.⁹⁴

J. Hillis Miller's *Topographies* tells us that the 'power of the conventions of mapping and of the projection of place names on the place are so great that we see the landscape as though it were already a map'.⁹⁵ The Merseybeat poets clearly map their territory, but their 'Liverpool 8' is not the same as the official district or postcode boundary. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau makes a distinction between *place* and *space*, that place becomes space when practiced, when used. This is exactly what the Merseybeat movement do, detailing their relationships with and within the city to create the social space of Liverpool 8. The dust jacket of Henri's 1969 *City* (designed by Lawrence Edwards) is a visual representation of this (fig 1.8). The title 'City' is not in type but rather picked out by block-highlighting parts of the streets to form the letters. The streets on the *City* jacket cover much of the area important to Henri, including the addresses of the three venues mentioned above: Rice Street is just above the bowl of the 'y' of 'city', Hope Street runs along the tail of the 'y', and Hardman Street runs along the top of the word, across the opening of the 'y'. The area also includes two of Henri's homes, the first, 24 Faulkner Square, and the second, 64 Canning Street, are both just to the right of the 'y'. The cover subtly indicates that the city means that district, as the map focuses on this area rather than, say, the city centre, or a less detailed overview. This is continued in the poem, which includes loco-specific references to Liverpool 8, such as hearing 'schoolgirl hymnsinging voices into the mist outside Blackburne House' (C, 8), as well as those references to everyday life in the city which are not explicit, such as 'walking with the dog along the early September already winter promenade' (C, 4), but which are clearly Liverpool-based.

What is also significant about the map area chosen is that it encompasses the area north of the official postcode of Liverpool 8. In his book – succinctly titled *Liverpool 8* – John Cornelius described the three venues quoted previously (Ye Cracke, The Philharmonic, and O'Connor's Tavern) as 'this fantastic three-cornered social scene' that he found as an art student during the height of the Merseybeat movement. He continues:

Liverpool 8, although only a mile from the city centre, was like a small enclosed village where everyone knew everyone else and few people strayed socially from a handful of regular drinking haunts.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Ye Cracke, 13 Rice Street, L1, The Philharmonic, 36 Hope Street, L1; O'Connor's Tavern, 12 Hardman Street, L1.

⁹⁵ Miller, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Cornelius, p. 34.

But this village is a shift from the literal place of Liverpool 8 to the social space of ‘Liverpool 8’. The physical places of the scene were used not simply to ground the poems in a geographical reality, they also function as a way of recoding the audience’s access to the city. Henri Lefebvre’s definition of social space, as discussed in *The Production of Space*, specifies that it is about relationships – ‘a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things’,⁹⁷ and, by using these literal places to imply a personal connection, the social space of Liverpool 8 is created. Cornelius is specifically referencing pubs and bars, and does not mention the cafés discussed earlier, but it is the social nature of the meeting places which is most important, and the claiming of them as belonging to a certain group of people. The Merseybeat ‘Liverpool 8’ is created from within, ignoring the official boundaries in favour of their own. The poets place importance on some places over others, appropriating parts of the actual topographical place to confer status on their area.⁹⁸

This, then, is the area which Henri describes in his poem ‘Liverpool 8’ in *The Liverpool Scene* anthology, referring to ‘streets named after Victorian elder statesmen like Huskisson’.⁹⁹ There are also references to the two cathedrals, which show what he considers to be a part of the eponymous Liverpool 8, although the ‘new Cathedral at the end of Hope Street’, the Roman Catholic one, is actually in Liverpool 3, and the Anglican one ‘which dominates our lives’ is on the border where Liverpool 8 meets Liverpool 1. This sense of ownership is repeated again as the Cathedral is seen as ‘towering over the houses my friends live in’, placing his own social life firmly alongside the geographical details (*TLS*, 13). Henri also used Liverpool 8 literally in his paintings: ‘I did a series of assemblage-paintings called collectively “Liverpool 8”, after the postal address of the district we lived and worked in, using the detritus, the textures, the graffiti and advertising hoardings of the area’ (*LA*, 35).¹⁰⁰ In another poem connected with his life as a painter, ‘I Want to Paint’, Henri also uses specifically named places, such as wanting to paint ‘Enormous pictures of every pavingstone in Canning Street’ (*TMS1*, 51), or: ‘Père Ubu drunk at 11 o’clock at night in Lime Street’ (*TMS1*, 52). Henri also wrote a short poem/play, titled ‘Père Ubu in Liverpool’, where the protagonist is ‘discovered walking round the corner of Lewis’s’ (*TLS*, 64). In response to the question ‘Where are we?’, ‘The Bird’ says simply ‘Oh! Lewis’s.’ (*TLS*, 65). In a handwritten copy of the work, Henri has drawn the famous Epstein statue, Ubu, and The Bird, complete with an illustration of how ‘the rain drips off ’is thingie’ (*TLS*, 65) that The Bird giggles at

⁹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 83.

⁹⁸ See also fig 1.7, a map of the area with the boundaries of the social space of their ‘Liverpool 8’ delineated.

⁹⁹ A statue of Huskisson stood in St. James’s cemetery, mere streets away from Henri’s homes in this period, moved to the Walker Art Gallery in 1968. See Hughes, *Seaport*, pp. 162-3 on this.

¹⁰⁰ See fig 1.9, *Autumn* and *Winter* from the *Liverpool 8 Four Seasons Painting*, with found objects.

(fig 1.10). The stage direction for Scene Two is Hardman Street, where ‘Père Ubu is seen toiling up the hill’ (*TLS*, 66), and where Ubu gets into an altercation with some Mods standing outside the Sink Club, which was indeed at 45 Hardman Street.

McGough’s *Frinck* (1967), a semi-autobiographical fantasy of a young man becoming a popstar,¹⁰¹ is full of these same real places – specifically ‘Ye Cracke (a pub)’ which ‘lay not 5 thirsty minutes away from his unpretentious commonorgarden flat’¹⁰², or ‘the Philharmonic (his nightly rendezvous)’.¹⁰³ Arriving in the latter, Frinck feels ‘Home at last’:

The Phil was crowded as usual. Students, businessmen, nogoodboyos, beats, doctors, outofworks; one of those rare places in fact where people of varied glasses congregate. A watershed of social togetherness, as they would say imbibical times. A pint-sized palace of walnut, frosted glass and mosaic where they changed the barmaids as often as they changed the dishcloths.¹⁰⁴

The wordplay (which has its sources in Dylan Thomas and e. e. cummings) is typical of the style which would come to epitomise the Scaffold, and also appears in the writings of John Lennon, such as *Spaniard in the Works*. *Frinck* is another example of Merseybeat work which gives what Peter Barry refers to in *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* as ‘cartographic precision’,¹⁰⁵ but also utilises the extra-textual Cultural Code, the ‘circumambient cultural geography’,¹⁰⁶ to emphasise the sense of place. Liverpool 8 functions as both a backdrop for, and an active character in, the Merseybeats’ work.

An important part of this social world was clearly the pubs. Mike McCartney praises the Liverpool pub’s ideal of ‘social togetherness’:

Anywhere else in the world, people naturally divide up into their ‘own kind’ when it comes to drinking. Artists to ‘arty’ bars, city gents to ‘gentle’ bars, pop people to popular bars etc. ... but not in Liverpool.¹⁰⁷

Patten also tells us, in ‘Friends’, that ‘I met them in bars and in railway stations/ And I met them in borrowed rooms and at bright gatherings’ (*PSP*, 46). The reference to the railway stations here again broadens the territory out from the postcode area of Liverpool 8 into the

¹⁰¹ It is interesting that McGough wrote this novella pre-Scaffold, imagining (and satirising) the heady delights of meeting one’s agent and travelling to London to record, rather than be able to draw on his own experiences.

¹⁰² Roger McGough, *Frinck A life in the day of / Summer with Monika* (London: Michael Joseph, 1967), p. 9.

¹⁰³ McGough, *Frinck*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ McGough, *Frinck*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁵ Barry, p. 48-9.

¹⁰⁶ Barry, p. 158.

¹⁰⁷ McCartney, *Thank U Very Much*, p. 107.

city centre.¹⁰⁸ Patten has chosen specifically social spaces – ‘bars’, ‘rooms’, ‘gatherings’ – which are again part of everyday urban life. This social normality is particularly important to the movement, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three, as the direct relationship with the audience is fostered by not only the content of the poems but also the places in which they were reading – exactly the same bars and bright gatherings to which Patten refers.

The poetry-and-jazz scene began, as discussed in the Introduction, in Streate’s Coffee Bar, on May Street (off Mount Street, again not in Liverpool 8). When the Merseybeat poets distanced themselves from the poetry-and-jazz scene there they chose Sampson & Barlow’s on London Road, and later there was The Liverpool Scene residency at O’Connor’s Tavern (which had the regular public bar on the ground floor and ‘upstairs, slightly more restrained avant-garde music and poetry evenings’,¹⁰⁹ although Paul Morley suggests that this distinction was less rigid, with ‘long haired rough spoken poets wandering into O’Connor’s and screaming their poems above the bar noise’¹¹⁰). There were also pre-Scaffold ‘late-night comedy sketch shows at the Blue Angel Club on the Friday’,¹¹¹ and, within Liverpool 8 itself, evenings at the Hope Hall (later to become the Everyman Theatre).¹¹² The sheer number of events and venues during this time shows the importance of the live performance and explains the emphasis on performance and aural experience within this poetry.

Whilst these venues are not all, strictly speaking, in Liverpool 8, they are within easy reach of the so-called ‘bohemian quarter’, the area surrounding Hope Street and the Art School and University. By claiming these venues physically but also talking about them in the poems performed there, we can see what de Certeau described as ‘spatial stories’ emerging.¹¹³ There is ‘a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal’,¹¹⁴ as the poets, using their own voices and their own experiences, seek to ground themselves even further in the area via the content of the poems as well as the context. By name-checking certain streets and venues the poets situate themselves in a specific place, but ‘Liverpool 8’ was also a short-hand for a cultural experience and the home of a certain scene.

¹⁰⁸ There are no railway stations, suburban or mainline, within Liverpool 8.

¹⁰⁹ Cornelius, p. 36.

¹¹⁰ Paul Morley, ‘Liverpool Surreal’, in Grunenberg and Knifton, pp. 40-55, p. 50.

¹¹¹ McGough, *Said*, p. 154.

¹¹² O’Connor’s Tavern, home to Wednesday nights hosted by The Liverpool Scene, was on Hardman Street. A great number of key venues for a number of Liverpool’s music scenes have existed around Hardman Street, see discussion and map in Brett Lashua, Sara Cohen, and John Scofield, ‘Popular music, mapping, and the characterization of Liverpool’, *Popular Music History*, 4.2 (2010), 126-144, p. 136-7.

¹¹³ de Certeau, p. 115.

¹¹⁴ de Certeau, p. 105.

In one of Henri's love poems Liverpool 8 is seen as a hub of creativity with links to major figures in the arts: 'William Burroughs sits dunking Pound Cake in coffee waiting for the last connection', 'Kurt Schwitters smiles as he picks up the two pink bus tickets/ we have just thrown away', and 'Parker blows another chorus of Loverman for us', to name just three examples from this poem (*TMS1*, 40).¹¹⁵ This is also an intensely personal poem of place, as Henri is using his cultural heroes to bless his relationship with Heather Holden, one of his art students at the Manchester Art College. In fact, Henri's way of appropriating his heroes and bringing them into his work will be seen as an important theme throughout this thesis. Many of the artists listed throughout this particular poem have firm links with Paris in the 1890s. Kevin Male, slightly younger than these poets, but a keen observer of the scene, also compares this period to that era.¹¹⁶ Henri is invoking the figures of early modernism to perhaps suggest something similarly important is happening in his own time. Indeed, in his essay to the catalogue for a 1997 exhibition of Henri's artwork of the 1960s, George Melly described Liverpool 8 as 'the Liverpoolian equivalent of Montmartre at the turn of the century'.¹¹⁷ Both this poem and 'Entry' also recall the poetry of Frank O'Hara, particularly his lunch-time poems such as 'The Day Lady Died', on the death of Billie Holiday. O'Hara's poems are full of references to artists (although these are usually still alive, and include his friends and colleagues from the New York MOMA, whereas in Henri's work they tend to be dead artists from an earlier generation or contemporary artists he is not personally acquainted with).¹¹⁸

DIASPORIC LIVERPUDIANS

Neither McGough nor Patten would stay in Liverpool. The work from Patten's early career is, as Bowen says of *Little Johnny's Confession*, 'clearly situated in, although not about, Liverpool'.¹¹⁹ The urban nature of his surroundings comes through in the poems discussed previously, as well as in poems such as 'Girl in a Blue Cardigan', from his second collection, where he is 'Watching you in city squares', the Liverpoolian connection further

¹¹⁵ Kurt Schwitters was one of the artists who inspired Henri, particularly in terms of assemblage or collage, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

¹¹⁶ 'There was a sense in the air at that time... Looking back on it... you think it must have been what people felt being in Paris in the 1890s. You just felt that somehow there was something really special going on, you didn't quite know what. Everything seemed to emanate from this place, the music, the football, the poetry, even the actors as well. You think it's going to last forever' (Interview with Kevin Male, January 2011).

¹¹⁷ George Melly, 'Pop & Protest: Adrian Henri's Pop Art of the Sixties', in *Adrian Henri: Art of the Sixties* (Whitford Fine Art: London, 2007), p. 3.

¹¹⁸ For a recent reassessment of O'Hara, see Robert Hampson and Will Montgomery, *Frank O'Hara Now: new essays on the New York poet* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Bowen, p. 88.

suggested by the reference to the Mersey Beat music scene, as she is with the ‘Guitarist from Mike’s group’.¹²⁰ In addition to ‘city squares’, another common image in the early poetry is that of the urban party. Indeed, the urban party typifies the early part of the 1960s for Patten. ‘Party Piece’ has ‘woodbines and guinness stains’ (*TMS1*, 95) at a city party, and similarly ‘Somewhere Between Heaven and Woolworths, A Song’ tells of ‘various all-night parties/ Among the couples on the stairs’ (*TMS1*, 103). This second poem is specifically situated in Liverpool, since the named department store was the first in the country, and was a clearly recognisable part of the city-centre landscape, in the main shopping area of Church Street, Liverpool 1. ‘You wear the streets like an overcoat’ (*PSP*, 127), he writes, an image which is presumably intended to suggest familiarity, but it also implies that one could shrug off the city at will.

Patten moved out of Liverpool quite soon after the media attention brought about by both the success of the Beatles and the publication of the poets’ own anthologies in 1967, but many of his poems remain grounded in the city. Looking back at his childhood area in ‘The Betrayal’, Patten deals with the destruction of Liverpool as a returning son (rather than as a resident as Henri does):

While I dozed
Houses outside which gas-lamps had spluttered
Were pulled down and replaced,
And my background was wiped from the face of the earth.
...
What those who shaped me could not articulate
Still howls for recognition as a century closes,
And their homes are pulled down and replaced,
And their backgrounds are wiped from the face of the earth. (*PSP*, 146-7)

Patten asserts that his Liverpool past is bound up with the people who ‘shaped’ him: his mother who is seen in ‘Cinders’, ‘sweeping kitchens/ No fairy godmother appeared, never’ (*PSP*, 145), or his grandmother, whose ‘Tattoos’ feature as mentioned above. At the same time his sense of his past is linked to the physical place in the first section quoted here. By the end of the poem he has returned to the humanity of Liverpool and a sense that they, the Liverpudlians, are being wiped out, not he who has escaped. Patten is referring here to the slum clearance programme of Liverpool City Council in the latter half of the twentieth century. The slum clearance that Patten laments – titling the poem ‘The Betrayal’ clearly indicates his feelings about the way in which the Council failed its people, destroying not just bricks-and-mortar houses but people’s *homes*, representative of their whole lives – is not the only way in which the city has changed. ‘Haunted places’, de Certeau believes, ‘are the

¹²⁰ Brian Patten, *Notes to the Hurrying Man* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 27.

only ones people can live in'.¹²¹ It is these 'haunted places' that slum clearance erases, and it is precisely these 'haunted places' which Patten's (and Henri's) poetry represents by linking places with personal – and person – memories. Something similar happens in *Mersey Minis 3, Longing*. This contains nostalgic remembrances of what the city used to look like from natives who have not lived in the city, often, for decades. For Lefebvre, a city is 'a space which is fashioned, shaped and invested by social activities during a finite historical period'.¹²² Space is not inert but rather each period's experiences are layered to create ongoing spatial relations. The reminiscences in *Longing* cut through the layers, each author picking up on their own past – presenting their own 'haunted places' even where those places no longer exist outside memory.

Terence Davies's films explore this same area. In *Of Time and the City*, Davies returns to his childhood city to find much has disappeared: 'The taxi slides through town and my old senses rise to remember the Majestic there, the Gaumont there or some other long-since-gone remembrance of days gone by' (*MM3*, 66). But Davies uses the physicality of place to disassociate himself from the present time and instead promote a particular past, claiming the city through his memories of it:

And you, who are young, who do not remember when George Henry Lees was once so exclusive no-one entered the shop, or the Bon Marché in brown and cream livery, or when Stoniers was once the Gucci of glassware... But in fifty years time as your grandchildren point to something new you, too, may say 'It was different in my day' or 'Things are not the same now' and you, too, may remember the small ecstasy of going into town to buy something special. (*MM3*, 67)

Of Time and the City uses newsreel and other contemporaneous footage to recall the city in the 1950s and 60s when he was growing up. In both the quotation above and the film's commentary Davies constantly reminds the audience that what he considers to be 'his' city no longer exists.¹²³ In this way he explores the experience of diaspora: that it is not only spatial distance but time that separates him from the city he remembers. We might compare this with Beryl Bainbridge's experience. In her *English Journey*, published 1984, the reader is faced with what is, for her, uncomfortable reality. Looking out of the Adelphi window, she tells us: 'All the landmarks I remembered, gone without trace' – the Kardomah is 'obliterated', the Lyceum tearooms 'burnt' and 'slung onto the refuse tips' (*MM5*, 47-8).

¹²¹ de Certeau, p. 108.

¹²² Lefebvre, p. 73.

¹²³ For more information about this film, see the dedicated website www.oftimeandthecity.com [accessed 22 March 2011]. The University of Liverpool also ran a two year project, *City in Film: Liverpool's Urban Landscape and the Moving Image*, to visually record the changing face of the city via film footage from 1897 to the 1980s. The project ran from 2006-2008, and was funded by the AHRC. See www.liv.ac.uk/isa/cityinfilm/intro.html [accessed 22 March 2011].

Bainbridge uses the Medieval *ubi sunt* motif not as an expression of nostalgia but to show the transience of her own lifetime's experience of the city. This sense of destruction is heightened at the end of the passage where Bainbridge baldly states: 'Someone's murdered Liverpool and got away with it' (*MM5*, 48). In *A Gallery to Play To*, Philip Bowen similarly laments changes in the city in his 'Postscript'. For Bowen, the physical places encapsulate the memories of 1960s, as he lists the places with descriptors and commentary, such as: 'Streats, once the Beat centre of the North-West, and the Basement Cub in Mount Pleasant (where Yankel wanted a shilling) are long gone'.¹²⁴ The idea of a 'lost Liverpool' that these quotations mourn, however, is not the way in which the Merseybeat poets themselves dealt with the city.

McGough tells the reader early in his autobiography of the space his family inhabited: 'The first seventeen years of my life were spent within a half mile radius of 11 Ruthven Road, in an unlovely, unfashionable, part of north Liverpool'.¹²⁵ At the end of the chapter entitled 'Geography' he includes a poem which links him to the people and the streets of the city:

For those early years this was my geography.
My north, my south, I sailed between the two.
Since then I've travelled the world and found
That everything I learned, I already knew¹²⁶

The last two lines of this poem recall the idea of Liverpool as a world city, while McGough's choice of 'sail' evokes the maritime. The poem also suggests that the poet did not need anything outside of his social circle, an attitude which is common in the early work of the Merseybeat poets. In contrast to the sentimentality of McGough or the lament of Bowen, Henri's attitude to the city is that of a long-term resident, accepting the changes and still loving it. 'Adrian Henri's Talking Toxteth Blues' records the so-called 'Toxteth Riots' of July 1981:

Well, I work up this morning, there was buzzing overhead
Saw the helicopter as I got out of my bed,
Smelt the smell of burning, saw the buildings fall,
Bulldozers pulling down next door's wall.
Toxteth nightmare . . .
 . . . yes . . .
 . . . city with a hangover. (PA, 39)

The poem uses a specific form of talking blues, which I shall return to in Chapter Four. The emphasis here is not on his internal emotional response but rather on what he *saw*, as the

¹²⁴ Bowen, p. 170.

¹²⁵ McGough, *Said*, p. 16.

¹²⁶ McGough, *Said*, p. 17. This poem has not been published in any of McGough's collections – it is possible that it was written solely for this autobiography.

poem continues: ‘Heard the sound of engines in the bright orange night,/ Saw the headlights blazing, saw the crowd in flight’ (PA, 39). There is still space for a joke, with an allusion to the musical *Evita* and the character of Eva Peron in ‘don’t cry for me . . . / . . . Upper Parly’ (PA, 39). He is still connected to the place, but it is significant that this is the first time Henri refers to this area as Toxteth, perhaps distancing this experience from that of ‘Liverpool 8’ of the 1960s.

WALKING THE CITY

Directions and geographical landmarks are often used to show the writer has a direct connection with a place (they embody a claim to be an authority on its navigation), in much the same way as the Merseybeat poets name-check venues and places within their scene to show their involvement. George Melly, who is from an old Liverpool family, uses direct geographical references to remind the reader of his connection to the city, as one who has not lived there for many years:

At the other end of Ullet Road is the Dingle where the 33, leaving ‘the prettier way’ behind it, joined up again with the 1 and 45 emerging from the slums to service Aigburth Road. Ahead of us, enclosed within this rectangle, lay my childhood.¹²⁷

Naming particular streets is a recurrent trope for both Merseybeat poets and later writers in the city. Poems about walking feature as another way of laying claim to the city, inspired perhaps by the *flâneur* who walks to reclaim urban space, or the psychogeographer who (via Surrealism and the Situationists) attributes feelings and moods to places.¹²⁸ This is evident in McGough’s poems about the character PC Plod. They are understandably full of references to his beat, such as walking ‘down Hardman Street’¹²⁹ away from a rape victim, ‘cruising up and down old Canning Place’ (ATM, 61), and ‘sitting in St Johns Gardens’ (ATM, 69) before his removal from the Liverpool Constabulary on the grounds that he has been ‘Appearing in poems of dubious nature’ (ATM, 70). The ‘spatial story’ is obvious here. For P.C. Plod, on the beat, the story does indeed begin, as de Certeau says, ‘on ground level, with footsteps’.¹³⁰ In ‘P.C. Plod versus Maggie May’, for example, he begins on the beat, ‘cruising up and down old Canning Place’, where he sees Maggie May ‘and followed her on tiptoe’ to the docks, where, in the morning (when ‘seagulls on ferries were hitching a lift’), Maggie May

¹²⁷ George Melly, *Scouse Mouse, or I Never Got Over It, An Autobiography* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), p. 7.

¹²⁸ I am indebted to Merlin Coverley’s work for a background in the history of walking – *The Art of Wandering: the writer as walker* (Harpenden: Oldcastle, 2012) and *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006).

¹²⁹ Roger McGough, *After The Merrymaking* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p. 59. Further references appear after quotations in the text as ‘ATM’.

¹³⁰ de Certeau, p. 97.

‘spotted him/ and was already halfway down Paradise Street’, eventually catching her and leading her ‘through the morning rushhour’ (*ATM*, 61-2). It is not only the names of streets but also directional attributes which orientate the poems, as McGough claims knowledge of the map of the city. So, ‘intertwined paths give shape to spaces’.¹³¹ Walking the city and naming the route appropriates the topographical system and again links the poets to the place.

The geography of the area is, for Henri, usually bound up with personal feelings about the place itself. Thus *City* is a love poem connected to place, just like the poem dedicated to Heather Holden mentioned previously:

Walking through dead leaves in Falkner Square going to the Pakistani shop with
Tony in the October afternoon sunlight thinking of you being woken up in the two
a.m. Blue Angel rock’n’roll darkness by Carl who I hadn’t heard singing thinking of
you thinking of you drinking in the Saturday night everyone waiting no party pub
walking with another girl holding cold hands in the autumn park thinking of you
walking home everynight in Blackburne Place twilight thinking of you thinking of
you. (C, 10)

The run-on lines and lack of punctuation represent the stream of consciousness, as Henri spends his hours thinking about the subject of the poem. The situations here are deliberately everyday: invoking normalcy in combination with spatial naming links his words (and him) even more closely to the quotidian life of the city and its streets.

The Corkish anthology *Liverpool Poets 08* has two poems by Andrew Taylor which use the walking model, and the volume is itself: ‘Dedicated to Adrian Henri who walked these familiar streets’ (*LP*, flyleaf). ‘The First Stirrings of Snow’ not only displays familiarity with the street names but also uses Henri as he used Schwitters and others:

Adrian Henri’s ghost saying
farewell, when he should be
sat in Mount Street by the fire (LP, 11)

The use of Mount Street also dates the poem, as this was where Henri lived from the late 1970s. This poem thus references Henri’s later years rather than the 1960s, which were before Taylor’s own time. In this poem Taylor is placing himself in Liverpool as much as Henri:

the need
to run and take cover in familiar
streets, where I’d once run with

¹³¹ de Certeau, p. 97.

a heart full of bursting (LP, 11)

The second poem by Taylor, 'City Walks', makes the urban mapping obvious from the very title. Again, he is grounding the poem in daily routine and a familiar territory:

Faces familiar by
daily routine and shortcuts to
Tithebarn Street (LP, 104)

Often the lines are set up as annotations of the places he sees on his walk to work, such as 'Town Hall on the lip of the hill. Sensing/ the river at the foot of Water Street', or:

Mathew Street
clogged with cameras and people who were *there*
in the Sixties. (LP, 104)

Another anthology (Coles' *Both Sides*) brings the changing nature of the area to the fore by placing Levi Tafari's 'Nuh blame Rasta (Dub poem)' after 'Adrian Henri's Talking Toxteth Blues', emphasising the different cultural meanings of place for different groups. The title of Levi Tafari's 'Toxteth where I reside (Dub poem)' gives the reader no doubt as to his location, and then the text itself offers:

Come with me yes I'll be your guide
to the city where I reside
let's take a walk
so we can talk
about Liverpool on Merseyside (BS, 284)

The poem refers back to the 1960s, when Liverpool 'went international/ well crucial' (BS, 284), but places that as a period firmly in the past, as now 'Toxteth' is 'my dwelling place'. This new Toxteth is the area after the riots:

So forget the ghetto mentality
because we are not ghettoites
we are a talented people
with a lot to give
the oldest Black community in Europe
and we're positive (BS, 284)

Is the Toxteth associated with the Black community today different from the Liverpool 8 of the (almost exclusively white) artists of Merseybeat of the 1960s?

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Henri wrote many poems using ‘Liverpool 8’ as a title – it is unsurprising that the Corkish anthology specifically says he *walked* these *familiar* streets – both describing and claiming the area as his own. One section of *Autobiography* in particular lists street names of the district and is worth quoting here at some length:

Rodney St pavement stretching to infinity
Italian garden by the priest’s house
seen through the barred doorway on Catherine St
pavingstones worn smooth for summer feet
St James Rd my first home in Alan’s flat
shaken intolerable by Cathedral bells on Sundays
Falkner Sq. Gardens heaped with red leaves to kick in autumn
...
Gambier Terrace loud Beatle guitars from the first floor
Sam painting beckoning phantoms hiding behind painted words bright colours
in the flooded catfilled basement
...
Granby St bright bazaars for aubergines and coriander
Blackburne House girls laughing at bus-stops in the afternoon
Blackburne Place redbrick Chirico tower rushing back after love at dinnertime
(A, 31)

Each place name is connected to an image, such as St James Road which does indeed lead to the Anglican Cathedral, or Granby Street with its plethora of grocers, where there is a rather more gentrified market today. This connects Henri to his area, and, as the only one of the three Merseybeat poets who stayed in Liverpool throughout his adult life, Henri is perhaps best placed to comment on the changing nature of the city. Henri is not comparing the present with a remembered past, but has a layered history of remembered encounters with those urban spaces. Walking, for de Certeau, is ‘a space of enunciation’,¹³² and by giving the reader an image to accompany a name Henri acts out what his area is for him spatially.

The use of the city in the Merseybeat movement is therefore twofold: first, the poets physically inhabited the space, performing live and connecting with their local audiences; and second, they appropriated the names of these spaces into their work to both claim it for themselves and present both local and national audiences with their interpretation of the city. The following chapters will also refer to the city – areas, streets, venues – as they appear in the movement again and again.

¹³² de Certeau, p. 98.

CHAPTER TWO: GINSBERG AND LIVERPOOL

To find the most obvious antecedents of the Merseybeat movement, we need to look, as Liverpool itself often looked, to America. The work of the Beats, and of Allen Ginsberg in particular, has often been cited as an influence on the poets, and has been accepted as such by critics and commentators. For example, in *Gladsongs and Gatherings: Poetry and its social context in Liverpool since the 1960s*, edited by Stephen Wade, there are several matter-of-fact statements to this effect: in Wade's introduction, we are told the Liverpool poets have 'literary antecedents in writers such as ... Allen Ginsberg (1926-97)';¹ Spencer Leigh's essay says that, in particular, 'Adrian Henri's style is very close to Allen Ginsberg's',² with David Bateman agreeing that Henri was 'heavily inspired by New York Beat poet Allen Ginsberg',³ Wade's own essay on Roger McGough has him 'influenced by the spontaneity and energy of Kerouac and, to a lesser extent, Allen Ginsberg';⁴ and Pete Townsend names Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso as 'two of the most apparent Beat influences of the Liverpool writers.'⁵ Therefore it is clear that, together with the American popular culture which influences the city of Liverpool, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Beat scene of the 1950s is clearly regarded as an influence on the Merseybeat poets – yet the relationship is not as simple as the above statements might lead us to believe.

The Liverpool poets were well aware of what was happening in poetry in America.⁶ But instead of those imitations McGough saw produced by some of his contemporaries, writing 'about New York, about yellow cabs', the iconic New York taxis that didn't exist in Liverpool, the Merseybeat writers were inspired to create their own Liverpoolian works: 'when we started writing about Liverpool that seemed very gritty and almost ironic. But it worked for the audience.'⁷ One of the most important ideas which Merseybeat poetry took from Ginsberg and his contemporaries was that, seeing a movement so firmly based in the

¹ Stephen Wade, ed., *Gladsongs and Gatherings: Poetry and its social context in Liverpool since the 1960s* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), p. ix.

² Spencer Leigh, 'All You Need is Words', in Wade, *Gladsongs*, pp. 143-149, p. 144.

³ David Bateman, 'Adrian Henri: Singer of Meat and Flowers', in Wade, *Gladsongs*, pp. 73-102, p. 73.

⁴ Stephen Wade, 'The Arrival of McGough', in Wade, *Gladsongs*, pp. 7-18, p. 8.

⁵ Pete Townsend, 'Jazz Scene, Liverpool Scene: The Early 1960s', in Wade, *Gladsongs*, pp. 168-176, p. 173-4.

⁶ Both from books and personal connections: there are letters to Patten in the *Underdog* archives from American writers such as Diane di Prima (see, for example, Patten/6/1/1/1), and Robert Creeley came to Liverpool to read at Patten's invitation (Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012).

⁷ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012. See also Roger McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* (London: Random House, 2005), p. 143; Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 48; and Bruce Cook, *The Beat Generation* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1971), p. 154.

recording of experience and the importance of the everyday, it made it acceptable for these Liverpool poets to do the same thing with their own lives.

According to Bruce Cook's *The Beat Generation*, the book which sparked this development in Liverpool was Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry* anthology: 'everybody in town who was interested in writing seemed to have a copy of it, and they were shouting poems out of it to one another across crowded pubs'.⁸ For McGough, another public venue, coffeehouses (themselves new and exciting at this time), are the scene of similar sharing:

An EP record called *Redbird*, Logue reading the poetry of Pablo Neruda to the jazz accompaniment of the Tony Kinsey Quintet, would be passed around and wowed over by the young Beats in the city's coffee bars. As was Allen Ginsberg's rendition of 'Howl'.⁹

From the word 'rendition', and the aural medium of the other works mentioned, it is evident that the poets experienced 'Howl' as a recording as well as a printed work.¹⁰ This will be shown as important later in this chapter and in the next. The long or paragraphic line, composing by the breath-unit, and performance to an audience are some of the aspects which Merseybeat poetry takes from the American movement and from Ginsberg in particular. For Henri, the persona which Ginsberg cultivated was also important, which fed into, and came from, the performance of his work.

Three years after Donald Allen's anthology, in 1963, Penguin published Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Allen Ginsberg in volume five of *Penguin Modern Poets*, an inexpensive paperback series which aimed to bring modern poetry to the masses.¹¹ The Merseybeat poets were well aware of the work of – and the glamour attached to – these writers: McGough's autobiography bemoans the fact that 'nothing was happening' in Liverpool, in terms of the new poetry, as against being 'in San Francisco with Ferlinghetti or in New York with Ginsberg'.¹² Ferlinghetti was important for another reason: his *City Lights* bookshop and press. *Howl and Other Poems* was published by Ferlinghetti as part of his Pocket Poets series, with the iconic black-and-white cover still available in facsimile

⁸ Cook, p. 154. *The New American Poetry 1945-60*, ed. by Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960) also included Frank O'Hara, a poet with whom Henri has a clear affinity, particular in terms of the use of visual art within poetry.

⁹ McGough, *Said*, p. 143.

¹⁰ The recording that McGough and his contemporaries would have had access to is either the Evergreen Records LP, *San Francisco Poets* (Evergreen Records, EVR-1, 1958), produced in conjunction with the San Francisco Renaissance issue of *Evergreen Review* (reissued by Hanover Records, M-5001, 1959), or *Allen Ginsberg Reads Howl and Other Poems*, including most of the contents of the *City Lights* Pocket Poets book (Fantasy Records, LP 7006, 1959).

¹¹ These Penguin volumes were widely available in central Liverpool bookshops.

¹² McGough, *Said*, p. 143.

editions today. In fact, the importance of the book as a cultural artefact is highlighted by Jonah Raskin (brought up in Long Island, and later to attend Columbia College, studying under Lionel Trilling just as Ginsberg did) in his introduction to *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' and the Making of the Beat Generation*:

In 1957, at the age of fifteen, I bought for seventy-five cents a copy of the City Lights paperback edition of *Howl and Other Poems* with the trademark black-and-white cover. It was the first book of poetry I ever bought, and it made me feel as cool as anyone in my high school.¹³

This shows how the Pocket Poets book is an important part of how he first experienced Ginsberg. Raskin continues: 'Reading it brought initiation into a secret society.'¹⁴ The same reactions were had by poets and writers in England: Spike Hawkins was inducted into this society by his English teacher, and then 'found bookshops such as Better Books and tiny volumes which were marked "City Lights" and I started to read these'.¹⁵ The cultural artefact of the black-and-white book itself is key, as this branding created an instantly recognisable object. Barry Miles was responsible for stocking these books at Better Books in London:

Howl and Other Poems was the one [of the City Lights books he ordered] that impressed me the most. It put into words all my ill-formed sixteen-year-old thoughts and feelings in a way that came as a complete revelation. Ginsberg expressed everything I was feeling, and he did it in a way that was totally new to me.¹⁶

The independent bookshops in Liverpool certainly stocked them. These included Charles Wilson's (Renshaw Street, and later a branch in Castle Street) where Ginsberg read in 1965,¹⁷ and Philip Son & Nephew (first opened in Church Street, moving to Whitechapel for this period). Liverpoolians might also have read about the famous 1957 obscenity trial (with a report by Ferlinghetti published in *Evergreen Review* in the winter of 1957) and heard Judge Clayton W. Horn's verdict that; '*Howl* does have some redeeming social importance, and I find the book is not obscene',¹⁸ as well as knowing the text itself. Indeed, a fourth print run of 5,000 extra copies was ordered to meet the demand created by the trial.¹⁹

If the previous chapter focussed on the first two syllables of 'Merseybeat', this chapter unpacks the last; how 'beat' is Merseybeat? John Clellon Holmes was the first to define the

¹³ Jonah Raskin, *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg's Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. xi.

¹⁴ Raskin, p. xi.

¹⁵ Spike Hawkins, cited in Jonathon Green, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground, 1961-1971* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 17.

¹⁶ Barry Miles, *In The Sixties* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), p. 53.

¹⁷ However, see the discussion on pages 66-7 regarding issues of memory surrounding the location.

¹⁸ Clayton W. Horn, cited in Bill Morgan and Nancy J. Peters, *Howl on Trial: The Battle for Free Expression* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2006), p. 199.

¹⁹ Morgan and Peters, p. 3.

word 'beat' for a wider audience, although he credits Jack Kerouac with inventing the term. Holmes's 1952 article 'This is the Beat Generation' defines it thus:

More than a mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself. A man is beat whenever he goes for broke and wagers the sum of his resources on a single number; and the young generation has done that continually from early youth.²⁰

Thirty years later, an article Ginsberg wrote for *Friction* magazine, entitled 'A Definition of the Beat Generation', runs through a similar sequence of meanings, starting with the idea of exhaustion, but also: 'at the same time wide-open – perceptive and receptive to a vision'.²¹ This idea of 'openness' or 'nakedness of mind' was a particularly relevant aspect of the movement to Merseybeat poetry. Ginsberg also extends the meaning, saying that Kerouac 'clarified his intention' of "'beat" as beatific, the necessary beatness or darkness that precedes opening up to the light, egolessness, giving room for religious illumination.'²² This aspect of Beat poetry was less relevant to the Liverpool poets, who preferred to stay grounded in contemporary urban life.

The term 'Merseybeat' is also connected to the Mersey Sound, to the English beat music movement.²³ In fact, the Beatles chose their name for the very reason that it could have different interpretations. They were inspired by Buddy Holly's backing group the Crickets, with its 'nice double meaning, one of them a purely English meaning, which Americans couldn't have appreciated', as being both the name of an insect and a sport, and chose the name 'Beatles' in direct homage to the band, with its own double meaning:

Thinking of the name Crickets, John [Lennon] thought of other insects with a name that could be played around with. He'd filled books as a child with similar word play. 'The idea of beetles came into my head. I decide to spell it BEAtles to make it look like beat music, just as a joke.'²⁴

²⁰ John Clellon Holmes, 'This Is The Beat Generation', in *Passionate Opinions: The Cultural Essays* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1988), pp. 57-65, p. 58-9. Originally published in *The New York Times Magazine*, 16 November 1952.

²¹ Allen Ginsberg, *Deliberate Prose: Selected Essays 1952-1995*, ed. by Bill Morgan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 237

²² Ginsberg, *Selected Essays*, p. 237. Originally published in *Friction*, winter 1982.

²³ As stated in the Introduction. Terms such as 'Mersey Beat', 'Mersey Sound', and 'Liverpool Sound' are also often presented as interchangeable in writings about the music of this period.

²⁴ Hunter Davies, *The Beatles: The illustrated & updated edition of the bestselling authorised biography*, rev. edn. (London: Cassell Illustrated, 2002), p. 109-110. Playing around with the name, they became 'the Silver Beatles' for the rest of that year, shortening it to 'the Beatles' in 1960.

Beat music is itself named for the strong beat that the guitar-and-drum-led groups of this time used so well, but Lennon was also aware of the American literary movement.²⁵ The Merseybeat poets clearly have transatlantic links in both their name and work. I shall be using Allen Ginsberg's visit to Liverpool in May 1965 as a case study to discuss this; I will consider the effect that Ginsberg's visit, and of both his persona and his work around this time, had on the poets, and on Henri in particular.

LIVERPOOL AS THE CENTRE OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Simon Warner's essay in the exhibition book *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool & the Avant-Garde* seeks to answer the question of what exactly Ginsberg meant by the oft-quoted (indeed, oft-misquoted) remark that Liverpool is 'at the present moment the centre of the consciousness of the human universe' (*TLS*, 15).²⁶ This was a quotation deemed so important that Edward Lucie-Smith made it the entire back cover of *The Liverpool Scene* (fig 2.1).

For Phil Bowen, author of the biographical *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets*, the answer is clear: 'Henri and the others knew he was talking about the Beatles'.²⁷ McGough also mentions the Beatles as the likely referent, claiming Ginsberg 'spent some time in Merseyside in search of the Beatles' aura'.²⁸ There are several divergent views about the seriousness of Ginsberg's statement, from George Dowden's belief that it was lightly meant, perhaps referencing Jung's idea of Liverpool as the 'pool of life', to Michael Horovitz's belief that Ginsberg was probably asked for a quotation by 'one of the bevy of media folk he attracted'.²⁹ Warner devotes several pages to detailing the interpretations of those who knew Ginsberg – indeed, many of these are recorded as being personal communications with Warner himself³⁰ – concluding his article with the speculation that 'the

²⁵ Philip Norman's biography of John Lennon lists a mix of English and American early influences (Lewis Carroll and the *Goon Show*; J. D. Salinger and *Rebel Without a Cause*; comics via both Ronald Searle and James Thurber), but also notes that Stuart Sutcliffe introduced Lennon to two key artistic movements: Dada and American Beat (Philip Norman, *John Lennon: The Life* [London: HarperCollins, 2008], pp. 63-69, 135-6).

²⁶ Warner states his intention is to 'historically re-describe the Ginsberg stay from personal and reported accounts, drawing on interviews, histories and biographies', but I see the main focus of the article as dissecting the above quotation. (Simon Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness? Re-Visiting Allen Ginsberg's Liverpool Trip in 1965', in *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde*, ed. by Christopher Grunenberg and Robert Knifton [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007], pp. 94-111, p. 96). The book was published to accompany the exhibition of the same name at Tate Liverpool, 20 February to 9 September 2007.

²⁷ Bowen, p. 67.

²⁸ McGough, *Said*, p. 163-4.

²⁹ Michael Horovitz, cited in Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', p. 105-6.

³⁰ See Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', pp. 106-8.

consciousness most raised' during this visit 'may well have belonged to Ginsberg himself.'³¹ This was 1965, the Beatles had 'broken' America the previous year, and Liverpool was on the world map. Indeed, Bowen quotes Barry Miles as saying that '*Like anyone who was anyone at the time*, he [Ginsberg] also wanted to visit Liverpool.'³²

The details of Ginsberg's visit to Liverpool in the early summer of 1965 are not particularly well documented. In fact, there is even some contention as to when the trip occurred. In a footnote to his essay, Warner tells us that: 'The precise days Allen Ginsberg spent in Liverpool are a matter of some conjecture',³³ as all we have to date it are two letters home. On 21st May 1965, Ginsberg wrote to his father, Louis Ginsberg, from London, saying that he has been:

Traveling around countryside – spent this weekend at Newcastle & visited old poet Basil Bunting & met a lot of longhaired young lads and their wives – England very beautiful May sunshine.³⁴

Then, on 1st June, he wrote to his father again from London: 'I spent the last week in Liverpool, where the Beatles come from, listening to new rock & roll groups – it's a jumping city like San Francisco'.³⁵ The last week of May, therefore, seems to be the most likely date for the visit.³⁶

There are also different accounts of the logistics of the visit. Brian Patten recalls that Miles telephoned him to organise the visit,³⁷ and Pete Brown claims in his autobiography that 'I volunteered to take Ginsberg to Liverpool. He sat on the train, occasionally chanting and playing his finger cymbals, eyeing up sailors bound for Cold War patrols.'³⁸ There is similar confusion over his sleeping arrangements, as Bowen tells us that Patten 'had no room in his

³¹ Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', p. 108.

³² Barry Miles of Ginsberg, in Bowen, p. 62, my italics.

³³ Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', p. 100n.

³⁴ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Michael Schumacher, ed., *Family Business: Selected Letters between a father and son Allen and Louis Ginsberg* (London: Bloomsbury, 1970), p. 234-5. The 'longhaired young lads' he met included the poet Tom Pickard, founder of the Modern Tower group, who was working alongside Basil Bunting in Newcastle.

³⁵ Schumacher, p. 236.

³⁶ Whilst Liverpool Special Collections and Archives holds many diaries and appointment books for all three of the Merseybeat poets, the earlier years of the 1960s are less well represented in this regard. This may have been because the poets were too busy enjoying themselves to record specific events, or that at this early stage of their careers they had no reason to preserve diaries for posterity.

³⁷ Patten may have been chosen as a point of contact because Robert Creeley had had a 'good time' when invited to stay with the *Underdog* editor in Liverpool previously – he read twice, once at the university and once in the basement of Sampson and Barlow's, where Patten was running a poetry night, and enjoyed a similar sightseeing experience as Ginsberg (Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012).

³⁸ Pete Brown, *White Rooms and Imaginary Westerns: Ginsberg, Clapton and Cream - An Anarchic Odyssey* (London: JR Books, 2010), p. 72.

attic’,³⁹ so asked Henri to host, whereas Patten says that ‘Allen stayed a few nights at 32 Canning Street, then down the road at 64’, Henri’s home.⁴⁰ Patten’s 2006 interview with Warner also shows that Ginsberg did stay with him initially:

He stayed with me at 32 Canning Street in Toxteth, Liverpool 8, in an attic room I shared with a student called Tim Dawson. Allen would sit in the box room, with a skylight, sing his Buddhist chants and say his Buddhist mantras. He was a bit of a showman. Tim and I were great fans but we were more fans of ‘Howl’ than all his chanting and bell-tinkling!⁴¹

Ginsberg did at some point in the week stay with Henri, and Henri, too, comments on his chanting:

I woke up and heard this noise downstairs, so I went down – there was a sink on the half-landing – and it was Allen washing the dishes and singing one of those Buddhist chants to himself. It was really an amazing revelation – Allen Ginsberg washing my dishes.⁴²

This incident is captured in Henri’s *Autobiography* in ‘Poem for summer 1967’ as ‘Allen singing washing the morning dishes’ (A, 40). Since Ginsberg’s visit was in 1965, I would suggest that Henri is using 1967 in the title to refer to the ‘Summer of Love’ of that year, using this as synecdoche for the feel of the city in the 1960s, falling as it does in *Autobiography* between ‘Part Three 1957-64’ and ‘Part Four Summer 1970’. 1967 was also the year of the publication of *The Liverpool Scene* and *The Mersey Sound*, so holds personal significance for Henri. Whatever the reason, an event from 1965 is brought into the evocation of 1967.

The domesticity of the image is significant in the context of what we know of Ginsberg’s trip. There was a reading, but it was unpublicised. It is yet another aspect of the visit which is difficult to pin down. Bowen claims:

A ‘Ginsberg reading’ during his brief stay in Liverpool was a must. Sampson & Barlow’s was defunct at the time, so another venue had to be found. Parry’s Bookshop in Hardman Street next to The Philharmonic Hotel had a vacant room so this was deemed the place.⁴³

The reference to a ‘vacant room’ is the most important phrase in this telling. It implies that it was a more informal gathering than many of Ginsberg’s performances elsewhere. However, Bowen’s naming of the venue as Parry’s is incorrect. This is, perhaps, partly because there is

³⁹ Bowen, p. 62.

⁴⁰ Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012.

⁴¹ Brian Patten, cited in Warner, ‘Raising the Consciousness?’, p. 100.

⁴² Adrian Henri of Ginsberg, in Bowen, p. 62.

⁴³ Bowen, p. 63.

no record of the reading in surviving flyers or advertisements, but it is also indicative of the casual attitude to the reading of both the locals and Ginsberg himself. Whilst Bowen says the event was held in Parry's bookshop, Patten recalls: 'Allen didn't want to read at the university, he wanted to read at a small place and Charles Wilson's bookshop in Renshaw Street was small so we had it there.'⁴⁴ Warner's article places Wilson's at the bottom of Hardman Street (Renshaw Street and Hardman Street converge). Like Bowen and Patten, Warner emphasises the theme of the relatively small gathering, quoting Patten: 'It was a very crowded reading in a very small space with about 50 people packed in. It was not really well publicised but Allen was quite happy to do a little reading.'⁴⁵

McGough and Henri, both of whom were in attendance alongside Patten, use similar terminology to describe the reading. McGough, who simply says the reading was 'at a small bookshop in Hardman Street', remembers it as 'serene, intimate'.⁴⁶ Similarly, for Henri:

It was one of the best poetry readings I've ever been to ... he sat cross-legged and just read and it was totally intimate and beautiful, and it just flowed out, not even preaching, just talking to you, but talking like some sort of prophet.⁴⁷

Pete Brown had been asked to introduce Ginsberg, and to provide support to Ginsberg's headline act.⁴⁸ Michael Horovitz may or may not have been asked to contribute: Henri's recollection of the evening is of Horovitz 'totally monopolis[ing] the proceedings',⁴⁹ whereas Horovitz claims that both he and Brown had been asked to 'provide substantial support performances'.⁵⁰ Either way, the recollections all agree on the simplicity and intimacy of the event.

Post-performance, the evening continued at Fat Johnny's, a West Indian drinking club off Falkner Square, not far from Hardman Street, in Liverpool 8. Both Patten and Henri comment on Ginsberg's informal, friendly manner within the city. They went drinking in the Phil and Ye Cracke and took him to the Cavern where he played Tibetan finger-cymbals. To

⁴⁴ Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012.

⁴⁵ Brian Patten, cited in Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', p. 100.

⁴⁶ The quotation contrasts the Liverpool reading with the 'rant in front of 7,000 at the Albert Hall' in June: 'I decided his trick was not to grow into the size of the venue, but to reduce the capacity of the hall to suit him.' McGough, *Said*, p. 163. The fact that the poets remember it as a *small* bookshop would point the location to Wilson's rather than Parry's. Another explanation for Bowen choosing Parry's is that the shop advertised in *Underdog* (for example, *Underdog* 6, Patten/6/1/1/6).

⁴⁷ Bowen, p. 63.

⁴⁸ Bowen says: 'Pete Brown, who was in Liverpool at the time, agreed to introduce Ginsberg and read briefly' (Bowen, p. 63), whereas Brown, as quoted previously, claims that he was the one who accompanied Ginsberg to Liverpool (Brown, p. 72).

⁴⁹ Bowen, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Warner, 'Raising the Consciousness?', p. 105.

Patten, recalling the visit forty years later, there was a consensus of feeling that ‘those who knew him as a poet were delighted to have him around; others found him an interesting character’.⁵¹ The ‘character’ is separated from the poet: McGough, interviewed in 2012, also rejected ‘the bells and all that’ as ‘slightly off-putting’, rejecting that persona rather than the works.⁵² These recollections indicate the ‘low-key’ nature of Ginsberg’s visit, but also lack any sense of reverence. Henri’s recollections corroborate this:

Nobody knew who he was – you’d take him to the pub and Allen would talk to you for five minutes then wander away and talk to lots of other people. The most unlikely people were terribly impressed by him.⁵³

An extended version of this comment appears in Edward Lucie-Smith’s anthology *The Liverpool Scene*, notable for its lack of reference to the poet and its focus on the man:

The great thing here was that nobody knew who he was – you take him to the pub and all you get is these guys saying, ‘Who’s that funny fellow with you, the fellow with the long hair?’ And Allen would just stand there and talk to you for five minutes and just wander away and you’d see him talking to somebody and then he’d wander off and talk to somebody else. And hundreds of people kept coming here for weeks afterwards, saying ‘Hey, that American bloke with the long hair who was with you – he’s gear, isn’t he?’ You know, all sorts and conditions of funny people whom you wouldn’t expect were terribly impressed by him. (TLS, 17)

Christopher T. George, a Liverpudlian now living in Baltimore, also emphasises this in his poem ‘Allen Ginsberg in Liverpool’, a tribute to Henri written after his death in 2000. George was not part of the scene in the 1960s, but his poem addresses Henri directly, using Ginsberg’s visit as a way in to pay tribute to Henri himself:

Everyone thought him the gear
– the little Jew
with the long hair.
You said later, ‘He’d talk
to anyone. Anyone at all.’⁵⁴

George links Ginsberg as ‘a new messiah’ to Henri’s own work:

You wanted to paint
‘The Arrival of Christ

⁵¹ Patten does go on to say that: ‘some of the young lads in the groups weren’t interested in poetry and thought his Tibetan cymbals a bit of an affectation. Remember this wasn’t exactly the days of flower power. The so-called summer of love was sometime off still’ (Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012).

⁵² Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

⁵³ Adrian Henri of Ginsberg, in Bowen, p. 63.

⁵⁴ For the full text, see <http://chrisgeorge.net/publish.net/poems/allen-ginsberg-in-liverpool> [accessed 6 February 2012]. First published in *Electronic Acorn*, 16 Sept 2004.

into Liverpool' and here
was Allen Arrived⁵⁵

In the end, however, the poem's emphasis falls on the place, rather than the person. Ginsberg is *in* Liverpool, with Cousin's bakery, the Mersey freighters, and The Phil. The poem's final lines act as a summary of the whole experience, moving immediately from global awareness to the domesticity inherent in Henri's own telling of Ginsberg washing up in *Autobiography*:

he regaled Liverpool
as the 'Center
of the consciousness of the universe.'

Next morning, your cat meowed to be fed.⁵⁶

This discussion of, and quotation from, George's poem serves to represent what I feel is the most important aspect of the 1965 Ginsberg visit, one that has not been explored by critics: what seems to have been the main focus of the trip is not Ginsberg himself, but rather Liverpool. The visit was part of his world tour of that year – Cuba, Russia, Czechoslovakia, England – but where other elements are well documented in the contemporaneous press (such as Ginsberg's election as the Prague King of May) and in later biographies, little seems to have been written about the Liverpool visit: it has the status of an unplanned break. In fact, it is with the Henri reference to Ginsberg 'talking to anyone' that Cook answers his own question, 'What sort of impact did Allen Ginsberg have on the places he visited?'⁵⁷ This emphasizes Ginsberg's interest in meeting new people, not his reading or his literary impact. This, to me, is crucial to any discussion of the Liverpool visit. Apart from the small reading, Ginsberg was mainly interested in sightseeing and socialising, as the letter to his father quoted previously highlights: Liverpool is 'where the Beatles come from', and he has spent his time there 'listening to new rock & roll groups'.⁵⁸

Ginsberg had arrived in London after being deported from Czechoslovakia. His time in Prague, being crowned King of May and then arrested by the police, is considered by critics to be by far the most important event of the European trip: both Miles's biography and *I Celebrate Myself*, Bill Morgan's chronologically detailed biography, devote a whole chapter to the 'King of May'. In contrast, Morgan sums up the Liverpool visit in two sentences: 'He also went to Liverpool to give a reading and listen to the new rock groups there. Liverpool was the home of the Beatles and everything new and mad in electric music happened there

⁵⁵ <http://chrisgeorge.netpublish.net/poems/allen-ginsberg-in-liverpool> [accessed 6 February 2012]

⁵⁶ <http://chrisgeorge.netpublish.net/poems/allen-ginsberg-in-liverpool> [accessed 6 February 2012]

⁵⁷ Cook, p. 153-4.

⁵⁸ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Schumacher, p. 236.

first',⁵⁹ the biographer's words echoing Ginsberg's own in his letter to his father. Miles states: 'It was the first time Allen had been in Britain during the summer, and he took advantage of the good weather to explore the country', adding that he was 'moved by the new dancing and music'.⁶⁰ Miles's autobiography makes much of meeting Ginsberg in this period and putting him up in London, but makes no mention of the Liverpool visit.⁶¹ Pete Brown's record of the visit serves as a summary of what most agree on:

In Liverpool, he met the triumvirate (Patten, Henri and McGough), read his poems and chased the second generation of rock'n'rollers. I think he caught a couple. We argued about the Beatles, who he predicted would change the world.⁶²

Music, people, and, yes, poetry, but Ginsberg-as-tourist rather than Ginsberg-as-performer. The briefness of the accounts of contemporaries, such as Brown's, shows how relatively small-scale and social the visit was. Similarly, in 'I Want to Paint', Henri highlights the social aspect of their visit as he sees 'Me and Allen Ginsberg sitting in a summer park painted by Henri Rousseau' (*TAN*, 22).⁶³ Whilst Henri often filled his poems with his heroes (often in social or quotidian settings), the impression one gets is of an emphasis on friendship rather than admiration. In fact, a photo (although obviously not taken by Rousseau) of the two of them sitting in a summer park does exist, but this was taken during a later visit.⁶⁴

A common theme to these – very few – references to the 1965 visit is the new music Liverpool was so famous for. Ginsberg was undoubtedly a fan of the Beatles. He had met

⁵⁹ Bill Morgan, *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 410.

⁶⁰ Barry Miles, *Allen Ginsberg: a biography* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), p. 366.

⁶¹ See Miles, *Sixties*, pp. 53-6. Miles's autobiographies *In the Sixties* and *In the Seventies* are full of encounters with artists and poets through Better Books and beyond, but make no mention of the Merseybeat poets or of either of their 1967 publications. In fact, Miles's only mention of the Merseybeat poets is that Henri and Patten read at a Hyde Park rally to legalise pot in 1967, where 'the crowd was excitable and few people heard them'; this comment is included only to set the scene for Ginsberg's own arrival (Miles, *Sixties*, p. 220). In his biography of Ginsberg, Miles goes even further, saying that 'no one heard them' at the event (Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 392). Similarly, another Miles history makes no mention of Ginsberg's travels outside of London after being deported from Czechoslovakia (Barry Miles, *London Calling: A countercultural history of London since 1945* [London: Atlantic Books, 2010], p. 144). Whilst Miles's writing about both his life and the lives of others within the Beat Generation is invaluable, it is also typical of the London-centric criticism which has often ignored literary happenings outside of the capital.

⁶² Brown, p. 72.

⁶³ This line only appears in the *Tonight at Noon* version.

⁶⁴ The photo appears in *Centre of the Creative Universe*, plate 8, p. 99, entitled 'Adrian Henri and Allen Ginsberg, Holland Park, London 1969'. It is this photo that Michael Kustow is describing when, picking up on the characters or roles each poet plays, he writes: 'He sits (in a painting, in a film) in a bright green garden wearing a gold braided jacket talking to Allen Ginsberg. Friar Tuck disguised as Sergeant Pepper meets the Baal Shem Tov disguised as Maharishi. William Blake (out of frame) provides the sunshine for them both.' (Michael Kustow, 'Notations for an Audio-Visual Album', in Adrian Henri, *Adrian Henri: painter/poet* (London: Fanfare Press, 1968), n.p.)

them soon after he arrived in London, at the after-party of Bob Dylan's concert on 9th May (before his visits to the North), and wanted them at his birthday party on 3rd June.⁶⁵ As well as writing to his father, Ginsberg wrote to Peter Orlovsky on 25th May:

I spent all week in Liverpool home of The Beatles and heard all the new rock bands and gave a little reading and had a ball with longhair boys – it's like San Francisco except the weather is greyer – lovely city, *mad* music, electronic hits your guts centres.⁶⁶

In both letters home, we can see Ginsberg's excitement over the music, and the Beatles specifically, but there is another lure: the 'longhair boys', which feature in his letter home about Newcastle, as well as in Lucie-Smith's anthology, where the famous quotation is followed immediately by this sentence: 'They're resurrecting the human form divine there – all those beautiful youths with long, golden archangelic hair' (*TLS*, 15). Ginsberg's sexual preferences are caught up in an almost Blakeian vision of English youth as angels (adding Ginsberg-as-sexual-predator to the list above, also implied in Brown's recollections).

William Blake was an important influence on Ginsberg, and one which the Merseybeat poets would have been aware of. The *Penguin Modern Poets* volume from 1963 (referred to earlier in this chapter) contains 'Sunflower Sutra', a poem clearly inspired by Blake and Ginsberg's vision of him in 1948. It is also informed by the clash of nature and industry which is a common theme in Blake's work, particularly in *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (which Ginsberg would go on to record). Blake's influence on Ginsberg has been well-documented. Eric Mottram observed that Ginsberg's 'inspiration not only came through Blake's voice and the long-breathed lines of his Prophetic Books, but through an essential sense of the poet as visionary bard.'⁶⁷ In *William Blake and the Moderns*, Alicia Ostriker's essay 'Blake, Ginsberg, Madness, and the Prophecy as Shaman' discusses the idea of Ginsberg as Blake's disciple, as, she believes, this prophetic role 'clearly forms the core of Blake's influence on Ginsberg, and he is the only one of Blake's modern disciples who publicly assumes such a mantle or burden.'⁶⁸

⁶⁵ 'Portland Coliseum', 'his Beatles poem' (Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 556), records a concert in the eponymous Portland Coliseum, 22 August 1965. The second stanza records an 'Apparition' of 'four brown English/ jacket christhair boys', who 'all jump together to End/ some tearful memory song/ ancient two years' (Allen Ginsberg, *Collected Poems 1947-1985*, 2nd. rev. edn. (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 365. Further references appear after quotations in the text as 'GCP'. Ginsberg is in the audience, possibly thinking of the first time he saw the Beatles (1963 would have been two years before this, the year of the first Beatles' album).

⁶⁶ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 361.

⁶⁷ Ginsberg himself believed that the series was intended to be sung, and arranged and recorded an album in 1969; *Songs of Innocence and Experience by William Blake, tuned by Allen Ginsberg* (MGM Records, FTS3083, 1969).

⁶⁸ Alicia Ostriker, 'Blake, Ginsberg, Madness, and the Prophecy as Shaman' in *William Blake and the Moderns*, ed. by Robert J. Bertholf and Annette S. Levitt (Albany: State University of New York

As noted above, Ginsberg's first vision of Blake occurred in 1948, recorded at length in Miles's biography: whilst lying on his bed that summer, reading Blake's 'Ah! Sun-flower' from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 'he heard a deep, ancient voice, reading the poem aloud. He immediately knew, without thinking, that it was the voice of Blake himself, coming to him across the vault of time'.⁶⁹ Miles specifically refers to the voice as 'prophetic'⁷⁰ and that Ginsberg 'suddenly had a deep understanding of the meaning of the poem and realised that *he* was the sunflower.'⁷¹ In a *Paris Review* interview, discussing Cezanne and Ginsberg's interest in his *petites sensations*, he said:

The thing I understood from Blake was that it was possible to transmit a message through time which could reach the enlightened, that poetry had a definite effect, it wasn't just pretty, or just beautiful, as I had understood pretty beauty before, it was something basic to human existence, or it reached something, it reached the bottom of human existence.⁷²

The feeling Ginsberg had when regarding Cezanne's paintings was the same as that which he had experienced during his Blake visions, and he wanted to explore how to reproduce that feeling, as he writes in 'Howl':

Who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus. (GCP, 130)

This visionary sense of time and space was clearly important for Ginsberg as a disciple of Blake.

Ginsberg's own 'Sunflower Sutra' sees the poet walking 'on the banks of the tincan banana dock', where he is 'surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery' and 'oily water on the river' (GCP, 138). The paragraphic line which Ginsberg developed from his readings of Blake is clear here.⁷³ In this decayed industrial environment, using similar

Press, 1982), pp. 111-31, p. 113. This essay does not mention Michael Horovitz as another of Blake's 'modern disciples', although Blake is a clear influence on him – see the brief discussion of the *Children of Albion* anthology, edited by Horovitz, later in this chapter.

⁶⁹ Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 98.

⁷¹ Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 99.

⁷² Allen Ginsberg, 'The Art of Poetry No. 8', *The Paris Review*, 37 (1966), pp. 13-55, p. 24-5. I do not have space to discuss this here, but for an in-depth exploration of Cezanne's influence on Ginsberg see Paul Portugés, 'Allen Ginsberg's Paul Cezanne and the Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus' in *Contemporary Literature*, 21 (Summer 1980), pp. 435-449.

⁷³ See Eric Mottram, 'American Poetry, Poetics and Poetic Movements since 1950', in *American Literature Since 1900*, ed. by Marcus Cunliffe, rev. edn. (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 237-282, p. 270.

imagery to that of Blake's *Songs of Experience*, the natural world seems to have been displaced ('no fish in that stream') and there seems no possibility of transcendence ('no hermit in those mounts') (*GCP*, 139). Then, 'Look at the Sunflower, he [Jack Kerouac] said', and Ginsberg is transported back to his vision: '- I rushed up enchanted - it was my first sunflower, memories of Blake - my visions' (*GCP*, 139). The connection to Blake is made explicit in this realisation as Ginsberg's 'I' moves from the literal record of the day seen in the first lines into a visionary state in response to the sunflower: 'Unholy battered old thing, you were, my sunflower O my soul' (*GCP*, 139). In Ginsberg's 1948 vision, *he* was the sunflower, and at the end of the memory section in 'Sunflower Sutra' he remembers this as he addresses the sunflower:

when did you forget you were a flower? when did you look at your skin and decide
you were an impotent dirty old locomotive? the ghost of a locomotive? the specter
and shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?
You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower! (*GCP*, 140)

The locomotive represents his corrupted state, as opposed to the natural world, but is also part of bringing the poem - and the poet - back to the supposed reality, as his opening line tells the reader he is 'sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive' (*GCP*, 139). In contrast, 'A perfect excellent lovely sunflower' (*GCP*, 139) is held up to represent the possibilities of both Ginsberg and Kerouac's souls at the end of the poem: 'We're not our skin of grime, we're not dread bleak dusty imageless locomotives, we're golden sunflowers inside' (*GCP*, 140).

Twenty years after the original vision, Ginsberg was still convinced that it was 'the only really genuine experience I feel I've had'⁷⁴ and his poetry certainly shows his preoccupation with the idea that Blake 'had come forth with some little magic formula statement in rhyme and rhythm that, if properly heard in the inner ear, would deliver you beyond the universe'.⁷⁵ 'Vision 1948' and 'On Reading William Blake's "The Sick Rose"' record the actual experience, and Miles records that Ginsberg's unpublished manuscript and journal writings also include many references to it, 'including a 111-line poem about it, called "One Day", written in 1961'.⁷⁶

A few weeks after his visit to Liverpool, Ginsberg performed at the Albert Hall, at the now-famous International Poetry Incarnation on 11th June 1965. At the press conference before the event, the poets read an 'Invocation' with clear Blakeian ties:

⁷⁴ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 103.

⁷⁵ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 100.

⁷⁶ Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 104.

England! Awake! Awake! Awake!
Jerusalem thy Sister calls!
And now the time returns again:
Our souls exult, & London's towers
Receive the Lamb of God to dwell
In England's green & pleasant bowers.⁷⁷

The explicit reference to 'Jerusalem' in the second line clearly links to Blake's preface to *Milton* (which is more commonly referred to as 'Jerusalem', and the hymn of the same name, composed by Hubert Parry to Blake's lines), and this link is continued: the 'holy Lamb of God' is 'On England's pleasant pastures seen', and 'England's green and pleasant land' ends Blake's poem.⁷⁸ 'Jerusalem' is a clear intertext in this opening section before the poem's exclaimed 'invocations'. On this evidence, Blake was clearly relevant not only to Ginsberg but to his English contemporaries. Indeed, Michael Horovitz named his anthology of the British Underground 'Children of Albion', a clear Blakeian reference.⁷⁹ In his introduction to *Wholly Communion*, the book accompanying Peter Whitehead's film of the event, Alexis Lykiard says the 'Invocation' 'spontaneously erupted',⁸⁰ but in the BBC2 documentary *Days in the Life*, those who were involved in setting up the event recall that a group of the poets wrote the 'Invocation' in Alex Trocchi's flat, the night before the Press Conference.⁸¹ The 'Invocation' also included examples of Ginsberg's technique (explained in the *Indian Journals*) of combining two or more nouns into a phrase ('hydrogen jukebox' from 'Howl' being the first and most widely cited example of his attempts – inducing a 'momentary gap in consciousness'⁸² as inspired by Cezanne and Blake), such as 'Spontaneous planet-chant Carnival!' and 'immaculate supranational Poesy insemination!'.⁸³ It also used the poem to advertise several avenues of dissemination for poetry at the time: 'Sigmatic New Departures Residu of Better Books & Moving Times in obscenely New Directions!'⁸⁴

But before this, Ginsberg had been in Liverpool, finding Blake in a street in Everton.

⁷⁷ Reproduced in Peter Whitehead, *Wholly Communion* (London: Lorrimer Films, 1965), p. 9.

⁷⁸ William Blake, *Complete Poems*, 3rd. edn., ed. by W. H. Stevenson (Harlow: Longman, 2007), p. 503. Further references appear after quotations in the text as 'BCP'.

⁷⁹ The 1969 Penguin anthology also links the book very clearly to Blake by reproducing his own painting of Albion on the cover.

⁸⁰ Whitehead, p. 8.

⁸¹ *Days in the Life: the gathering of the tribes*, prod. by Jonathon Green (broadcast 2 December 2000, BBC2) [accessed via the British Library Listening Service, V4648]. The group included Alex Trocchi, Michael Horovitz, Pete Brown, and Allen Ginsberg.

⁸² Portugés, p. 436.

⁸³ Whitehead, p. 9.

⁸⁴ Whitehead, p. 9.

GINSBERG AND MRS. ALBION

Arthur Ballard, Henri's then-employer at the Art College, took Ginsberg on a tour of the city, including a visit to the cast-iron church of St. George's, Everton, where, on the way out, Ginsberg noticed Albion Street, which he took as 'a Blakeian sort of sign'.⁸⁵ This, in turn, became the impetus for Henri's poem 'Mrs. Albion You've Got A Lovely Daughter'. Peter Davies's biography of Arthur Ballard makes no mention of the sightseeing tour for which Ballard was the chauffeur. This tour may well have been deliberately ignored by Davies, as throughout the biography he stresses the traditional attitude to painting which Ballard favoured, not wanting to associate the man with the 'kind of literary, theatrical or illustrative influences' of his staff such as Henri.⁸⁶ Indeed, Davies is dismissive of Henri throughout the book, calling him a 'well-read "magpie"',⁸⁷ intending to trivialize Henri's multimedia and Pop Art leanings. However, it is this magpie nature – and 'well-read' could hardly be an insult – that lies behind Henri's works, be they paintings or poetry, and 'Mrs. Albion' is no different.

David Bateman's interview with Henri in *Gladsongs and Gatherings*, which discusses the poem at some length, opens by declaring that:

Heavily inspired by New York Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, Adrian Henri brings home William Blake's vision of Albion: an England of heroic optimism as well as tedium and hypocrisy, and where the mythical exists within the commonplace, just waiting to be seen.⁸⁸

Whilst I disagree that Henri's work is 'heavily' inspired by Ginsberg, the Blakeian inspiration, via Ginsberg, can be clearly seen in this particular poem. The phrase 'daughters of Albion' is a nod of acknowledgement to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, one of Blake's prophetic books, and the 'daughters of Albion' write graffiti about him ('Billy Blake is fab'), as if he were a rock star (*TMS1*, 55).⁸⁹ In an interview published in 2001, Henri states that 'I actually recognised in Blake that there were these mythological giants, that the Daughters of Albion were actually the four major rivers of the country.'⁹⁰ The conceit of the poem is that the Mersey is one of these major rivers, but also that Albion's – England's –

⁸⁵ Henri, cited in Bateman, 'Singer of Meat and Flowers', p. 90.

⁸⁶ Peter Davies, *Arthur Ballard: Liverpool Artist & Teacher* (Gwent: Old Bakehouse Publications, 1996), p. 77.

⁸⁷ Davies, *Ballard*, p. 77.

⁸⁸ Bateman, 'Singer of Meat and Flowers', p. 73.

⁸⁹ The George poem quoted previously includes a common Liverpool graffito 'King Billy is fab'. This is a reference to the Protestant King William of Orange; Henri has appropriated it and transformed it into a praise of Blake.

⁹⁰ Adrian Henri, cited in Bateman, 'Singer of Meat and Flowers', p. 90-1.

‘most lovely daughter’ is the city of Liverpool itself. The opening lines of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* could certainly be read with reference to the Mersey and Liverpool: ‘Enslav’d, the Daughters of Albion weep; a trembling lamentation/ Upon their mountains; in their valleys, sighs toward America’ (*BCP*, 181). Looking towards America is what Liverpool as a port city does, and the opening of Henri’s poem echoes this as the ‘most lovely daughter sat on the banks of the Mersey dangling her landing stage in the water’ (*TMS1*, 55). As the poem proceeds, however, the ‘daughters of Albion’ refer not to the city, but to the city’s teenage daughters. Here we are faced with Henri’s own set of personal motifs: ‘taking off their navyblue schooldrawers and/putting on nylon panties ready for the night’ (*TMS1*, 55). The ‘navyblue schooldrawers’ are not only important as belonging to the schoolgirls Henri so admired but also as introducing the first of a sequence of colours in the poem, as their bodies are ‘pressed into dresses or sweaters/ lavender at The Cavern or pink at The Sink’ (*TMS1*, 55), with assonance linking the colours of the clothes to the music venues. Henri clearly takes inspiration from Ginsberg for this poem, but the significance is where he deviates, where he takes it from there: we have come a long way from Ginsberg’s Blake.

Blake’s poem has links to the political theory of his time, and in particular Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published the year before this, in 1792.⁹¹ Blake critiques the attitudes of the day, with Oothon lamenting the fact that men have ‘enclos’d my infinite brain into a narrow circle’ (*BCP*, 185), demanding she adhere to societal propriety in terms of her sexuality. Wollstonecraft’s treatise is a clear source for Oothon’s speech calling on ‘Urizen, Creator of Men’, ‘How different their eye and ear! How different the world to them!’ (*BCP*, 188), referring to the disparity between man and woman’s experiences. The speech occurs after Oothon has been kidnapped and raped by Bromion, and her original love, Theomorton, rejects her for no longer being pure, punishing them both, leaving them ‘bound back to back in Bromion’s caves’ (*BCP*, 183). Wollstonecraft and Blake’s critique of the rigidity of social codes, particularly in relation to sexuality and marriage, are evident in the same speech, with Blake using the literal chains Theomorton has bound Oothon with to represent marriage figuratively:

... she who burns with youth and knows no fixed lot, is bound
 In spells of law to one she loathes. And must she drag the chain
 Of life in weary lust? (*BCP*, 189)

Instead, what Oothon wants is freedom: ‘I cry, Love! Love! Love! Happy, happy love, free as the mountain wild!’ (*BCP*, 192). Henri’s ‘daughters of Albion’ (who, in Blake’s poem have no role other than to ‘hear [Oothon’s] woes, and echo back her sighs’ [*BCP*, 184]) are

⁹¹ Blake also illustrated the second edition of Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories from Real Life* (1971).

not bound by these codes, and are free to experience, in 1965, the realities of sexual liberation; having previously been ‘wondering if tonight will be the night’, they are then seen ‘worrying about what happened/ worrying about what hasn’t happened’ (the former presumably related to them needing to explain ‘why they didn’t go home’, and the latter the consequences of this in the failure to menstruate) (*TMS1*, 55). Read in the context of the Blake poem, these elements of Henri’s work are pushed to the foreground: just as Oothon describes herself in her defence as ‘a virgin fill’d with virgin fancies,/ Open to joy and to delight wherever beauty appears’ (*BCP*, 191), so too are these schoolgirls, ‘lovin’ an’ a-layin’ with those ‘*Beautiful boys with bright red guitars*’ (*TMS1*, 56), enjoying the freedom which Oothon did not have. However, these schoolgirls are also grounded in a particular time and place: it is those guitars, in the Cavern, in 1965, which are central to this poem. The poem is full of modern urban experiences:

The daughters of Albion
 arriving by underground at Central Station
 eating hot ecclescakes at the Pierhead
 writing ‘Billy Blake is fab’ on a wall in Mathew Street. (*TMS1*, 55)

Throughout the daughters are connected with local places: they arrive into the centre via Central Station (which forms the hub of the Merseyrail network), they say goodnight in Bebington (a small town in the Wirral), and relax in St. John’s Gardens (next to St. George’s Hall in Liverpool City Centre), where they have ‘old men looking up their skirts’ (*TMS1*, 55). However, not only do these ‘daughters of Albion’ use the ‘underground’ and the Mersey ‘dawn ferry’, they have ‘nylon panties’ and later ‘blue suspenderbelts’, and they ‘throw away their chewinggum ready for the goodnight kiss’ after a night out ‘pressed into dresses or sweaters’ at the Cavern (*TMS1*, 55-6). Mrs Albion’s lovely daughter here is very much of Henri’s time.

Henri’s poem carries the dedication ‘for Allen Ginsberg’ (*TMS1*, 55), but it is also a specifically Liverpool-centred poem, and one which is full of Henri’s own obsessions: popular culture, his love of Liverpool (and Liverpudlian girls), the urban landscape, and much more. By listing modern material elements (such as those quoted in the previous paragraph) Henri takes the poem away from Ginsberg’s idea of Blake’s Albion and into the twentieth century. The title itself refers to the pop song ‘Mrs. Brown You’ve Got A Lovely Daughter’, which would have been known by British audiences from the television play *The Lads* in 1963, before being recorded by Herman’s Hermits. The song was a hit in the UK, but in the April of 1965, just before Ginsberg came to Liverpool, the song had reached

number one in the U.S. Billboard.⁹² Music – and the scene in Liverpool at the time associated with it – is important to the ‘daughters of Albion’, who are, as we have seen, ‘reelin’ an’ a-rockin’ (TMS1, 56), evoking a Chuck Berry song,⁹³ and wearing ‘lavender at The Cavern or pink at The Sink’ (TMS1, 55), two of the most important music venues in Liverpool at the time. In contrast to Blake and Ginsberg, there is no visionary element: the poem remains grounded in contemporary urban life.

Thus, whilst the poem directly references Blake in its title and in the graffito ‘Billy Blake is fab’ (TMS1, 55), as Henri himself says, it ‘doesn’t depend on the reference to Blake’.⁹⁴ Whilst Henri’s poem came from a prompt by Ginsberg, the final work itself is resolutely Liverpudlian and Merseybeat.

GINSBERG’S POETIC INFLUENCE

‘Mrs Albion’ first appeared in print in *Underdog 7* in 1965. Although the precise date of publication is unknown, it must have been post-May, after Ginsberg’s visit. This volume also contains two poems by Ginsberg, ‘Who Will Take Over The Universe?’ and ‘Paterson’. The long line was certainly something the Merseybeat poets were aware of, from the City Lights volume *Howl and Other Poems*, but ‘Paterson’ is an excellent example of not only the long line but also the paragraphic prose line in Ginsberg’s work. The title recalls William Carlos Williams’s work of the same name, while referencing Ginsberg’s childhood town in New Jersey (a response to, and representation of, a particular space).

The placing of the two poems within the volume is also of note. First is ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’, a poem exploring:

⁹² *The Warner Guide to UK and US Hit Singles*, compiled by Dave McAleer, rev. edn. (London: Little, Brown, 1996), p. 368. Herman’s Hermits also starred in a 1968 comedy film of the same name. The song itself addresses the mother of a girl who has recently broken up with the protagonist (personified by the singer).

⁹³ ‘Reelin’ and Rockin’ was released in January 1958 as the B-side to ‘Sweet Little Sixteen’. Each verse ends with the line ‘We was reelin’ and a-rockin’, rollin’ till the break of dawn’. Chuck Berry also performed at the Cavern, 27 February 1967 (Spencer Leigh, *The Cavern: The Most Famous Club In The World* (London: SAF, 2008), p. 165). It is interesting to note here that the lyrics of ‘Sweet Little Sixteen’ echo Henri’s own fascination about schoolgirls: ‘She’s got the grown up blues/ Tight dress and lipstick, she’s sportin’ high heel shoes’, but ‘tomorrow morning, she’ll have to change her trend/ And be sweet sixteen and back in class again.’

Both tracks appear on the remastered album Chuck Berry, *Sweet Little Sixteen*, prod. by Various (Horizon, HZCD1001, 2006).

⁹⁴ Adrian Henri, cited in Bateman, ‘Singer of Meat and Flowers’, p. 91.

The Revolution in America
 already begun
 not bombs, but sit
 down strikes on top of submarines
 In Greyhound buses, on the sidewalks
 near the City Hall – (Underdog 7, n.p.)

What is particularly interesting about the poems that Ginsberg submitted to *Underdog* is that he gave Patten one new poem and one old poem, for both editions seven and eight. In this way he could disseminate his new work (in this case ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’), whilst also keeping older poems in circulation. This poem, clearly reworked after publication in *Underdog 7*, appears, amended, in the *Collected Poems* with different line breaks:

The Revolution in America
 already begun not bombs but sit
 down strikes on top submarines
 on sidewalks nearby City Hall – (GCP, 273)

The *Underdog 7* version gives the impression that the ‘Revolution’ is everywhere, with the list, preceded by a line break and a comma, of ‘on top of submarines/ In Greyhound buses, on the sidewalks’ (*Underdog 7*, n.p.). The final published version is more compressed. In both, the break of ‘sit/ down strikes’ emphasises the non-violent nature of the action.

The version of ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’ in *Underdog 7* ends with the line ‘America’s spending money to overthrow the Man –’, cutting off abruptly, and on the next page, ‘Paterson’ begins with ‘What do I want in these rooms papered with visions of money?/ How much can I make by cutting my hair?’ (*Underdog 7*, n.p.), with the repeated word ‘money’ linking the two. In the version published in Ginsberg’s *Collected Poems*, ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’ ends by repeating the question implicit in the title: ‘Who are the rulers of the earth’ (*GCP*, 273). The poem has already provided the answer. For example, the idea that one should: ‘Ignore the government,/ Send your protest to Clint Murchison’ (*GCP*, 273) suggests that Murchison might have more power than the elected government. This refers either to Murchison Senior, an oil magnate involved in the ‘hot oil’ trial of 1935, and a financier of the Republican party, or to his son, Murchison Junior, who inherited his father’s business and used the wealth for various projects, such as founding the Dallas Cowboys American Football team in 1960, and financing a pirate radio station, Radio Nord. Later the poem refers to ‘The Ghost of John F. Dulles’ (*GCP*, 273), Eisenhower’s Secretary of State and an influential figure in the Cold War (J. F. Dulles in the *Underdog* version). His ‘Ghost’ ‘hangs/ over America like dirty linen’ (*GCP*, 273), referring to his decisions early in the Cold War to adopt an aggressive stance against Communism, perhaps

causing more problems later for the present day (1961) Americans: ‘Fumes of Unconscious Gas/ emanate from his corpse’ (*GCP*, 273). Other political figures included in the poem are the revolutionaries Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, who are very much alive (‘Che Guevara has a big cock/ Castro’s balls are pink’ [*GCP*, 273]) whilst the government, represented by Dulles, is dead, although its corpse continues to contaminate.

‘Paterson’ is also a critique of contemporary American political reality, a rejection of the ‘rooms papered with visions of money’, listing instead a series of things he would rather do than be involved with ‘the slobs and dumbbells of the ego with money and power’ (*GCP*, 40). The bodily and grotesque images of ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’ are raised again in ‘Paterson’’s manifesto:

I would rather go mad, gone down the dark road to Mexico, heroin dripping in my
veins,

...

rather jar my body down the road, crying by a diner in the Western sun;
rather crawl on my naked belly over the tincans of Cincinnati;
rather drag a rotten railroad tie to a Golgotha in the Rockies;
rather, crowned with thorns in Galveston, nailed hand and foot in Los Angeles,
raised up to die in Denver,
pierced in the side in Chicago, perished and tombed in New Orleans and resurrected
in 1958 somewhere on Garret Mountain

(*GCP*, 40)

Ginsberg’s messiah complex is in evidence here: these lines clearly evoke Christ’s death and resurrection, here played out across the entire United States.⁹⁵ Ginsberg is also figured, from the first-person stance of the poem, as standing alone against the government that he attacked in ‘Who Will Take Over the Universe?’ – he is alone ‘screaming and dancing in praise of Eternity annihilating the sidewalk, annihilating reality,/ screaming and dancing against the orchestra in the destructible ballroom of the world’ (*GCP*, 40). The links between the two poems are highlighted in *Underdog 7* by the editorial decision mentioned above, to place the two poems one after another in that issue. However, as mentioned above, quite apart from these poems in *Underdog*, ‘Howl’ would also have been familiar to those interested in poetry in Liverpool. The performance of ‘Howl’ at the Six Gallery in San Francisco in October 1955 was undoubtedly an important moment. Whilst I do not have space here to discuss the Six Gallery reading, the fact that Ginsberg subsequently recorded the poem several times, and that the aural medium is one of the ways in which people at the

⁹⁵ The Rocky Mountain range extends along the West coast of America from Canada down to New Mexico; there are towns named Galveston in Texas (South) and Indiana (Mid East); Los Angeles, California (South West coast); Denver almost certainly refers to Denver, Colorado (Mid West) where the Beats spent some time (and which figures prominently in *On the Road*); Chicago, Illinois (North East); New Orleans, Louisiana (South); and Garret Mountain, New Jersey (North East coast).

time received the work (as in the McGough quotation earlier), shows the necessity of treating oral expression in Ginsberg's work as vital to the experience. Indeed, Ginsberg himself knew this, developing ways of intoning particular lines for the greatest effect – later readings are not naturalistic speeches, but present 'an exaggerated poetic form',⁹⁶ what Patrick Dunn describes as 'singsong', with 'iconic intonation.'⁹⁷ He also described this first public reading of 'Howl' as 'like a jam session', with Kerouac's interjections after each long line adding 'a kind of extra bop humor to the whole thing'.⁹⁸

The repeated 'who' opening each line in Part I of 'Howl' is particularly important in performance, as the anaphoric structure serves as a defining beat in this long poem, bringing the listener consistently and rhythmically back to the speaker, and to the 'best minds of his generation' (*GCP*, 126) to whom he is referring. The 'who' is repeated fifty-nine times, and gives a fixed point of return. It is also usually followed by an active verb, giving the poem a constant sense of movement and of physical action. The 'best minds' are those 'who bared', 'who cowered', 'who wandered', 'who jumped', 'who burned', 'who bit', 'who howled on their knees', 'who hiccupped', 'who wept', 'who coughed', 'who plunged', 'who fell on their knees', 'who crashed', and 'who threw', either watches or potato salad (*GCP*, 126-30). The overwhelming sense of activity in the poem has a powerful effect on the reader, but Ginsberg has also employed a range of rhetorical devices to build this even further. Take, for example, 'yacketayaaking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars' (*GCP*, 127). Here the sense of movement is created by the repeated 'ing' ending of the verbs, followed by a list punctuated by 'and' – here, depending on the performance, Ginsberg either speeds up the pace or deliberately uses 'and' to highlight each new section, building up the tension by accumulation through this connective. Thus, in the line: 'who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz' (*GCP*, 126) recordings of the poem usually show Ginsberg drawing out the vowel of 'jazz' after the fast-paced 'and' list, and then diffusing the tension finally through his sibilance.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Patrick Dunn, "'What If I Sang': The Intonation of Allen Ginsberg's Performances", *Style* 41.1 (2007), pp. 75-93, p. 83.

⁹⁷ Dunn, p. 83. Patrick Dunn's essay discusses the variations in each different recording of 'Howl'. His work is inspired in part by Ann Wennerstrom, whose theories of the music of everyday speech have made interesting background reading for my discussion of the Merseybeat movement's performative utterances. However, it is not within the bounds of this work to discuss Ginsberg's performances in more depth.

⁹⁸ Jane Kramer, *Allen Ginsberg in America*, (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 48.

⁹⁹ Such as the live recording from the Knitting Factory, New York, on *The Allen Ginsberg Audio Collection* (Caedmon Records, UACD 5328[3], 2004).

There is also a dislocation of usual prose sentence construction here, leading to a fundamentally image-based poem. The reader or listener receives phrases or lines as individual images to process and connect or juxtapose with the next section, as Ginsberg's un-grammatical phrasings jolt the reader or listener into concentrating fully on the words and their meaning. In 'Notes on Painting and Poetry', from *Tonight at Noon*, published in 1968, Henri directly cites Ginsberg as one of the poets whom he admired, who used 'a repeating or running phrase to link an image-sequence' (TAN, 71). He also observed that 'the image that follows must make the repeated word/phrase seem different each time, to avoid monotony' (TAN, 71) – exactly what Ginsberg achieves in 'Howl' with the use of a 'who'-plus-verb structure. Henri goes on to say that he sees his own 'Mrs Albion' as a 'modified example of this procedure' (TAN, 71). The anaphora which appears again and again in, for example, Henri's work in *The Mersey Sound* and *The Liverpool Scene* – 'Without You' and 'Love Is' being two of the most effective examples – is very much suited to oral expression, as the strong beat of repetition brings the reader back to the central theme of each text.

Although I have emphasised oral performance here, the look of the work on the page is also important. The first setting of 'Howl' in *Howl and Other Poems* was incorrect, the long lines cut up by the printers: 'His beloved work of art had turned into a typographical nightmare.'¹⁰⁰ It cost money to reset, but even though Ginsberg wrote to his brother Eugene complaining 'I hate to put out gold like that',¹⁰¹ he still felt it necessary to do so. As he wrote to Ferlinghetti, on 3rd July 1956, the paragraphic feel of the text was crucial to the experience:

The one element of order and prearrangement I did pay care to was arrangement into prose-paragraph strophes: each one definite unified long line. So any doubt about irregularity of right hand margin will be sure to confuse critical reader about intention of prosody. Therefore I've got to change it so it's right.¹⁰²

In a letter to John Hollander in autumn 1958, Ginsberg explains that each line is 'ONE SPEECH BREATH', 'I literally measure each line by the physical breath'.¹⁰³ This foregrounds vocalisation, but also goes beyond this: 'if you talk fast and excitedly you get weird syntax & rhythms, just like you think, or nearer to what you think'.¹⁰⁴ This, Ginsberg says, is 'sort of a search for the rhythm of the thoughts & their natural occurrence &

¹⁰⁰ Raskin, p. 185.

¹⁰¹ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Raskin, p. 185.

¹⁰² Allen Ginsberg, cited in Morgan and Peters, p. 43.

¹⁰³ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Kramer, p. 170-1. This is clearly influenced by Charles Olson's 'Projective Verse', an essay published in 1950 and then subsequently much-quoted in William Carlos Williams's *Autobiography* the following year.

¹⁰⁴ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Kramer, p. 171.

spacings & notational paradigms.’¹⁰⁵ It is the speed and compression of the thought process that he is trying to achieve in print. In a conversation recorded in *Composed on the Tongue*, Ginsberg states ‘my basic measure is a unit of thought’,¹⁰⁶ and that this coincides with ‘natural speech pauses ... the pauses and stops *would* fit if someone were in intimate conversation’.¹⁰⁷

A ‘stream of consciousness’ poetic is also present in Henri’s work, but this is used not as a way of expressing the contents of the mind, as in Ginsberg, but rather as a score for performance. In *The Liverpool Scene*, a volume containing much of Henri’s early work written around the time of Ginsberg’s visit, there are several poems in which the ‘rhythm of the thoughts’ is clear – such as the use of short pause caesuras and ellipsis, the paragraphic line, the present tense, and the juxtaposition of image and thoughts in ‘Liverpool 8’:

The cathedral which dominates our lives, pink at dawn and grey at sunset... The cathedral towering over the houses my friends live in...

Beautiful reddish purplish bricks walls, pavements with cracked flags where children play hopscotch, the numbers ascending in silent sequence in the mist next morning... Streets where you play out after tea... Back doors and walls with names, hearts, kisses scrawled or painted...

(*TLS*, 13)

Here it is a social space which Henri is conjuring up through a ‘stream of consciousness’ listing of images. The focus on performance and communication in Henri’s work takes Ginsberg’s ideas about ‘natural speech’ and turns them into a way of connecting with his audience, making that ‘intimate conversation’ public and performative rather than private and contemplative.

There are no letters in the Archives between Ginsberg and Henri, though we know that Henri was his main guide around Liverpool.¹⁰⁸ A notebook from early 1967 has a page of seven questions for a ‘Ginsberg interview’, including notes from ‘1. Symbol to 2 generations. Also most (destructively) influential poet since Eliot’, to ‘7. Travel: how necessary?’ (see fig 2.2).¹⁰⁹ These two questions in particular show a resistance to Ginsberg’s

¹⁰⁵ Allen Ginsberg, cited in Kramer, p. 173.

¹⁰⁶ Allen Ginsberg, *Composed on the Tongue: Literary Conversations, 1967-1977*, ed. by Donald Allen (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1980), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ Whilst all three poets say ‘we’ when referring to various aspects of Ginsberg’s visit, such as Patten’s comments about going drinking together (Warner, ‘Raising the Consciousness?’, p. 105), this gives a misleading sense of collective experience. It is clear that the day’s sightseeing tour which prompted ‘Mrs. Albion’ was undertaken by Ballard, Henri, and Ginsberg. There is also evidence, as I have suggested, for Ginsberg staying with Henri in Canning Street.

¹⁰⁹ The list reads as follows:

influence: the idea of Ginsberg being ‘destructive’ is interesting, showing that Henri felt, just like McGough, that too much influence by another poet can be detrimental to one’s own poetic.¹¹⁰ The comment about travel is particularly significant for what we know of Henri personally, that he was the only one of the three Merseybeat poets who stayed in Liverpool. By contrast, travel for Ginsberg was particularly relevant when one considers the timing of this question: as noted earlier, the visit in 1965 when Henri and Ginsberg met was part of Ginsberg’s ‘world tour’, and once he returned to America he would write *The Fall of America*, a sequence of poems dated 1965-1971, exploring the Mid West and criss-crossing back and forth across the continent – thus the ‘necessity’ of travel for the American poet becomes obvious both in his life and his poetics, whereas the opposite is the case with Henri.

Henri also has notes reading ‘Poetics – breath as measure etc.’ and ‘Impulses (breath)’ (fig 2.2), which give clues as to what Henri was interested by in Ginsberg’s work; in particular, how he moves off the page into performance. Henri’s ‘Notes on Painting and Poetry’ explains his position, worth quoting here in full:

Charles Olson’s celebrated essay *Projective Verse* can be read as a call to purify one’s own dialect. The whole concept of writing for your own breath-and-speech measure is obviously conditioned by the kind of speech you hear around you from birth. This is what makes English ‘beat’ poets so hopeless: there are dozens of them still publishing in mimeographed magazines the same old poems written in Mock-American. They follow the manner, not the spirit of the Americans. The great post-war revolution in American poetry consisted of writers like Kerouac and Ginsberg developing a new poetics and prosody by discovering their own voice, and recognising this quality in the practise of older writers like Charles Olson and William Carlos Williams. But Williams’ voice is not like Ginsberg’s voice, nor like Creeley’s. And so a writer living in Liverpool and writing for his own voice and breath-measure will obviously be very different again. (TAN, 77)

The ‘breath-and-speech measure’ is particularly relevant for a poet for whom performance was so important. It was especially important in the summer of 1967, when this interview preparation was taking place, as the two print publications featuring the Merseybeat poets had just come out, as well as *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene* LP, and Merseybeat was

‘Ginsberg Interview

Symbol to 2 generations. Also most (destructively) influential poet since Eliot. Significance realized by governments e.g. Czechoslovakia, etc. How does this affect him?

‘Liverpool’ quote. Ask to explain about beat – has he changed his ideas?

Poetics – breath as measure etc.

Live poems devices to attain ecstasy.

Impulses (breath)

England – misinterpretation as social protest – meaning as art Pop Art.

Travel: how necessary??

In terms of dating these pages of the notebook, a list of ‘things to do 2.vii.67’ appears four pages before the pages referring to Ginsberg.

¹¹⁰ See his dislike of the Beat imitations of his Liverpool contemporaries, quoted at the end of Chapter One and the beginning of this chapter.

propelled into the national consciousness, followed swiftly by bookings for performances on rather larger stages than the poets had been used to at clubs and pubs in Liverpool.

Two pages later in this particular notebook there is a page titled ‘Alan: Quotes’ (fig 2.3) – including part of the famous Liverpool quotation ‘the centre of the consciousness of the human universe’. Before this, however, appears two comments: ‘interested in states of altered perception, altered consciousness, deepened feeling’ and ‘let the mind supply the language’. The first clearly relates to the effects of drug-taking and drug-taking as a way of exploring ‘states of altered perception’, which was part of the Beat programme (one of the meanings behind the idea of ‘openness’ included in the definitions of ‘Beat’ in the *Friction* and *New York Times Magazine* articles quoted at the beginning of this chapter). The second comment in Henri’s notebook refers to Ginsberg’s injunction to ‘trust the mind’: ‘talk as you think’.¹¹¹ Language is clearly a focus of concern, as Henri’s comment ‘Wychita [sic] V.S. – language the subject?’ highlights this as a topic for discussion.

‘Wichita Vortex Sutra’ is one of the poems included in *The Fall of America*, an anti-Vietnam War poem composed by Ginsberg as he travelled. Writing about the composition process, Ginsberg states that the lines are arranged ‘according to their organic time-spacing as per the mind’s coming up with the phrases and the mouth pronouncing them.’¹¹² This emphasises Ginsberg’s trusting in ‘the mind’ to provide the form, but it also foregrounds language itself as the medium, the vocalisation of the words and the spaces between them. The technological aspect of composition is also represented in the printed text:

When transcribing, I pay attention to the clicking on and off of the machine [the hand-held tape recorder], which is literally the pauses ... And then, having paid attention to the clicks, arrange the phrasings on the page visually, as somewhat the equivalent of how they arrive in the mind and how they’re vocalized on the tape recorder.¹¹³

Another important aspect of the poem’s engagement with language is the inclusion of advertisements, road signs, and various reports (newspaper and radio) which Ginsberg read as he travelled, and read out into his tape recorder. Henri also used ‘found words’ in his work, especially in his paintings or ‘works on canvas’.¹¹⁴ Ginsberg opens the poem with just such an announcement, segueing into his own description of the town cited:

¹¹¹ Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 40.

¹¹² Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 29.

¹¹³ Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ ‘The Entry of Christ Into Liverpool’ is just one example, poem and painting, where, as the procession moves through Liverpool, the reader encounters the various hoardings and street graffiti in the path. This piece is discussed at length in chapters Four and Five.

Turn Right Next Corner
The Biggest Little Town in Kansas
 Macpherson
 Red sun setting flat plains west streaked
 with gauzy veils, chimney mist spread
 around Christmas-tree-bulbed-refineries ... (GCP, 394)

Two stanzas on, he returns to Macpherson as a venue, playing with the name of the town and his own entry with ‘PERSON appearing in Kansas!’ (GCP, 395). The poem starts with Ginsberg’s entry into the town, with the Vietnam War element becoming explicit later: ‘What if I sang till Students knew I was free/ of Vietnam, trousers, free of my own meat’ (GCP, 397).

The simple reportage and inclusion of ‘found’ language which appears throughout *The Fall of America* becomes sinister in this poem, with direct quotations from the media presented on the page as prose to emphasise their source:

Kansas City Times 2/14/66: ‘Word reached U.S. authorities that Thailand’s leaders feared that in Honolulu Johnson might have tried to persuade South Vietnam’s rulers to ease their stand against negotiating with the Viet Cong. American officials said these fears were groundless and Humphrey was telling the Thais so.’ (GCP, 400)

In a passage full of figures and percentages Ginsberg undermines the government’s media presence:

McNamara made a ‘bad guess’
 ‘Bad Guess?’ chorused the Reporters.
 Yes, no more than a Bad Guess, in 1962
 ‘8000 American Troops handle the Situation’
 Bad Guess (GCP, 398)

The ‘bad guess’ of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara comes from ‘[Senator] Aiken Republican on the radio’ (GCP, 398), who apparently claimed that McNamara’s prediction of the war (sanitised here by his choice of the word ‘situation’) needing only 8000 troops was ‘no more than a bad guess’.¹¹⁵ The ‘bad guess’ is repeated not only four times in five lines here, but also again twice more in this section, culminating in ‘the latest quotation in the human meat market –/ Father I cannot tell a lie!’ (GCP, 399), evoking the Stock Exchange and George Washington’s famous words to further indict the US government and the media front.

¹¹⁵ Paul Carroll, “‘I Lift My Voice Aloud,/ Make Mantra of American Language Now.../ I Here Declare the End of the War’”, in *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*, ed. by Lewis Hyde (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984), pp. 292-313, p. 295.

Language is clearly confronted as the main vehicle of political propaganda in this poem:

The war is language,
language abused
for Advertisement,
language used
like magic for power on the planet
Black Magic language,
formulas for reality (GCP, 401)

The 'Black Magic language' already mentioned is joined by advertisements such as 'you're the Pepsi Generation' (GCP, 398), a phrase written on recruiting billboards. Cynical instructions from Ginsberg to 'put it this way', for the newspapers to spin (to use our contemporary language) the facts, such as 'Lincoln Nebraska morning Star –/ *Vietnam War Brings Prosperity*' (GCP, 399) lambasts early media management of the war. How to reclaim language is Ginsberg's goal:

I search for the language
that is also yours –
almost all our language has been taxed by war. (GCP, 406)

The titular 'sutra' shows Ginsberg's intention of forming a new line of thinking, reclaiming 'our' language via transcendence, and turning this language into an anti-war mantra. Instead of 'Headline language poetry' (GCP, 400), language could be used to stop the war. He starts by calling 'all Powers of imagination/ to my side' (GCP, 406), invoking various holy men and deities (and William Blake), asking them to 'Come to my lone presence/ into this Vortex named Kansas' (GCP, 407). He then intones the mantra itself, aiming to create a mantra which by its very force could affect reality:

I lift my voice aloud,
make mantra of American language now,
I here declare the end of the war! (GCP, 407)

This is the central problem with which Ginsberg is wrestling here: what can poetic language achieve, but it is also what *he* can make it achieve. It is 'my lone presence' and 'my voice' here, and a few lines later he tells us again: 'this act done by my own voice' (GCP, 407), emphasising his role and his language. In his discussion of this poem in Lewis Hyde's volume of essays *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*, Paul Carroll cites his correspondence with Ginsberg, presenting Ginsberg as a 'priestly legislator'¹¹⁶ in the manner of Shelley, and arguing that the 'Wichita Vortex Sutra' mantra is an example of how poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. He quotes Ginsberg as saying in response that 'the

¹¹⁶ Carroll, in Hyde, p. 292.

In *Composed on the Tongue*, Ginsberg states that he aimed to ‘set up a force field of language which is so solid and absolute as a statement and a realization of an assertion by my will’ that it would counteract the pronouncements of the State Department. By making ‘my language identical with the historical event’ he could bring about end of the war, but ‘the point is, how strong is my word?’¹²⁰ The mantra has failed, in part, because ‘American language now’ was not good enough. He goes on to quote Shelley (as Carroll did in this context), saying that ‘the poet’s word is the strongest’.¹²¹ But ultimately, the poet’s word and desire is not aligned with the words and desires of others: whilst he does say ‘our language has been taxed by war’ (*GCP*, 406, my emphasis), it is only ‘I here declare the end of the war!’ (*GCP*, 407, my emphasis) so his will for the end of the war will not prevail (at the time of the writing of the mantra, and the poem) because it does not come from or affect the majority consciousness – it is only *his* voice proclaiming the mantra.¹²²

It is unclear whether Henri’s interview with Ginsberg was ever conducted, but, if it were, no transcript has survived. Henri’s comments, however, reveal his readings of Ginsberg and what he took from him. Similarly, what is obvious from Patten’s selections for *Underdog* is what Ginsberg meant to him.¹²³ This, namely, is America. In the first place, American politics and Ginsberg’s visionary responses to US realities, and in the second place its ‘cool’ lifestyle – *Underdog* 8, in 1966, includes ‘In Society’ and ‘Note Poem’, both about socialising. Patten’s editorial decision to include the latter two poems, and in the same volume, presents Ginsberg and his poetry in a very specific light to the audience.

‘In Society’, with the epigraph ‘Dream 1947’ in the *Underdog* version (in the *Collected Poems* this is expanded to ‘Dream New York – Denver, Spring 1947, and is the first poem in the collection), states in the opening line it is about a ‘cocktail party’, setting up the mood to be shattered. The authorial ‘I’ is presented throughout. ‘I was/ offered refreshments, which I accepted’ sets up the first shock of the poem, as the refreshment is:

a sandwich of pure meat: an
enormous sandwich of human flesh,

¹²⁰ Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 47.

¹²¹ Ginsberg, *Composed*, p. 47.

¹²² Ginsberg was very active in peace protests and other countercultural causes. Public opinion about the War in Vietnam did in part change over the course of the 1960s because of such groups, with ex-Vietnam Veterans speaking out. Thus, we could say that the majority consciousness Ginsberg was trying to reach in this poem, did, in reality, affect the end of the War.

¹²³ Indeed, Patten was aware of what he was doing, as a note he wrote to himself shows. A handwritten ‘advice sheet’ for making a magazine (‘If 28 pages, inc. covers, then 20 pages of poems, no more than one poem per poet unless very short’), lists a number of poets, then at the bottom Patten has written: ‘Allen Ginsberg: I have poem seek other opinions first’ (Patten/1/1/3/40/8).

I noticed, while I was chewing on it,
it also included a dirty asshole. (Underdog 8, n.p.)

The poem is a simple anecdotal record of a dream, using a first person narrative. The ending of this poem is also interesting:

‘Why you narcissistic bitch! How
can you decide when you don’t even
know me,’ I continued in a violent
and messianic voice, inspired at
last, dominating the whole room. (Underdog 8, n.p.)

Whilst there is a comic element to this, the fact remains that ‘Ginsberg as messiah’ would have been understood by his readers – he presented, after the ‘Howl’ obscenity trial, and his increasingly vocal political statements, a shorthand for the counter-cultural movement, an image of the alternative. For Eric Mottram, in *Allen Ginsberg in the Sixties*, this period is about ‘power and paranoia’,¹²⁴ with Ginsberg railing against society. Specifically, *state* power and *political* paranoia, as in ‘Wichita Vortex Sutra’, is an important issue for Ginsberg at this time, for raising awareness. Mottram argues that: ‘Ginsberg wants to dominate the room but only for a purpose: the expansion and regeneration of mutual consciousness.’¹²⁵ However, I would argue that Ginsberg’s misogyny is also at work – the woman is specifically a ‘fluffy female’ and a ‘bitch’ – and the attack of ‘In Society’ is much more localised and personal than the attacks on the state in other poems discussed here.

In ‘Note Poem’, the reader of *Underdog* is presented with another party. In Patten’s submissions folder for this volume, the manuscript copy of ‘Note Poem’ is a single sheet, the text of the poem typewritten, with significant red pencil additions; the title ‘here note poem’ is crossed out, with ‘Note Poem’ written above it, and the contextualising quotation is also struck through: ‘writ at country house of novelist Ken Kesey everyone high on LSD & DMT big party with mototcycle [sic] gang Hell’s Angels’ (Patten/1/1/1/3/28). There is also a post-it note attached to this sheet, added presumably when Patten was organising his files for inclusion in the archive, which reads ‘As sent me for Underdog by AG’ (fig 2.4). It is not clear if the red pencil comes from Ginsberg before hand-over, or from Patten as notes to the printer.¹²⁶ However, the exclusion of the quotation removes certain aspects, and what the reader of *Underdog* receives is not, therefore, ‘First Party at Ken Kesey’s with Hell’s Angels’, which is the title in Ginsberg’s *Collected Poems*, but the anonymised ‘Note Poem’, lacking specificity. Without the publication title or the contextualising quotation, there is no

¹²⁴ Eric Mottram, *Allen Ginsberg in the Sixties* (Brighton: Unicorn, 1972), p. 6.

¹²⁵ Mottram, *Sixties*, p. 6.

¹²⁶ Patten himself cannot remember the specifics, but says that the poems were sent to him by airmail after the 1965 visit (Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012).

anticipation of violence from the Hell's Angels (linked to the presence of the police) to be dispelled by the lack of violence in the poem, or the LSD association of Kesey himself (or, indeed, what *first* party implies, of there being more to come).¹²⁷

In *It Was Twenty Years Ago Today*, Derek Taylor highlights the drug connection, segueing straight from a discussion of the Hell's Angels who 'took the acid that would change them and become as little children' (removing the violent element often associated with the gang) to 'Allen Ginsberg wrote a poem', and quoting it in full.¹²⁸ The allusion Taylor makes to the Hell's Angels 'becom[ing] as little children' is a reference from Matthew 18:3: 'And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The poem registers a 1960s faith in communal drug-taking as a path to a better society (here, as elsewhere, conceived as a taming of Hell's Angels). This also links to the Beat movement's explorations of drug-taking as a way of better accessing one's consciousness and reaching a higher truth – Ginsberg was, for example, involved with Timothy Leary and his LSD experiments.¹²⁹

What we have in 'Note Poem', in contrast to 'In Society' and the 'cocktail party', is a 'house party' in the woods:

3AM and the blast of loudspeakers
hi-fi Rolling Stones Ray Charles Beatles
Jumping Joe Jackson and twenty youths
dancing to the vibrations through the floor. (Underdog 8, n.p.)

Outside the house, all is calm; it is a 'cool black night', the cars are parked in the 'shade' from the 'stars dim above' (*Underdog* 8, n.p.). Inside, the movement implied by the dancing is later joined by the action of beer cans 'littering' the yard, building up a picture of these 'sweating dancing' youths (*Underdog* 8, n.p.). The 'scarlet/ tights' of one party-goer are echoed in the last line of the poem where, bringing it all back to reality, '4 police cars' parked symbolically outside the gate, have their 'red lights revolving in the leaves' (*Underdog* 8, n.p.). What here is mostly innocent lacks the implicit threats of other published versions (with their reference to Hell's Angels), and perhaps links more closely to the lifestyles of its readers in Liverpool – particularly the opposition of party-goers and the police, of pleasure being subject to constraint. This poem is also very different to the other Ginsberg poem in the issue, it has an objective presentation of details, without a first person narrator, and a paratactic basis.

¹²⁷ The actual events of this party are recorded in Miles, *Ginsberg*, p. 475.

¹²⁸ Derek Taylor, *It Was Twenty Years Ago Today* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1987), p. 105.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert, *The Psychedelic Experience: a manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: University Editions, 1964).

After the Liverpool visit in May 1965, Ginsberg continued to communicate with Patten. He also wrote the back cover blurb for Patten's first solo collection, *Little Johnny's Confession*. The Liverpool Archives include a biographical note from 1966 describing Patten as 'editor of tiny demonic Underdog', 'finely devising his own education at the Sink/ the Cavern the Philharmonic & nearby beds and bookstores' (fig 2.5).¹³⁰ Ginsberg certainly felt comfortable writing to Patten in March 1967 for help locating a friend of his 'girlfriend and guru' Maretta, as 'I thought you or Adrian Henri might know of him'.¹³¹ The letter goes on to ask Patten to look after Maretta 'if she shows up there', signing off with a postscript telling him: 'I'll be in England in July so maybe see you then, Love, as ever, Allen Ginsberg'.¹³² Within the archive, the next recorded letter from Ginsberg is in July 1972 (replying to Patten's of that February), five years later. This is a letter between equals. Ginsberg offers Patten advice about his agent – which shows Ginsberg recognises Patten as a fellow professional poet – and (perhaps as a postscript, written along the left hand edge of the letter) tells him of his work, 'improvising Blues 3 chords C F G, or G C D etc.', and signs off with 'Hope to see you here love Allen'.¹³³

Aside from the two brief letters, the only record in Ginsberg's own words of the Liverpool visit is in 'Who Be Kind To', addressed, at least in part, to the poet Harry Fainlight, and written, according to Miles, three days before the Albert Hall reading where it had its first performance.¹³⁴ 'Who Be Kind To' references the London visit, specifically in terms of connection, and the need for physical contact:

For this is the joy to be born, the kindness
 received thru strange eyeglasses on
 a bus thru Kensington,
 the finger touch of the Londoner on your thumb,
 that borrows light from your cigarette (GCP, 360)

A few lines further into the poem, the Liverpool visit is mentioned. Where the previous section foregrounds touch, the sense emphasised here is sound:

¹³⁰ Letter from Ginsberg to Patten, 8 April 1966, Patten/3/1/5/1. Ginsberg has written on the bottom of this typed page: 'Brian – Change 19 above to any age you want, I first wrote equivalent of my own reflections', intending Patten to reuse his words.

¹³¹ Letter from Ginsberg to Patten, 5 March 1967, Patten/3/1/5/2.

¹³² He did return to Liverpool, but not until 1984 – Ginsberg records it in his 'Chronological Addenda' with one word 'Liverpool': 'One World Poetry Brussels visit; Liverpool; poetry reunion Albert Hall, London, with Basil Bunting, Tom Pickard, Gregory Corso.' (Ginsberg, *Selected Essays*, 198). The Liverpool Archives have nothing on record in the poets' papers about this.

¹³³ Letter from Ginsberg to Patten, 2 July 1972, Patten/3/1/5/3.

¹³⁴ Miles, *Sixties*, p. 61.

the boom boom that bounces in the joyful
 bowels as the Liverpool Minstrels of
 CavernSink
 raise up their joyful voices and guitars
 in electric Afric hurrah
 for Jerusalem –
 The saints come marching in, Twist &
 Shout, and Gates of Eden are named
 In Albion again (GCP, 360)

Ginsberg repeats ‘joyful’ here twice to emphasise the emotion, which is then linked to religious fervour at ‘raise up’, the ‘saints’, and ‘Jerusalem’, the latter an allusion to Blake, alongside the ‘Gates of Eden’ and ‘Albion’.¹³⁵ As well as the ‘Liverpool Minstrels of/ CavernSink’ (eliding the two into one venue) with ‘guitars/ in electric Afric hurrah’, he also includes the song ‘Twist & Shout’, which was a hit in 1962 for the Isley Brothers and subsequently (and more importantly) appeared on the Beatles’ first album *Please Please Me* the following year.¹³⁶ Thus, within a few short lines Ginsberg manages to encapsulate his Liverpool experience. That ‘Liverpool Minstrels’ are raising ‘their joyful voices and guitars/ in electric Afric hurrah for Jerusalem’ links the two sides of the Atlantic; ‘electric Afric’ implies the debt that current popular music owes to Blues music, while ‘Jerusalem’ records that Blakeian visionary aspect that Henri responded to in ‘Mrs. Albion’. The links across the Atlantic between England, Africa, and America also evoke the ‘triangular trade’, mentioned in the first chapter, upon which Liverpool’s nineteenth century fortune was based.

The reference to Albion in ‘Who Be Kind To’ is also significant. After the Albert Hall reading (which disappointed Ginsberg in its ramshackle nature, too many poets, and his own embarrassment for being drunk by the time his turn came), Ginsberg drafted, but never sent, a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*:

there was the spontaneity of youths working together for a public incarnation of a new consciousness everyone’s aware of this last half decade in Albion (thanks to the many minstrels from Mersey’s shores & Manhattan’s).¹³⁷

Whilst the Mersey here is not referring to the Liverpool poets, but rather to the Beatles, one cannot read the reference to Albion without thinking of all the ‘Blakeian signs’ Ginsberg found, or wanted to find, in Liverpool and his England visit.

¹³⁵ ‘Gates of Eden’ was also a song by Bob Dylan, on his *Bringing it All Back Home* album, released in March 1965 (Columbia, CS9128), two months before Ginsberg wrote this poem.

¹³⁶ *Please Please Me* topped the UK album chart for 30 weeks in 1963, with ‘Twist and Shout’ reaching number 3 in the UK Chart in August, and reaching number 2 in the US Chart in April 1964 (*The Warner Guide to UK and US Hit Singles*, pp. 86, 93)

¹³⁷ Ginsberg, cited in Miles, *Sixties*, p. 61.

CONCLUSION

In his letter dated 8th April 1966, Ginsberg's biographical note includes reference to Patten's 'short poems with Scouse vowels' (fig 2.5). This, like the other letters between these two, is not a letter to a fan, but to a fellow poet. This, I believe, is significant in the light of how the relationship between Ginsberg and the Merseybeat poets has been viewed. The relationship, as I stated at the beginning of this chapter, is not simple. The position of all three Liverpool Poets is clear in their critical comments on the Beat imitations of their contemporaries. They are aware of the American writers, but they are not their followers:

They're all there and hanging out in San Francisco, with Ferlinghetti, or in New York. It was great – liberating – and that's what we talked about too, from our point of view: your relationships, celebrating the life around you, celebrating ordinary conversation style... and what's more real than that? ¹³⁸

It is worth noting here that John Lennon arrived at a similar conclusion; a 'prescient belief' held by Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe, according to Philip Norman, was that 'the city to which they belonged [Liverpool] was unique in Britain – in the whole world – and deserved to be celebrated in art and culture just as American Beat poets ... had enshrined San Francisco.'¹³⁹ Merseybeat poetry is influenced by the thoughts behind the American movement, by the emphasis on communication both for and within an outsider group (the Six Gallery was emphatically not an academic setting), as well as taking performative lessons from Ginsberg. Sources of influence are clearly complex, and the Beat movement was undoubtedly exciting, fresh, and new. But the Merseybeat poets took from it what they felt was useful, applying their own English – and more specifically Liverpoolian – sensibilities, and, whilst clearly admiring Ginsberg, not merely imitating his work. As we saw earlier, the 'daughters of Albion' take the 'dawn ferry' home, not a New York yellow cab.

At some point during his time in Liverpool, Ginsberg did declare that Liverpool was 'the centre of the consciousness of the human universe'. The full quotation as it appears in *The Liverpool Scene* is 'Liverpool, which I think is at the present moment the centre of the consciousness of the human universe' (*TLS*, 15). It is also recorded in the anthology as 'Allen Ginsberg talking' – in other words, this is not a considered academic position, but perhaps just something said lightly in discussion. Furthermore, the qualification at the beginning of Ginsberg's remark – 'at the present moment' – has been ignored. Whilst calling the phrase a 'typical exaggeration', George Melly says that 'if you substitute "the

¹³⁸ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

¹³⁹ Norman, p. 136.

young” for “the human universe” it was surprisingly accurate.’¹⁴⁰ This was 1965, Beatlemania and the Mersey Beat scene were at the top of the charts, but if it was Liverpool that year, it would be ‘Swinging London’ the next. In his autobiography, McGough treats the quotation with typical humour, saying that ‘depending on who you talked to in the pubs and clubs around town’, Ginsberg ‘was either quoting the bleeding obvious or going just a teeny-weeny bit over the top’.¹⁴¹

The 1965 visit was, indeed, ‘more of a social whirl than a performing occasion’,¹⁴² but it is also the case that the Merseybeat poets also thought of it as a social experience. They took Ginsberg to the Cavern, the Walker Art Gallery,¹⁴³ arranged a tour of the city, and brought him into their social circle at the Phil and Ye Cracke. Ginsberg certainly didn’t go to Liverpool primarily to meet the poets: it was the music he was most interested in. But this works both ways – the Merseybeat poets, by 1965, had already carved themselves a local niche, performing weekly sessions at pubs and clubs and, in Patten’s case, producing a little magazine. That national exposure for the movement came after Ginsberg’s visit owes more to the fact that the world was focused on the city for its music, rather than because the literary world was awoken at this moment by Ginsberg.

A parallel can be drawn here with the dedication of *The Liverpool Scene*: ‘To the Beatles without whom etc.’ – the book certainly might not have been possible without the Beatles, in that media attention from the capital and elsewhere was drawn into the city largely because of the success of the group (Beatlemania), but this was not true of the scene itself. Indeed, Donald Carroll added this dedication more as a marketing tool than for any real gratitude to the group – and note, too, even within the dedication, the irreverence of the ‘etc.’. Mersey Beat might have been the impetus for external eyes turning on the city and for Ginsberg’s own visit, but the poetry scene of Merseybeat was alive before that and would continue on the same path after he had returned to London and the Beatles had cut their next LP.

¹⁴⁰ Melly, *Revolt*, p. 214.

¹⁴¹ McGough, *Said*, p. 164. Furthermore, Ginsberg appears to reposit his grand phrase from Liverpool back to San Francisco two years later, as Derek Taylor quotes him as saying, in 1987, ‘Nineteen sixty-seven was a remarkable year for young people because solitary individuals’ consciousness seemed finally to come together in the Human Be-In in San Francisco’ (Taylor, p. 178).

¹⁴² Warner, ‘Raising the Consciousness?’, p. 100. McGough also summed up his memories of the visit by saying ‘He sort of came and went really as far as that’s concerned’ (Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012).

¹⁴³ In his 2006 interview with Warner, Patten claims that: ‘We both took a tab [of acid] and spent hours and hours in the Walker Art Gallery walking around. We saw it in a new light, in fact many different lights.’ (Brian Patten, cited in Warner, ‘Raising the Consciousness?’, p. 105).

CHAPTER THREE: VERBAL EXPRESSION AND THE LIVE EVENT

The preceding chapters have discussed the ideas behind the ‘Mersey’ and ‘Beat’ sides of the movement. The two aspects come together here to show how Merseybeat manifested itself in Liverpool in the 1960s: by live performance. We have already seen that literary critics have, in the past, dismissed the movement as lacking in substance – something which the poets have used to comic effect, as in their listing of some early negative reviews in their tour to celebrate the 30th anniversary of *The Mersey Sound* (see fig 3.1). However, this thesis argues that critics have not used the appropriate tools to deal with these poets, or have ignored the other aspects of their work which exist outside of the printed page, which has prevented evaluation of the movement on its proper grounds – loco-specificity, verbal expression, audience connection, live performance.

Allen Ginsberg’s visit to Liverpool was not the only way in which the Beats connected with the Merseybeat movement. The Six Gallery reading, mentioned in the previous chapter, which launched Ginsberg’s poetic career, is significant in a wider context as the catalyst for a new kind of poetry reading. What is notable about the Six Gallery reading is its informality. It was in an art gallery, not a lecture hall, and, crucially, the audience had a part to play. Jack Kerouac’s interjections during ‘Howl’, shouting ‘Go!’ after each line, driving Ginsberg on, were effectively part of the reading itself.¹ Don Cusic, evaluating Ginsberg in *The Poet as Performer* (a survey of performers of the twentieth century, and how poets might deal with the demands of performance), writes that it is ‘his performances’ and ‘the voice’ that made him ‘a well-known poet’.² He notes that the wider Beat movement sought to ‘capture the speech of the voices around them (as well as their own) and put it down on paper so the reader “heard” the words as well as read them’.³ This emphasis on voice, indeed on ‘*the voice*’, was a great inspiration to Merseybeat.

Whilst the previous chapter ended by discussing the desire of the Merseybeat poets to distance themselves from American Beat poetry, what the quotation from Adrian Henri’s ‘Notes on Painting and Poetry’ showed is not only the fact that ‘your own breath-and-speech measure is obviously conditioned by the kind of speech you hear around you from birth’ (*TAN*, 77), and so therefore should reference Liverpool rather than New York, but also that it is *yours*. To write for one’s own voice also means that one’s own voice is needed in the performance of that writing. Charles Olson’s ‘Projective Verse’ is a clear inspiration,

¹ See the description of the set-up and the reading itself in Barry Miles, *Allen Ginsberg: a biography* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), pp. 192-4.

² Don Cusic, *The Poet as Performer* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), p. 75.

³ Cusic, p. 80.

alongside Ginsberg, for the idea of breath-measure: ‘the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes,’ and poetry comes from: ‘the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the syllable,/ the HEART by way of the BREATH, to the line’.⁴ The authorial presence and the physicality of live performance are aspects of the Merseybeat movement which deserve exploration.

McGough saw ‘our local Beat poets’ writing about ‘yellow cabs, and walking along 52nd Street’ because ‘this was the hip furniture you could bring into your verse to appear cool.’⁵ The Merseybeat poets, on the other hand, took from the Beat movement an emphasis on everyday life and on one’s own experience, so it was natural for them to ‘set poems in a Liverpool landscape’.⁶ In fact, despite leaving the city in 1967, Brian Patten has not lost his Liverpool accent. By reading poems in his own voice, Patten is taking the same stand, retaining his specific Liverpool roots. In 2010, at a reading at the Bluecoat, Patten made a comment about his accent and use of voice. Introducing ‘Cousin Lesley’s See-Through Stomach’, inspired by watching *The Invisible Man* on television with his cousin as a child, he said: ‘only a Liverpudlian could get away with this non-rhyme’.⁷ He then proceeded to read the opening line: ‘Cousin Lesley took a pill/ That made her go invisible’⁸ and deliberately paused after this. ‘Pill’ and ‘invisible’, which do not rhyme in Received Pronunciation, do rhyme here in Patten’s Liverpudlian accent. ‘Cousin Lesley’ is a humorous poem, but the audience’s laughter at the Bluecoat in 2010 had more to do with the intentional ‘unrhyme’, this sign of Patten’s non-conformity, and the deliberate pause that drew attention to it, than the content itself.⁹

One of the most important results of regular live events is the creation of different performance instances – we cannot reproduce the exact same reading every time. Charles Bernstein’s *Close Reading* recognises this, referring to a poem’s ‘fundamentally plural existence’.¹⁰ Bernstein argues that a reading ‘extends the patterning of poetry into another

⁴ Charles Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, in *Collected Prose*, ed. by Donald Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 239-49, p. 242.

⁵ Roger McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* (London: Random House, 2005), p. 143.

⁶ McGough, *Said*, p. 143.

⁷ Brian Patten at the Bluecoat ‘Chapter and Verse’ Festival, 13 October 2010.

⁸ Patten, Brian, *Gargling with Jelly* (London: Viking Kestrel, 1985), p. 16.

⁹ Two of Patten’s collections include notes which specifically reference the importance of the live event. His first, *Little Johnny’s Confession* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967) includes this in the opening biographical note: ‘Many of them were written for the voice, like songs, and for a fuller appreciation should be read aloud.’ A later collection, *Grave Gossip* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), includes this note from Patten himself before the contents page: ‘Mostly the poems first found a public at poetry readings, and my thanks are due to the people who arranged the readings, and the many people who have attended them.’

¹⁰ Charles Bernstein, ‘Introduction’, in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-26, p. 9.

dimension, adding another semantic layer to the poem's multiformity.¹¹ Peter Middleton also writes of 'the inescapably intersubjective, plural condition of reading',¹² and states that, crucially: 'Poetry readings proliferate versions of the poem, each version displacing but not replacing every other.'¹³ In fact, the poem as a work exists as the sum total of all these different experiences of the text, both multivarious readings and other expressions. Furthermore, as John Miles Foley states, an oral poem is 'profoundly contingent on its context', and cannot stand alone, but rather includes 'the performance, the audience, the poet, the music, the specialized way of speaking, the gestures, the costuming, the visual aids, the occasion, the ritual, and myriad other aspects of the given poem's reality.'¹⁴ Whilst Foley's work is on primary oral cultures, the statement stands: a live performance involves more than just hearing the words. Therefore, this chapter will not only consider performance instances of particular texts, but also the staging, the milieu, the audience – all aspects which feed into and affect the performance.

AUDIENCE AND ATMOSPHERE

Middleton recognises that listening to poetry 'requires effort', and that 'attentiveness is vulnerable to distractions of every kind (beer, traffic, hard chairs, comings and goings, even the very presence of the poet)'.¹⁵ It is here that I suggest performance studies may be of some use in explaining how the Merseybeat scene utilised audience and atmosphere. Richard Schechner is a performance studies pioneer, whose theory of Selective Inattention in live audiences is particularly relevant to the Merseybeat scene.

Schechner believes there are two kinds of audience. The accidental audience is a group of people who are unconnected to each other and the performance, and yet have chosen to attend. The integral audience attends because they have to – Schechner cites the opening nights of commercial shows attended by critics.¹⁶ However, the result is the opposite of what one might expect: '*the accidental audience pays closer attention than does an integral audience*'.¹⁷ For Merseybeat, this has two specific meanings. The accidental audience, who happen upon the reading, will be far more integrated into the performance than the second

¹¹ Bernstein, *Close Listening*, p. 10.

¹² Peter Middleton, 'Poetry's Oral Stage', in *Performance and Authenticity in the Arts*, ed. by Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 215-53, p. 221.

¹³ Charles Bernstein, 'Hearing Voices', in *The sound of poetry, the poetry of sound*, ed. by Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 142-148, p. 148.

¹⁴ John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 60.

¹⁵ Middleton, 'Poetry's Oral Stage', p. 222.

¹⁶ See Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), p. 146.

¹⁷ Schechner, p. 147, author's italics.

type, who can become ‘part of the spectacle for the general audience’.¹⁸ As a result, the accidental audience ‘become the artists along with the performers’.¹⁹ They make their own show, as it were, which is exactly what Henri wanted: ‘People are being fed their entertainment. They no longer have a chance to do things for themselves. We are trying to give them a chance.’²⁰

“‘Blasts of Language’”: Changes in Oral Poetics in Britain since 1965’ details Middleton’s research with Nicky Marsh and Victoria Sheppard, seeking to answer how and why ‘poetry readings have come to be an essential part of the writing and distribution of poetry over the past 40 years’.²¹ Interestingly, the 1965 starting point removes the beginnings of the Merseybeat movement (and others) from the discussion. What I find most interesting is that Middleton *et al.* give accounts from two poets who specifically cite Henri as important in their own trajectory as performers of poetry.²² First, Peter Finch, who says of Henri in The Liverpool Scene that: ‘He was engaging in a theatrical way with the audience’, the crucial point being that: ‘this style of “entertainment” in a poetry reading’ was ‘a move away from the more academic approach.’²³ The excitement that Finch felt at this new way of experiencing poetry is echoed by Maggie O’Sullivan. Middleton introduces her recollection by referring to Henri as ‘the Liverpool performance poet’, highlighting the performative nature of his practice, and she goes on to observe: ‘He was the first living poet that I’d ever encountered. I thought it was tremendously exciting, his delivery and the energy of his work.’²⁴ The emphasis on ‘entertainment’ is important. In fact, the article’s title quotation comes from Finch’s emphatic dismissal of ‘traditional’ poetry readings, where you have ‘concentrated language blasted at you’.²⁵ Henri’s theatre, his energy, and his desire to entertain are key elements of the Merseybeat movement. In an article for *Sphinx* magazine, in 1964, Henri discussed his involvement in the Poetry Conference at the Edinburgh Festival that year. The article is primarily concerned with communication and the audience, and the

¹⁸ Schechner, p. 146.

¹⁹ Schechner, p. 153.

²⁰ Alix Palmer, ‘Beauty – in a bus ticket’, *Daily Herald*, 23 May 1963, p. 15.

²¹ Peter Middleton, Nicky Marsh, and Victoria Sheppard, “‘Blasts of Language’”: Changes in Oral Poetics in Britain since 1965’, *Oral Tradition*, 21 (2006), 44-67, p. 46.

²² Both these poets also cite Bob Cobbing as an influence. The later generation of poets interviewed by Middleton cite Adrian Mitchell as making a significant impression on them. Mitchell, a friend of Henri’s, was a vocal political activist as well as a brilliant performer – see, for example, his reading of ‘To Whom It May Concern’, about the Vietnam war, from the 1965 International Poetry Incarnation, in Peter Whitehead’s *Wholly Communion* film.

²³ Middleton *et al.*, ‘Blasts of Language’, p. 50.

²⁴ Maggie O’Sullivan, cited in Middleton *et al.*, ‘Blasts of Language’, p. 51.

²⁵ Peter Finch, cited in Middleton *et al.*, ‘Blasts of Language’, p. 53.

importance of both. Henri was ‘amazed to see how little discussion there was on this basic issue’²⁶ Henri begins the article by observing that:

the trouble is that poets don’t share their audience’s background – and as modern poetry is concerned almost exclusively with making personal statements it follows as night follows day that most people won’t be interested in what they have to say.²⁷

In contrast, he claimed: ‘Roger McGough, Brian Patten, myself, and others, care about most of the things that our audience care about’.²⁸ Indeed, in *The Liverpool Scene* – which records interviews with the poets alongside the poetry – McGough wants to: ‘get away from poetry as something that happens where there’s a glass and a bottle of water’ (*TLS*, 30), and Patten stresses: ‘You want to communicate it’ (*TLS*, 32). The direct communication link that these poets seek in their performance of poetry is so effective because of their awareness of the audience and their attitudes and experiences. However, it is not that the audience of a traditional reading do not also ‘share a background’, but rather that the Merseybeat poets are seeking out a different audience. Merseybeat was based on a set of values and experiences which stood apart from those middle-class assumptions implicit in the traditional poetry reading.

In *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?* Rueben Tsur discusses his theory of the modes of hearing: ‘We seem to be tuned, normally, to the nonspeech mode; but as soon as the incoming stream of sounds gives the slightest indication that it may be carrying linguistic information, we automatically switch to the speech mode’.²⁹ In other words, we have to decide whether to treat what we hear as pure sound or as speech, and we interpret speech in a different way to other environmental noises, but the ‘poetic mode’ falls somewhere between the two. In the ‘poetic mode’, we hear the sounds formed by linguistic elements and pay attention to them – as if the ‘sounds patterns’ are ‘somehow expressive of their atmosphere’³⁰ – rather than, as in the pure ‘speech mode’, receiving what we hear simply as linguistic information. This theory is particularly interesting here in the light of Middleton and Schechner’s theories of attention in performance. If we agree with Tsur’s ideas, the poet’s reading of a poem is somewhere between the two usual modes, and therefore has the

²⁶ Adrian Henri, ‘the poet, the audience and non-communication’, in *The Art of Adrian Henri, 1955-1985* (London: Expression Printers, 1986), p. 45. Article originally published in *Sphinx*, autumn 1964. He states that, at this Poetry Conference: ‘only the Liverpool contingent (Brian Patten and myself), Alexander Trocchi and perhaps Pete Brown seemed at all concerned with communication’ (*Art of Adrian Henri*, p. 45).

²⁷ *Art of Adrian Henri*, p. 45.

²⁸ *Art of Adrian Henri*, p. 45.

²⁹ Reuven Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 11.

³⁰ Tsur, p. 9.

potential to be mixed up with the ‘nonspeech mode’ of the circumambient orality. This ability to switch between modes and to shift one’s attention is what Finch is describing here:

What you do in listening to poetry is you don’t listen to everything, some of it you take in and you use traditional comprehension of it; otherwise you just listen to the sound the words make. ... Couple that with the concentration problem. If you’re not accustomed to sitting for several hours listening to somebody talk to you in that way, your mind is going to drift.³¹

The ‘concentration problem’ does not exist in the same way for the Merseybeat movement: a typical Monday night at Sampson & Barlow’s would include a number of different performers, poets and musicians, and as such one would not be ‘sitting for several hours listening to somebody talk’, but would rather experience a variety of sets to break up the evening. For Schechner, the accidental audience ‘attends from pleasure’,³² and this is in part due to the way in which the reading is set up as an experience. By hosting ‘open mic’-type events and readings in pubs and other social venues, the Merseybeat poets gave their audience permission to treat the poetry reading as part of their evening’s entertainment, moving in and out of the performance space as it suited them. Finch’s comments also point to another important aspect: the performance venue. Merseybeat performances required another move away from the traditional poetry reading, often held in universities, perhaps organised by the English Department, in ‘podium oriented’ lecture theatres, to use George Economou’s phrase.³³ What the Merseybeat poets did, by taking poetry out of the lecture hall and into the public sphere, was not only to advertise their readings as another form of entertainment (rather than connected to education and lecturing), but also to place the poetry in public and on a level with the other forms of public entertainment available, such as music (both the jukeboxes in pubs and live performances). In addition, poetry readings are ‘inherently collective events’³⁴ where a text is experienced by a number of people at the same time. The collective nature of the audience, a sense of togetherness, shapes the way that the audience respond to the reader. The atmosphere of the reading is therefore a key component in the success of the reading itself, as a particular instance of a work is created in the space where poet and audience come together. Not only do ‘audience and poet collaborate in the performance of the poem’,³⁵ as Middleton says, but the space of performance also has a part to play in the creation of this instance of a work.

³¹ Peter Finch, cited in Middleton *et al*, ‘Blasts of Language’, p. 54.

³² Schechner, p. 146.

³³ George Economou, cited in Peter Middleton, ‘The Contemporary Poetry Reading’, in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 262-99, p. 271-2.

³⁴ Peter Middleton, *Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), p. 93.

³⁵ Middleton, ‘The Contemporary Poetry Reading’, p. 291.

AUDIENCE AND THE UNIQUE EVENT

The Merseybeat poets are not only aware of the audience but also the space and place of performance. A reading is a unique event in a particular time and place, and all sounds within that space contribute to the audience's experience. Circumambient sound is crucial to readings. 'The orality of the milieu,' as Walter J. Ong states, 'can deeply affect both the composition of texts and their interpretation'.³⁶ One of the ways in which the milieu affects the reading relates to how the space is used. Middleton's list of potential distractions at a reading – 'beer, traffic, hard chairs, comings and goings, even the distracting appearance of the poet'³⁷ – can actually heighten the experience, drawing attention to the specificity of that event. Indeed, the contemporary press often refer to the setting. For example, a 1968 article by Julian Holland, titled 'Britain's unexpected BOOM', claims that: 'Public readings in pubs, universities, schools, theatres, coffee-bars, bookshops, libraries, concert halls are now the life-blood of poetry.'³⁸ The fact that Holland says 'now' suggests that this is a new phenomenon, and the listing of the venues suggests the ranges of *new* venues for poetry: the move away from the university and into non-academic spaces. Henri's account of an evening in Bolton as part of the 1969 Writers' Tour of Lancashire is telling:

Least successful evening, though many people came. Beautiful new theatre, nice people running it. Too formal. ... We stop early and suggest informal talk in the bar. Crammed in, everyone firing questions, much more successful and genuine. Feel we were talking about what *they* wanted.³⁹

The location of the poetry reading matters as much as the audience that are participating in it. Using borrowed spaces such as the bar of the theatre here or the back rooms of pubs in Liverpool is not a failing but rather an opportunity for informal encounter.

It is interesting to note that whilst the Merseybeat poets did open their poetry to a wide audience, and did succeed in breaking from the traditional reading, the barriers were still very much in place. When William Burroughs made his *Final Academy* tour, the evening in Liverpool (5th October 1982) was at the Centre Hotel. Geoff Ward, who organised the event, believes that even in the 1980s, 'there was still a sense of "them and us"', and that:

³⁶ Walter J. Ong, 'Text as Interpretation: Mark and After', in *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context*, ed. by John Miles Foley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), p. 164.

³⁷ Middleton, *Distant Reading*, p. 30.

³⁸ Archive clipping, Henri K/12, Julian Holland, 'Britain's unexpected BOOM', n.d.

³⁹ Archive clipping, Henri K/12, 'Events While Guarding the Sacred Flame', *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 April 1969.

I remember thinking, right from the start, I'm not going to bring William Burroughs and the University together, that's just not going to happen. If this is going to happen, it's going to happen in town.⁴⁰

The Burroughs evening was not only in a non-academic setting, it also attracted a non-academic audience:

I think some of the punks who turned up for the reading, it would have been the first reading they'd come to. Everybody wore black jeans, everybody looked like they were in Echo and the Bunnymen. Men, women, everybody.⁴¹

Ward's attention to the dress of the audience accords with Middleton's comment about potential distractions:

The space is precariously and only partially transformed from its mundane use as a gallery, pub, or lecture hall, whose signs remain prominently in evidence throughout the scene of textual performance, and this transformation of the backdrop tells the participants that the everyday world, despite the way it is crowded with other activities and purposes, can still provide a space for poetry.⁴²

Unplanned sound and visual cues cannot and should not be ignored. It is all these additions which create the temporal and spatial reading. The social spaces of these events are indeed part of the 'everyday world', and are chosen accordingly: Henri's experience in Bolton was that the informal exchange suited both him and the audience better; Ward knew that the audience would only come if the setting was right.

The uniqueness of an event also comes from its place as a moment in time and space, as something which cannot be repeated exactly the same again. Circumambient sound (such as audience laughter) cannot be controlled, but other sounds which can affect a reading – and set it apart as a unique event – can also come from the poets themselves. At Burroughs' *Final Academy* evening in Liverpool, one of the poems Henri read was 'Adrian Henri's Last Will and Testament'. After reading the poem, Henri described it as 'obviously applicable to this occasion'⁴³ because Burroughs is mentioned twice. He has chosen this specific poem because of its relevance and connection to Burroughs. However, this knowledge of the setting and audience is also indicated in another way. In linguistic analysis of everyday speech and conversation, pitch accents are a potent conversational tool which indicate salient information and knowledge of previous discussion.⁴⁴ The epigraph of this poem is one of

⁴⁰ Interview with Geoff Ward, February 2013.

⁴¹ Interview with Geoff Ward, February 2013.

⁴² Middleton, *Distant Reading*, p. 30.

⁴³ Recording of the Final Academy event, 5 October 1982, Centre Hotel, Liverpool [accessed via the British Library Listening Service, T7411, T7413].

⁴⁴ 'Humans can interact with maximum cognitive efficiency if the items most worthy of attention are articulated with the most energy – the highest pitch. On the other hand, items that a speaker assumes

Burroughs's maxims: 'No one owns life, but anyone who can pick up a fryingpan owns death' (*TMS1*, 13). In this instance, Henri drops his voice after the epigraph, saying 'William Burroughs' in a much quieter voice. A reason for this, according to linguistic analyst Ann Wennerstrom, is because this is information that the audience already has – they know (certainly Burroughs knows) where the quotation is from.

A comparison of this instance with two other recordings of Henri's 'Last Will...' shows how a poem can be altered for effect in different situations. The 30th anniversary cassette produced by Penguin has already been mentioned, but the other recording which is particularly relevant to this chapter and the next is *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene LP*.⁴⁵ It is the earliest of the three recordings of this poem I analyse here (1967, 1982, and 1997), and all three represent different types of staging: the *Scene LP* and *Final Academy* are live recordings (although the *Scene LP* has been produced and mastered for publication, whilst the *Final Academy* tapes are a straight record of the night); the Penguin Audio Cassette (released in 1997 to mark the 30th anniversary of *The Mersey Sound*) is a studio recording. In terms of unplanned sound, the *Final Academy* instance records Henri stumbling over the pronunciation of 'Kropotkin', and giggling at it, as well as the audience's laughter at certain sections. The first 'provision' (that Henri will leave his priceless collections 'to all Liverpool poets under 23 who are also blues singers and failed sociology students' [*TMS1*, 13]) gets a laugh on both the *Scene LP* and the *Final Academy* recording, as does the provision about the proceeds from sales of relics. There is also a distinct sound of paper rustling on the *Final Academy* recording at this point, indicating that Henri is reading from the page rather than from memory (in *The Mersey Sound* there is a page break here in the printed text). The Penguin Audio Cassette, being a studio recording, does not have any circumambient noise. Henri announces the poem with its title, and then reads both the epigraph and its author (on the *Scene LP*, he does not attribute the quotation to Burroughs), pausing before reading the poem itself. It is clear, in all recordings, that this is an epigraph rather than the opening of the poem. To return to (conversational) linguistic analysis, one reason for this is that quoted speech, in Wennerstrom's observations, 'was often set off by pauses and could sometimes involve altered voices, with higher pitch, louder volume, and other paralinguistic features.'⁴⁶ Henri reads the epigraph in such a way as to make it clear to the audience he is reading someone else's words rather than starting the 'poetic mode'.

to be already active in a listener's consciousness may be articulated with less energy and lower pitch so that listeners need expend little cognitive effort to process them.' Ann Wennerstrom, *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁴⁵ *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene LP*, prod. by Hal Shaper (CBS, 63045, 1967). The impetus for, and the creation of, this album has already been discussed in the Introduction. Further references appear in the text as 'Scene LP'.

⁴⁶ Wennerstrom, p. 210.

On the page, his ‘imminent death’ is heralded by ‘mutely screaming I TOLD YOU SO’ (*TMS1*, 13). Both the capitalisation (a literalisation of ‘mutely screaming’) and the cue of ‘screaming’ might suggest that in performance this is to be emphasised, and, indeed, on the Penguin Audio Cassette he does raise his voice. However, for the *Scene* LP he does not. Other slight textual variations exist: ‘I leave the entire East Lancs Road with all its landscapes to the British people’ in the Penguin Audio Cassette, versus ‘with its landscapes’ in the *Scene* LP, or Burroughs being asked to distribute Henri’s collected works ‘through’ or ‘throughout’ the land. Elsewhere it is the tone that shifts. Thus, in the final ‘provision’, in the Penguin recording, Henri places firm emphasis on particular words:

Proceeds from the sale of my other effects to be divided equally amongst the 20 *most beautiful schoolgirls* in England (these to be chosen after *due* deliberation and *exhaustive* tests by an informal committee of my friends).⁴⁷

It is both the subversion of these stock phrases – ‘due deliberation’ and ‘exhaustive tests’ by an ‘informal committee’ are the kinds of wording one might see in a legal document – and the camaraderie his knowing tone implies that makes this lubricious ‘provision’ so amusing to the audience.

There are other sections where the voice takes almost exactly the same path for its expression in the three recorded versions discussed here, such as provision four: ‘Proceeds from the sale of relics: locks of hair, pieces of floorboards I have stood on, fragments of bone flesh teeth bits of old underwear etc. to be given to my widow’ (*TMS1*, 13). All recordings treat the text which comes after the colon as an aside, with the voice being dropped slightly, returning to the same level and tone as the opening of this section at ‘to be given to my widow’, which is another laugh point in live recordings. The audience laugh both at the absurdity of the suggestion, but also because of the way it is spoken. The list starts quite reasonably, copying the traditional saints’ relic objects, but the quickening pace from ‘bone flesh teeth’ – read as if a foregone conclusion – makes ‘bits of old underwear’ all the more effective as a comic image because it is so incongruous. Ending this with the throw-away ‘etc.’ adds to the effect, as, having ended the specified items with ‘old underwear’, the audience may wonder what else there is to be in that ‘etc.’.

What this suggests is that Henri’s reading of this poem – as of a number of others – changed over time. Certain elements are highlighted for particular readings (as with the decision to read this for the *Final Academy* evening, due to its mention of Burroughs), but emphasis and

⁴⁷ Text from *TMS1*, p. 13, italics to indicate emphasis in the Penguin Audio Cassette recording.

other paralinguistic features are flexible. Reading before an audience is necessarily a different experience to reading in a recording studio (and we do not know how many times the Penguin versions were recorded), and the different instances give the poet a chance to either read differently each time or to develop a particular oral expression that has been worked out and honed over several occasions.

LOCATION AND LOCALITY

The awareness of location includes an awareness of locality. For example, when Henri sent 'I Want to Paint' to Penguin for inclusion in *The Mersey Sound*, he sent Anthony Richardson a copy of the poem with this handwritten note:

The original of this poem was written about 1961 and the only copy eventually lost. It was rewritten from memory ... I improvise on [it] when reading and some of these later additions have been added to the present version. (Henri A I.i [19])

The evolution of a poem can indeed come from reading, from interactions with an audience, and from proposing alternate lines to gauge their success, but the poems can also be changed for particular instances of reading. One line of 'I Want to Paint' has been through various manuscript versions: the poet painted at his 'Installation' to 'the Chair of Poetry at Oxford' (*TMS1*, 51) has been variously William Burroughs (Henri A I.i [20]), Pete Brown (Henri A I.i [21]), or McGough (*TMS1*, 51), and we can imagine other names may have been used for local effect in live performances.⁴⁸ Similarly, an archival copy of 'The New "Our Times"' shows Henri's attention to loco-specific details as it has been adapted for a reading in Edinburgh (fig 3.2). This version of the poem changes names to translate the poem to another city. For example: the 'Police-Constable' is now called Angus MacKay; the 'Bearded ... couple' are from Edinburgh rather than Liverpool; and 'A certain Mrs Elspeth Clout' has moved from the Huyton area to Murrayfield (*TMS1*, 47). Henri has also gone further, adding in Scottish references, so that the ear-battering 'chip-shop proprietors' (*TMS1*, 47) are now accused at Leith, where their Liverpoolian trial location is undisclosed, and Mrs Clout dies specifically in Grassmarket. Recorded versions of this poem also have Henri affecting accents for the recorded speech. In both the *Scene* LP and the Penguin Audio Cassette he reads the 'U.S. State Dept.' (*TMS1*, 47) spokesman's line in an American accent, while the chip-shop owners are clearly Lancastrian. (He also reads number three as if he were reading a headline from a newspaper, mimicking that particular style.) It is probable, therefore, that this relocation of the poem would have Henri affecting a Scottish accent for this couple, bringing it even more obviously into Scotland, and away from Liverpool as the

⁴⁸ See also Henri's 'note on improvisation', (*TAN*, 63-4).

original site. The effect which the poem produces is more important than the printed text of the poem itself, and part of this effect is rooted in the specificity of texts to time and place. Each performance of a poem occupies a new site, tailored to the audience of that moment.

The manuscript of ‘The New “Our Times”’ also includes the dedication ‘for Felix Fénéon’ which is printed in *The Mersey Sound* but not announced in either the Penguin Audio Cassette or the *Scene* LP. The manuscript follows this with the explanation ‘a free 1960’s version of Fénéon’s “Our Times”’ (see fig 3.2), which is situated at the bottom of the page in *The Mersey Sound*, signalled by an asterisk after the dedication (‘a free 1960s Liverpool version of Fénéon’s great “Our Times”’ (TMS1, 47)). We cannot know if Henri read this contextual introduction at the reading, but when he was making his additions he did not cross it out, which might suggest he did read it in this instance. There is audience laughter audible on the *Scene* LP recording of this poem, with Henri clearly aware of the effect he was having: for example, he pauses after the ‘jellybaby’, waiting for the audience’s laughter to subside before continuing ‘thrown at a passing pop singer’, even though there is no caesura in the printed text (TMS1, 47).

Specific references connect the poets to their public. It is particularly important that in the Scottish version of ‘The New “Our Times”’ Paul McCartney is 23 rather than 21, as he was when Henri wrote the poem in January 1964. The audience at this reading would have known this, and Henri’s use of a correct common cultural reference is important for his own authenticity. Paul Du Noyer described Henri as ‘closer to Scouse populism than to high culture’,⁴⁹ which serves as a summary of one of the central tenets of this movement: everyday imagery and common cultural referencing is used to foster a direct connection with the audience. Henri described ‘our audience’ as a ‘predominantly teenage, non-intellectual, non-student audience [who] like to laugh with McGough and cry with Patten about the sort of problems we all share.’⁵⁰ It is the ‘we’ here which is important, suggesting that the poets are on the same level as their audience, rather than standing above them. Furthermore, contemporary reviews of Merseybeat readings often imply that the audience knew the poems beforehand, with statements such as ‘some of you may have the best selling Penguin book ... in which many of Adrian’s best known poems appeared’.⁵¹ However, what some critics intend as an insult is actually what the audience readily accept. To say that the reading consisted of ‘at least half a dozen others which seem to have been doing the rounds for some

⁴⁹ Paul Du Noyer, *Liverpool: Wondrous Place – Music from Cavern to Cream* (London: Virgin Books, 2002), p. 94.

⁵⁰ *Art of Adrian Henri*, p. 45.

⁵¹ Archive clipping, Henri K/12, *Oasis* (souvenir magazine), p. 2.

time'⁵² is not negative, or a sign that the poets do not have newer work, but rather that the poems are familiar to the audience, and are being repeated precisely because the audience want to hear them again – the poems are *supposed* to be 'doing the rounds'. As McGough states: 'the kids didn't look on it as Poetry with a capital "P", they looked on it as modern entertainment, part of the pop movement' (*TLS*, 78), and if they like a song or a poem, they want to hear it again. A setlist for a Mersey Beat band would include crowd-pleasers, old favourites, the band's best known tracks as well as new material – why can't a Merseybeat poet do the same?

In early 1966, the three Merseybeat poets were asked to perform at the Bluecoat Chambers, a traditional arts venue in Liverpool (rather than the pubs at which they had their regular weekly sessions). It was reviewed in the *Guardian* in a 'letter from our own correspondent', John O'Callaghan: 'One hundred and fifty were squashed into the tiny auditorium, and as many again heard the two-hour show in an overspill room by loudspeaker for nothing.'⁵³ The 'overspill room' is also of interest – in that it shows there was great demand for the poets. It reappears in McGough's own account of the reading, when speaking to another journalist:

Once we played in a posh place. It was full, you know – 150 people. There were 100 in an outside room listening to our poetry on a relay system. We had sort of joined the Establishment. We had to get back from there quickly to other places.⁵⁴

Although this reading was clearly a success, it also marked, for McGough, the wrong environment for their work:

The atmosphere I like to read in, is the bar atmosphere where people can have a drink while they are listening. At the end of it, if they feel like it, they can have 'Knees Up Mother Brown'.⁵⁵

This atmosphere is crucial. Art is a 'state of encounter'.⁵⁶ The pubs and clubs allow the audience to mix with the performers, and situate the poetry performance in dialogue with popular cultural forms. Sound, for Ong, 'situates [us] in the midst of a world'.⁵⁷ Whether one calls it 'unplanned sound',⁵⁸ 'unintended sounds',⁵⁹ or 'white noise', circumambient orality

⁵² Anthony Thwaite, 'Review', *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 May 1969, p. 486.

⁵³ John O'Callaghan, 'Liverpool Letter', *The Guardian*, 14 February 1966, p. 34.

⁵⁴ Peter Brock, 'The newest sound – it's poetry', *Daily Express*, 25 February 1966, p. 30.

⁵⁵ Brock, p. 30 – cf. Working Men's or Variety Clubs.

⁵⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2002), p. 18.

⁵⁷ Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 129.

⁵⁸ Middleton, 'The Contemporary Poetry Reading', p. 270.

⁵⁹ Adalaide Morris, 'Introduction: Sound States', in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. by Adalaide Morris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 1-14, p. 4.

is that which is not part of the text of the poem being read but what is added to it by the atmosphere of the reading – highlighting the ‘world’ you are in the ‘midst’ of. Instead of detracting from the poem, it adds a layer of meaning: this reading is happening, here and now, and you are part of something which will not happen exactly like this again. The audience are part of this experience, both in the sense that they are needed to foster lines of direct communication, but also in that their noise and reactions are part of the creative site.

AUTHORIAL PRESENCE AND CONTROL

The live event presents another issue. If the reader of a poem is that poem’s author, a listener will, in all likelihood, give authority to that interpretation. Indeed, in performing his or her poem, the poet is producing ‘an exaggerated, dramatized, picture of authorship.’⁶⁰ By speaking his or her own words, the poet’s performance can be taken as the authoritative version. Susan Stewart notes that: ‘It is not just sound that we hear; it is the sound of an individual person speaking sounds.’⁶¹ In the Merseybeat movement, as in most modern poetry reading instances, the author usually reads their own work, and so the audience pays attention to their way of reading:

Poems compel attention to aspects of rhythm, rhyme, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia, and other forms and patterns of sound to which attention is not necessarily given in the ongoing flow of prose and conversation.⁶²

As these are created by the human voice, they call attention to the voice itself and to the poet, both as originator and vocaliser. The poem on the page is made up of neutral text – neutral in that, as Wolfgang Iser pointed out, the reader ‘can never learn from the text how accurate or inaccurate are his views of it’,⁶³ as the printed poem cannot respond to the reader’s emotions or influence those emotions with anything more than the silent page. Whilst there are certainly some printed elements which can aid a speaker (punctuation such as commas and dashes for pace, or question marks and exclamation marks for tone) there is also a marked lack of guidance from the printed text. In contrast, the reading can never be neutral.⁶⁴ ‘It is,’ as Ong says, ‘impossible to speak a word orally without any intonation’.⁶⁵ Performance features further supplement the text:

⁶⁰ Middleton, ‘Poetry’s Oral Stage’, p. 224.

⁶¹ Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 109.

⁶² Susan Stewart, p. 68.

⁶³ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 166.

⁶⁴ ‘Features of spoken language are not reproducible readily in written language. For example we have tried to convey the tone of voice, cadence and emphasis of a protest by the use of an exclamation mark and a question mark (but this is very jejune). Punctuation, italics, and word order may help, but

By using performance features, such as repetitions, gestures, sound effects, quoted speech, and, I argue, other prosodic manipulations, tellers attempt to draw the empathy of the audience to their own evaluation of the events.⁶⁶

Whilst Wennerstrom's work is to do with conversation and speech (not, as Tsur would say, the 'poetic mode'), she has noted many uses of paralinguage which are cues for listeners which do translate into poetry. Paralinguage – variations in pitch, tempo, tone, and so on – cannot, by its very definition, exist on the page and is, therefore, a key aspect of what makes up the poetry reading. Taking Henri's 'Tonight at Noon' as an example, there are a number of recorded versions where the same choices for performance have been taken, although these are not necessarily indicated on the page. On the page, quoted speech can be clearly indicated with quotation marks, but, as we have seen, in an oral expression some other means of marking this off from the rest of the piece is needed (such as what Wennerstrom calls 'altered voices'⁶⁷). In 'Tonight at Noon', there are some examples where quoted speech is used for a particular effect. In all the recordings which I have heard of this poem, Henri uses an accent during the line 'Hitler will tell us to fight on the beaches and on the landing fields' (TMS1, 11). A reader would recognise the words as a (slight misquotation) of Winston Churchill's 'We shall fight on the beaches' speech to the House of Commons in 1940. In reading the poem out loud Henri adds another oral link by impersonating Churchill for the phrase 'on the beaches and on the landing fields'. On the page, there are no quotation marks to indicate this is recorded speech, or anything which marks it out as not the same as the rest of the poem's text, but in performance Henri can mark this out. He also heightens the juxtaposition by emphasising 'Hitler', as if he wants to ensure the audience 'get' what he is doing, deliberately subverting the British WWII leader's famous lines by placing them in the mouth of his opponent.

The poem is a list of surreal or absurd images, inspired by the oxymoronic title 'Tonight at Noon', taken from a Charlie Mingus LP. In *The Mersey Sound* (as in other printed versions) the line 'Supermarkets will advertise 3d EXTRA on everything' (TMS1, 11), utilises typography to emphasise 'extra' by capitalising it, representing the supermarket's advertising but also highlighting it visually for the reader. This reversal of the usual supermarket practice of discounting is the first surreal idea of the poem, and, in the Penguin Audio Cassette, Henri raises his voice, firmly declaring the word 'extra' to highlight the

they are rather crude.' J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 74.

⁶⁵ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 101.

⁶⁶ Wennerstrom, p. 201.

⁶⁷ Wennerstrom, p. 210.

absurdity. Other images, which are not highlighted on the page, are emphasised in the same way (with the same emphatic pronunciation and volume), such as ‘When the leaves fall *upwards* to the trees’, or ‘White Americans will demonstrate for equal rights/ in front of the *Black House*’ (*TMS1*, 11, my italics). Both of these examples are highlighted by Henri pausing before the surreal image, again to make sure the listener is paying attention. None of the pauses (within lines) are represented as such on the page, this is purely an oral performance element. Thus, for example, the line ‘Elephants will tell each other human jokes’ (*TMS1*, 11) has a deliberate pause after ‘each other’ and then a clear emphasis on ‘human’. There are many such lines where the usual phrase or idea is switched or subverted. By turning the ideas on their head, Henri builds up a list of surreal possibilities for a world where it is ‘Tonight at Noon’, in order to make the final couplet all the more powerful. The printed layout uses a single-word line (‘and’) to draw the eye towards these final lines:

In forgotten graveyards everywhere the dead will quietly
bury the living
and
You will tell me you love me
Tonight at noon. (*TMS1*, 12)

In the Penguin Audio Cassette recording Henri pauses after ‘living’ and ‘and’, which are both line breaks, but the pause is far longer than for other similar breaks.⁶⁸ In the penultimate line the emphasis is on ‘You’, and then the rest of the line is read without any other emphasis, all in the same tone. Henri pauses before saying the final ‘Tonight at noon’, again quite simply and without any other paralinguistic additions. It is as if he is simply stating a fact, but the listener, having just heard three stanzas of absurd images, knows it to be equally impossible. In fact, by reading this deadpan, Henri actually makes it all the more powerful emotionally. Previously the absurd tendencies of the poem have been clearly signalled, with pause or tone emphasis. The sadness of the final couplet is therefore a combination of the accumulated sense of impossibilities and the quietness of this final example.

In choosing to emphasise certain absurd aspects via oral means, Henri adds something to the spoken version which is not obvious in the printed text, perhaps guiding the audience in interpreting meaning by highlighting particular elements. ‘Without You’ is a list poem, switching between metaphors of how much worse it would be or feel if the addressee were not around – such as the prosaic, ‘Without you every morning would be like going back to work after a holiday’ or the romantic transformative imagining of the everyday, ‘Without you plastic flowers in shop windows would just be plastic flowers in shop windows’ (*TMS1*,

⁶⁸ See Chapter Four, p. 153 for an analysis of the same poem with a musical accompaniment, used to emphasise similar elements.

17) – and lines which appear to indicate the opposite – ‘Without you every musician in the world would forget how to play the blues’ (TMS1, 17). Unpacking this sentence indicates that the blues, a melancholy music genre, would *not* be used, whereas one would expect that the blues would be needed without one’s lover. The random placements of the less romantic implications are caught up in the flow of the poem’s majority of positives, but create moments of turbulence. Henri’s reading on the Penguin Audio Cassette guides the audience, as we have seen in ‘Tonight at Noon’, cuing in the audience’s attention to the ‘point’ of each line – such as the plastic flowers that had special meaning to the couple that would ‘*just be plastic flowers*’ without her. Henri’s reading uses deliberate pauses or emphasis: such as getting a fine for being ‘in possession of ... curry powder’ or ‘Without you Sunshine breakfast would *only* consist of cornflakes’. The vocal expression of the lines is particularly important in this poem as the images are not conventionally romantic. The line ‘Without you I’d probably feel happy and have more money and time and nothing to do with it’ (TMS1, 17) is open to the interpretation that, in some ways, he would be better off without her. However, in the reading, Henri reads this list with an abrupt change of tone at ‘and nothing to do with it’, as if realising that this would not actually be a good outcome. The poem fades out, with his voice getting quieter across the last section, ending: ‘no night/no morning/there’d be no city no country/ Without you’ (TMS1, 18). This technique is used more obviously at the end of ‘In the Midnight Hour’, where Henri repeats this title phrase a number of times, getting quieter at each repetition, an effect which does not exist on the page. It is a little like a record which has reached its end constantly repeating the final moments and fading out, giving the poem an ethereal quality.

As noted earlier, both live readings and recordings are ways of presenting a definite ‘voice’ for a particular work. It is hard not to hear ‘the voice’ as ‘*the voice*’.⁶⁹ The idea of ‘individual voice’ and a personal style of performance is one which appears in many reviews of readings. Adrian Mitchell described Patten’s reading voice as having ‘all the colours of a melancholic alto sax’,⁷⁰ while Michael Horovitz calls it ‘his plangent erotic saxophonetrance’.⁷¹ A reviewer of a live show in 1972 referred to Patten as having a ‘scratchy little voice’: ‘Words were sometimes unimportant, the impact was the way in which Brian Patten’s scratchy little voice created sounds which could have told his love-

⁶⁹ Indeed, when discussing issues of authenticity in pop music, the sociomusicologist Simon Frith believes that ‘we hear singers as *personally* expressive.’ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the value of popular music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 186, author’s italics.

⁷⁰ Adrian Mitchell, cited in Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 104.

⁷¹ Michael Horovitz, ‘Afterwords’, in *Children of Albion: the poetry of the Underground in Britain*, ed. by Michael Horovitz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 328.

tales without intelligent words.⁷² This emphasis on the *sound* of the expression clearly accords with Tsur's 'poetic mode', the liminal space where words can also be treated as sounds. McGough's voice is also very distinctive in his recordings, particularly in his pace and speech rhythm. In his autobiography, McGough refers to his childhood habit of speaking too quickly:

over the years and with practice I have learned how to r-e-a-d-a-l-o-u-d more slowly, taking my time and breathing properly, but in conversation, when that part of the brain that signals speech receives the impulse to form sounds in the mouth, somehow the words and images all become jumbled up like flotsam on a wave that crashes down on the beach. Writing, of course, is one way of cleaning up the beach, but even my writing style is staccato.⁷³

This is from a chapter titled 'runningallthewordstogether', which is a characteristic of his writing style, derived in part from e. e. cummings. Sometimes words are run together because they present a single image; at other times it is representative of his speech rhythm patterns.⁷⁴ Taking 'At Lunchtime, A Story of Love' as an example, we have, on the page 'the younglady in the greenhat' who says it is 'tooeary in the morning and toosoon/ after breakfast' (*TMS1*, 69) to make love. This poem was recorded for both the *Scene* LP and the Penguin Audio Cassette, and is a good example of McGough's oral expression. Middleton noted in his analysis of Jackie Kay reading 'Brendan Gallacher' that 'it turns out that the page layout is not a good guide to the oral sounding of the poem',⁷⁵ and in these records McGough ignores the page layout's line endings, reading the poem as if it were prose – a 'story of love', about how, 'this being a nuclearage, the world was going/ to end at lunchtime' so the bus passengers might as well 'makelove' (*TMS1*, 69).

His breaths are clearly audible, usually aligned with the commas which separate the phrases in the printed poem, but the hurried delivery implies that he needs these little pauses to catch his breath. Both recordings differ from the printed text – for example the *Scene* LP says 'i started to makelove', ending on a down note at the end of a sentence, instead of elaborating, as the Penguin Audio Cassette does, with the end of that phrase 'with all my body'. The pauses for breath come at the ends of sentences, and it may be that the end of this phrase is cut on the *Scene* LP because he cannot fit it into one breath unit. Emphasis is also used: the Penguin Audio Cassette version highlights that 'the world was going/ to *end* at lunchtime'

⁷² Archive clipping, Henri K/13, 'With Mersey poets yer gorra listen 'ard!', *Standard Recorder*, 22 December 1972. It is also interesting that this review (from a local Basildon newspaper) also seeks to represent Scouse pronunciation in its vernacular title.

⁷³ McGough, *Said*, p. 59.

⁷⁴ Henri, as an artist, often runs words together to create a single image, such as the 'navyblue schooldrawers' of the daughters of Albion (*TMS1*, 55).

⁷⁵ Peter Middleton, 'The Long Biography of the Poem', *Textual Practice*, 18 (2004), 167-83, p. 13.

(TMS1, 69, my emphasis), with both readings continuing seamlessly across the line break here and elsewhere. McGough also uses asides and other variations in pitch and tone in the Penguin Audio Cassette version, in a conversational style – just as in the *Scene* LP, he reads the poem in sentences rather than stopping at the line breaks. His ‘staccato’ delivery is also evident at the end of the poem, which breaks into a list – beginning ‘And the next day’ (TMS1, 70) – each read with an audible intake of breath at the beginning of each line. McGough speeds through the six lines much faster than those around them. He also varies his pitch greatly, significantly changing the meaning from the printed text. The printed text ends this section with a full stop:

it was a pity that the world didn’t nearly
end every lunchtime and that we could always
pretend. (TMS1, 69-70)

In the Penguin Audio Cassette, McGough clearly gives the phrase an exclamation mark, lightening his tone to go with the frivolous nature of what he is saying. The same lightness of tone exists in the *Scene* LP for the salient information of the final lines:

people pretended that the world was coming
to an end at lunchtime. It still hasn’t.
Although in a way it has. (TMS1, 70)

In this recording, the pitch of the phrase rises for ‘in a way’ before falling again for ‘it has’. This picks out ‘in a way’ as separate, and emphasises the absurdity of the poem’s premise – that if the world was ending at lunchtime, people would do things that they did not have time to regret.⁷⁶ McGough’s use of pause and phrasing in these two recordings of ‘At Lunchtime, A Story of Love’ are typical of his performative utterances.

McGough played with the notion of ‘performing authorship’ in his ‘Letter from the Poet’ (which appears at the opening of his autobiography). This begins by telling the ‘audience’ that:

I apologise sincerely for being unable to attend this evening’s performance. Owing to the pressure of work, an increasing sense of unreality, and the fear of drowning in a sea of upturned faces, I have employed an out-of-work actor to impersonate me.⁷⁷

This actor will read and ‘generally keep up the poetic image’, the letter continues, impersonating McGough’s ‘nervous mannerisms’.⁷⁸ It is intentionally humorous (set out as a

⁷⁶ There is also a serious issue behind the poem, the fear of nuclear war. This was important for Henri too – ‘Bomb Commercials’ will be discussed in Chapter Five, p. 211-13. See also Jeff Nuttall’s decision to name his book about the 1960s *Bomb Culture*.

⁷⁷ McGough, *Said*, p. 1.

⁷⁸ McGough, *Said*, p. 1.

formal letter sent from ‘Dunrhymin’), but it also draws attention to the idea that an authorial presence is required for a poetry reading. The need for a physically present author for a live reading is matched by that author’s need for a physically present audience. Being aware of one’s audience also means that there can be some control over the audience’s experience. Control of the audience’s reactions and interpretations comes not only from the way of reading the text of the poem itself but also from the spoken interactions with the audience between poems. Patten’s third of the Penguin Audio Cassette includes explanations and speech between the actual poems, which is unusual for a studio recording. Patten chooses to highlight how young he was when he wrote the poems he is reading – this is, after all, a 30th anniversary recording. Introducing ‘Party Piece’, he says: ‘I scribbled this next poem when I was walking home from an all-night party when I was 15. It’s one of the earliest in this selection’. The audience is therefore aware not only of the content – this all-night party could be the one that features in the poem – but also of how young Patten was when he attended that party. ‘Party Piece’, for Peter Barry, is an example of Patten’s ‘verbal dexterity’, and, whilst I agree that this kind of writing cannot be ‘wholly performance-dependent’, there are elements which are brought out in reading it aloud.⁷⁹ In all recordings which I have heard, Patten lowers his voice for the ending, contrasting the humour of making ‘gentle pornography with one another’ with the sadness implicit at the end, where ‘all there was between them then/ was rain’ (*TMS1*, 95). This also contrasts with the audience’s expectations from his introduction – the account of the ‘all-night party’ becomes sinister in the poem, when, after its end, ‘the dawn creeps in,/ Like a stranger’ (*TMS1*, 95).

Introductory notes and comments are common in live readings. They help to frame the poems, both by literally framing what is to come in some kind of context, but also by pointing out the differences between ‘regular speech’ and the ‘poetic mode’. For example, Heather Solomon’s article about a 1973 reading described Henri’s reading of a particular poem thus:

Throughout the readings, Henri moved to the rhythm of his poetry, eyes closed, creating the images of his words in his mind. ‘I need an American accent to attempt to do this one. This is a talking blues, you see. They have to be done in a kind of country and western sort of accent. This is an English country and northwestern poem written on Boxing Day morning. It’s called Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues.’ The poet carried this off beautifully and brought the house down.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 143.

⁸⁰ Archive clipping, Henri K/11, Heather Solomon, ‘Adrian Henri: Poet’ *The Georgian*, 2 November 1973.

This record of the experience not only highlights Henri's presence and his physicality, but also gives us an example of how he chose to present this particular poem (which will be discussed in Chapter Four). The audience gets an explanation of both the content and the context (perhaps necessary because of his affectation of an accent). Finally, Solomon also records the audience's reaction to the reading, showing the importance of their presence as well as Henri's own. It can be made clear, as seen above with epigraphs, what is and isn't part of the actual poem by how the poet uses tone, but the comments and chatter between poems is another way of communicating with the audience (outside of the text) and adds to the whole experience of each live event.

Crafting a 'set list' is also another way of controlling how the audience receives the poems. The Liverpool Archives hold many of Henri's notebooks and other miscellaneous writings alongside his manuscript drafts. One such 'miscellaneous note' is a handwritten sheet on which it appears Henri has written notes for a reading. He has written: 'I never choose the programme of poems I read until the last moment, preferring to vary the choice according to my mood, that of the audience, its size, and the sort of setting we are in' (Henri M/6/3). This explanation of his motivations – with a clear emphasis on the audience and the setting – is followed by more handwritten text, written, it seems, in preparation for a particular event, which includes the statement:

Tonight I will read some well-known 'old favourites' from Penguin Modern Poets No. 10 'The Mersey Sound': poems like 'Love Is...', 'Tonight at Noon' ... and 'Without You'.
(Henri M/6/3)

It is unclear whether this is to be read – perhaps in a programme – or if Henri would announce this, but the explanation is interesting. The phrase 'old favourites' was added in after the rest of the sentence was written, and indicates that he is aware of the reactions his poems receive. This is also evident at a reading as part of the 30th anniversary tour of *The Mersey Sound*, which was recorded by the BBC. There are clear murmurs of recognition when Henri announces poems such as 'Love Is' ('another sixties love poem') and 'Bat Poem' ('this is my, um, superhero poem'), with the latter prompting laughter throughout, showing that reading an 'old favourite' will please the audience (Patten/9/1/12).

It is, of course, not only the poet who influences the interpretations of a poem, but also the consensus of the audience, another difference between silent reading and the live event. In the 1980s, Egon Hansen, of the Department of Stress Research in Stockholm, ran experiments on the 'emotional stream of affect', finding that 'emotional feelings may be contagious', and furthermore that they 'may be passed on to one person from one or more

other persons, or from a work of art', meaning that not only the poem and the reading of it can affect the audience, but also that members of the audience can influence each other.⁸¹ On the page, there are no stage directions to indicate a punchline, but, at a live event, the audience's laughter may prompt those who are not laughing to reappraise their own interpretation. For example, introducing his solo poetry-reading section of the Scaffold's concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1968, McGough provides some cues for the audience's interpretation. After reading three short comic poems, he says he will 'change the mood slightly with three, um two, poems ... failed love poems'.⁸² Expectations could either be for something amusing or depressing, depending on the interpretation: 'poems about love which are failures' or 'poems about failed love'. The last poem – perhaps the subject of the slip 'three, um two' – is 'Let Me Die a Youngman's Death'. There is a murmur from the audience at the announcement of this poem, intimating that they have heard the poem before. The poem is an extended plea to die 'a youngman's death':

not a clean & inbetween
the sheets holywater death
not a famous-last-words
peaceful out of breath death (TMS1, 91)

By reading the poem aloud (either solo or with music, as will be discussed in the next chapter), certain features are brought to the audience's attention. The drawn-out vowel sounds of 'clean & inbetween the sheets' are followed by a rushed jumble of phrases serving as descriptions for the kind of death he wishes to avoid, ending with the satisfying, concluding internal rhyme of 'out of breath death'. The following three stanzas list examples of how McGough might die at various ages, increasing in both age and sensationalism:

Or when I'm 104
& banned from the Cavern
may my mistress
catching me in bed with her daughter
& fearing for her son
cut me up into little pieces
& throw away every piece but one (TMS1, 91)

The audience laugh at several points in the Queen Elizabeth Hall recording, including at both the idea of being banned from the Cavern at 104 and at the final two lines of the quotation above – the latter causing a laugh which extends into the next stanza. The consensus of the audience is clear here in interpreting this poem as humorous. McGough reads each stanza, each new idea, with great relish, emphasising elements which are not

⁸¹ Egon Hansen, *Stress, Stream of Affect, and Emotions: Exploratory Experiment with Poetry Reading* (Stockholm: Stress Research Section Karolinska Institutet, 1996), p. 28-9.

⁸² The Scaffold, *Live at the Queen Elizabeth Hall 1968*, prod. by Eleanor Fazan (Cherry Red Records, ACMEM63CD, 2006). The Scaffold will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

obvious on the printed page. For example, in his reading of: ‘Or when I’m 104/ & banned from the Cavern’ (*TMS1*, 91), the emphasis is on ‘banned’, rather than on the name of the famous Liverpool club. In contrast, in his reading of the poem on the Penguin Audio Cassette, his voice contains no amusement during these lines. Both readings pause before the final word ‘death’ – which is not represented in the layout of the poem in print – showing some consistency in his vocalisation of the poem. The 1968 recording has a far more intense range of emotional tones, with, for example, the final word being almost whispered in contrast to the opening declamation. It is a much more forceful delivery – perhaps influenced by McGough’s own feelings about the poem: he was 30 in 1968, but 60 in 1997.⁸³

As well as the way in which an individual poem is announced, a poet can structure his whole set to have certain effects. For example, Patten’s 2010 Bluecoat reading was deliberately (and comically) structured as: ‘a short journey through childhood, adolescence, schooldays, early love poems and later love affairs, infidelity, divorce, growing older, aging, death, and, if we have time, I’ll throw in the afterlife as well.’⁸⁴ In Henri’s notebooks there are many instances of set lists with notes attached. One page of notes for a reading at the Blue Angel (with the Liverpool Scene) has notes showing a consideration of emotional affect (fig 3.3). Henri has written a numbered list, and to the right of the titles of songs, sketches, and poems, he has made notes on the emotions evoked. So, his ‘The New “Our Times”’ is ‘funny’, opening the set, with a bracketed section of pieces both ‘lyrical’ and ‘sad’. This does not necessarily contradict the ‘miscellaneous note’ quoted above, where Henri wrote that he made up his ‘programme of poems’ at the last minute, because it is for a group performance, perhaps requiring structure ahead of time. It also indicates increasing professionalization, with Henri changing his practice as Merseybeat gained popularity and reading tours became one of his main sources of income. However, Henri still ‘var[ies] the choice’ according to a range of factors, taking into account the audience and how he can affect it. Interviewed for the *Writers and their Work* series, McGough stated that he planned further ahead:

I work out the running order before I go on, I know exactly where I’m starting and where I’m going to finish before I go on and I work out the running order of what I read pretty carefully. Every time I do a performance I write down what I’ve read, what order I’ve read the poems. And on the train going home I work out was it a good order of things, why didn’t that poem work as well tonight as it should have

⁸³ McGough (now much closer to being 73 than he was when he wrote the poem) has written an updated version, ‘Not for me a youngman’s death’, which asks to ‘die an oldman’s death’ (Roger McGough, *As Far As I Know* [London: Viking, 2012], p. 74). At a reading as part of the 2012 Woodstock Literary Festival, McGough read the two poems one after another, pointing up the link between the two, and, whilst reading the 1960s poem with the same relish as always, the later poem was solemn, certainly read at a more leisurely pace.

⁸⁴ Brian Patten at the Bluecoat ‘Chapter and Verse’ Festival, 13 October 2010.

done tonight – it’s in the wrong order, and so I’ll change the order round. That’s very much a vital part of the process of the performance. (McGough/13/2/9)

McGough kept his set lists (see the bundle in, for example, McGough/6/17). This shows a certain professionalism in his attitude towards the shows, and is, furthermore, akin to the way pop musicians work, with ‘running orders’ for shows.⁸⁵ What these quotations and archival pieces clearly show is how much the audience really did figure in the minds of the poets before, during, and after their engagements with them. The performance of poetry has been shown here to be a way of layering more meaning than is possible on the page and, as such, is a crucial aspect in the dissemination of a work. The poems are intended to exist both on and off the page, with oral expressions providing something that silent reading cannot, in terms of authorial control and reader interpretation. But there is still more to the live event than this: a poet reading his own work is not the only way in which the audience can receive it. A poem can also be read as a multisensory crossmedial performance piece.

COLLABORATION IN PERFORMANCE

The Liverpool Archives hold a number of recordings of stage shows and performances by these poets, and the audio cassette entitled ‘*Liverpool Poets live in Basildon*’ (1984) is an example of just such a performance piece, using a combination of the three poets’ works.⁸⁶ Opening with the Beatles’ ‘All You Need Is Love’, the music fades out as Henri reads the opening of his ‘Poem for Liverpool 8’ from *Autobiography*, with an opening explanation: ‘The place, Liverpool; the time, 1967...’, setting the scene (McGough/13/1/1/22). It is Henri who announces the next poem, ‘First Day at School’, written by McGough. All three poets contribute to this poem: for example, after McGough’s line ‘Waiting for the bell to go’, Patten says ‘to go where?’, which in the printed text reads as: ‘Waiting for the bell to go. (To

⁸⁵ The link to pop music is interesting, too, because of their formation as a ‘group’ – linking them both to the ‘literary group’, as in the social scene of the American Beats, and to the ‘music group’, the contemporary term used for a band.

⁸⁶ I note here that the recordings which are available to me (in the Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives) are almost all post-1960s. Whilst this chapter focuses on the work of the three Merseybeat poets in that decade, in Liverpool, I am using these later recordings because there is little audiovisual material available for the 1960s (although I am grateful to Andy Roberts for material relating to The Liverpool Scene at the very end of the decade). This may be partly because the early days were not deemed important (whereas later theatre tours such as *Words on the Run* had soundboard recordings from the venues themselves), but also because their nature was deliberately live and transient and spontaneous – see Chapter Five’s discussion of Happenings on this. However, from conversations with the poets themselves and members of their audiences, I believe that similar collaborative performances occurred in their readings of the 1960s, and that, even if they were with different poems, the analysis stands as an example of the fluid nature of the Merseybeat’s ‘total art’ aesthetic.

go where?)'.⁸⁷ Lines such as 'games that are rough, that swallow you up', after McGough mentions playground games, are spoken by Henri or Patten as if asides added to McGough's main narrative. The poets dramatize their reading in other ways, adding in a whistle of surprise after McGough tells of the 'glassrooms – whole rooms made out of glass – imagine!' The final lines of the poem are also dramatized to have additional meaning from the printed version:

McGough:	Perhaps the teacher will read it for me	
Patten:	Tea-cher?	
Henri:	The one who makes the tea.	
Patten:	Oh!	(McGough/13/1/1/22)

It is as if they are three individual children, and Henri has the answer to Patten's question. In McGough's original poem, this comment about the 'tea-cher' is presented as the (single) child narrator's own conclusion: 'Perhaps the teacher will read it for me./ Tea-cher. The one who makes the tea' (*Glassroom*, 8). Immediately after this poem's end, Patten announces 'Last day at school'. What follows is his poem 'Schoolboy', connected to the previous poem with this framing phrase, and performed similarly, with all three poets reading lines of Patten's poem. This opening, on the theme of school and childhood, blends the three poets' voices and blurs the lines of authorship between their individual works. This section discusses a number of examples from archival manuscript and audiovisual material where the poems have been transported from the page into performance through collaboration: additional meaning or interpretations can be formed through dramatization; multiple voices can be used to present different characters; poems can be performed in conversation with other works.

As this suggests, poems are not stable entities to be read off the page, rather they can be worked on, post-publication, for shared performance in a variety of ways. Something clearly happens to a poem in performance in terms of its ownership. Whilst there are clear indications of the audience's 'knowingness' at various readings (such as those murmurs of recognition at the *Poetry Please* recording of *The Mersey Sound* 30th anniversary tour, which would imply that they know who wrote which poem), and reading aloud has been discussed as a way of demonstrating authorship and controlling interpretations in a previous section of this chapter, in group performance these lines are blurred. A draft of ideas for the 30th anniversary tour plays with various ideas for the opening, with each poet taking turns to describe how they met and possibly reading a relevant poem, but Patten also suggests going 'upstage for 3 voice poem – if we've mentioned Adrian as painter maybe I want to paint

⁸⁷ Roger McGough, *In The Glassroom* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1976), p. 8. Further references appear after quotations in the text as '*Glassroom*'.

pictures could be shared', and then later, for the main body of the first half of the show he writes: 'Main Poems MOSTLY? from The Mersey Sound, a few more shared' (Patten/5/4). Sharing poems is exactly what the poets do in that 30th anniversary tour, as well as other tours around that time. In fact, after this school-montage opening, which uses works by all three poets and their three voices, Henri introduces the Basildon show by telling the audience: 'we do bits together and then we do solo bits' (McGough/13/1/1/22). This simple statement sums up the fluid nature of their performances and collaborations.

In the interview for the *Writers and their Work* programme mentioned previously, McGough spoke about the benefits of collaborative performance (this was around the time that he was working on a tour with Patten). Often, in performance, McGough said, 'people won't know who's written what too much – we're not saying this is my poem, this is Brian's poem, we'll share the poem, break the poem up', with the value of this way of working being that:

you can do things with poems that weren't there before, you can rediscover them for yourself. It's often happened that I'll have a poem that I've grown tired of reading, but I'll work with Brian, and Brian shares it and it becomes sort of new for me.
(McGough/13/2/9)

There are a wide range of annotated poems in the Archives marked up for shared performance such as Patten's 'Proclamation from the New Ministry of Culture', from *Grave Gossip* (1979) – fig 3.4.⁸⁸ There is an introductory header segueing into the title: 'Your attention please, there now follows a ...'. Here is it easier to show who speaks, as the two lines written in after the title are colour coded for first 'R' and then 'B', and it stands to reason that the colours used will then be for the same speaker in the main body of the text. So, from a poem on the page written by Patten, the audience receive a duologue – and the performance is not just oral, but also has a visual dimension, as we can see from the 'stage direction', as it were, included on this sheet: 'look at each other, conspiratorial smile', which is inserted before the final line, and adds a dramatic element which one does not get from the words on the printed page.

One of the reasons for the use of two voices is to allow a change of pace and emphasis. 'Proclamation' uses McGough and Patten's voices for alternate lines to quicken the pace, such as in these lines:

The judges can be chosen from amongst yourselves
The honours to be awarded are numerous,

⁸⁸ As well as the poems discussed here, I have included two other examples of poems marked up for joint performance in the Appendix: 'I Studied Telephones Constantly' (fig 3.5) and 'Drunk' (fig 3.6), both of which contain additional text and textual amendments and changes of speaker.

The prizes to be awarded are numerous,
You may write or paint exactly what you wish,
You may say exactly what you wish
About the free spirit of the land. (Patten/1/1/21/68)

The repetitive structures of two sets of the lines here quoted (honours and prizes being numerous, and write, paint, say what you wish) are emphasised in this performance by hearing the same phrases spoken, one after another, by different voices. But these two voices can also be used in other ways. Patten has added these two lines after the introduction and title:

R: we are the two government officials
B: who are organising the next gov. arts fes. (Patten/1/1/21/68)

Patten's line follows on from McGough's, here, finishing his sentence. The two government officials are presenting a united front. Patten's poem is clearly ironic:

Work in bad taste will be disqualified
Anonymous entries will be ferreted out
Those who do not enter will be considered
Enemies of the free spirit of this land.

From now on the festival is to be an annual event. (Patten/1/1/21/68)

The colour coding here (see fig 3.4) indicates that this last line will be spoken by the two together. Rather than celebrating the 'free spirit of this land', which is a phrase which appears three times in Patten's poem, the intent of this 'Proclamation' is, obviously, to find those who do not conform. By joining the two voices together, *lack* of freedom is expressed.

A recording of 'Proclamation' exists in another group format, with all three poets reading. Patten introduces the poem in almost the same way: 'Your attention please, there now follows a broadcast from the new Ministry of Culture', which changes the title of the poem itself from 'Proclamation' to 'broadcast' (McGough/13/1/1/149). In this instance, the two additional introductory lines are spoken by McGough and Henri, with Henri's line coming in as soon as McGough has finished speaking, following the same 'united front' approach of the previous example. Although it is unclear from this archival material which of these instances of performance came first, it is interesting to see how similar they are in their interpretation. For example, both have the two lines 'You may say exactly what you wish/About the free spirit of this land' spoken by the same person, following a series of shorter exchanges. This affects the pace, acting as a stop to the previous two lines' anaphora. This structure – of McGough and Henri building up a set of rhythmic short lines, only to be stopped by Patten reading a longer sentence across two lines on the page – is repeated again

later in the live example, and differs in its expression from the manuscript example, where the two speakers took two lines each, because they have an extra voice to utilise:

Henri: Work in bad taste will be disqualified
McGough: Anonymous entries will be ferreted out
Patten: Those who do not enter will be considered
Enemies of the free spirit of this island (McGough/13/1/1/149)

These shifts in pace, with Patten always speaking a longer section, are subverted in the final line of the poem, which is broken into three:

Henri: From now on
McGough: the festival
Patten: is to be an annual event. (McGough/13/1/1/149)

Instead of speaking the line together as in the manuscript example, which brings Patten and McGough together as a single entity, the same point – of representing government control and uniformity – is made here by having each speaker follow on immediately from the last. The one sentence is not, in fact, broken up in terms of its sense. Whether two or three government officials, the vocal expression highlights the intent of Patten’s poem in a way which the printed text cannot: presenting this overarching ‘we’ in more than one voice serves to heighten the irony of the ‘Proclamation’: the ‘free spirit’ is clearly the opposite, as is seen both in the actual words being spoken and the vocal expression (‘we’, finishing each other’s sentences, speaking simultaneously, robotically).

It is interesting that these pages survive, with their crossings-out and changes of personnel, showing the group’s fluid way of working. It is not set who will do what, but, just as with the musical collaboration which is discussed in the next chapter, rehearsal will help work out what is the most effective use of each speaker, what is the most dramatic way of presenting the poem, what is the most successful use of their alliance.

One of the most significant examples of collaboration for a live performance is McGough’s ‘40-Love’. The poem is about a ‘middle/ aged/ couple/ playing/ ten/nis’, with the words on the page divided into two columns to represent the ball bouncing between the two tennis players – breaking up the syllables of words such as ‘ten-nis’ and ‘be-tween’ reaffirms this (*TMS1*, 70-1).⁸⁹ In solo performance, such as the version recorded for the Penguin Audio Cassette, McGough reads to highlight this idea of the rhythmic bounce of the ball between partners, deliberately pausing between each line, quickening as the poem progresses. In group performance McGough uses the other voices available to dramatize the tennis match

⁸⁹ The visual characteristics of ‘40-Love’ will be discussed further in Chapter Five, p. 194-5.

further. One example, from the recording of the 1984 *Liverpool Poets* show in Basildon (McGough/13/1/1/22), explores the idea of the match further with McGough and Patten speaking one column each, and the word ‘net’ then spoken by Henri. Having a third person speak that single word in the phrase ‘the/ net/ will/ still/ be/ be-/ tween/ them’ (TMS1, 70-1) both highlights the ‘net’ of the tennis match but also further imitates a tennis match, with an umpire commenting on service (‘net’ service, where the umpire calls ‘let’ to allow a player to take another serve if their first ball clips the net on delivery). *Wordplay* (1976), a stage show written by McGough and performed with John Gorman, Andy Roberts, Lindsay Ingram, and Victoria Wood, also performs the poem in much the same way: Gorman and Roberts take the roles of the tennis players, quickening their pace as the poem progresses (also moving about the stage, as is clear from the background noise on the recording), both women shout the word ‘net!’, and then McGough quietly speaks the final ‘will still be between them’ (McGough/13/2/71).

The dramatization of ‘40-Love’ in *Words on the Run* (a 1995 theatre tour by the Merseybeat poets, guitarist Andy Roberts, and playwright Willy Russell) is also another example of the way in which the poets can manipulate audience reception. McGough introduces the poem with: ‘And now a choral rendition of two major poetical works’ (Patten/9/1/14). Here, Patten and Henri speak each side of the match as in the Basildon recording, getting faster after ‘ten/nis’, culminating in McGough shouting ‘net!’ before lowering his voice for the final few words. This set up reproduces the format of the previous examples, but what happens next colours the audience’s reception. They pause for laughter and applause, but then go straight into a reading of another McGough poem, ‘Missed’. This poem is not set out on the page as a match, nor is there any other recording of it in this format that I can find, but for *Words on the Run*, Patten, Henri, and McGough each speak lines of the poem, one after the other. The audience is set up to treat these two poems as linked: first, by McGough’s introduction before ‘40-Love’: ‘And now a choral rendition of *two* major poetical works’; second by their treatment – the poets speaking alternate words/phrases of each poem; and third, because of the sports link – as ‘40-Love’ relates to tennis, ‘Missed’ also uses a sporting metaphor for the punchline:

he aimed
low in life
and
missed⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Roger McGough, *Holiday on Death Row* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p. 35.

Is the man in the second poem one half of the couple in the first – now ‘divorced/ out of work’, dissatisfied with his lot in life?

There are other poems with similar divisions and character roles, for which we have audio records. For example, in the *Liverpool Poets* show in Basildon discussed above (McGough/13/1/1/22), Henri invites the audience to join in with the reading of ‘Car Crash Blues’: ‘It has a one-word chorus which is the one word that is in every pop song ever written and we would like you to join in with the chorus.’ This is the word ‘baby’ which is repeated at the end of every phrase in the poem. Henri comments ‘very good’ after the second attempt. It is interesting to note that there is a small number of respondents at the first instance, which indicates that they know the poem well enough to know the word ‘baby’ is coming at that point. However, the audience’s participation grows and grows at each subsequent addition, and when Henri adds in the line: ‘You make me feel like Basildon, baby’, laughing, the audience also laugh, and the next few lines are broken up with Henri’s own laughter and the audience’s.

One final example of performative collaboration and how it can add meaning to the printed work is the performance of McGough’s ‘9 to 5, or Cosy Biscuit’, on the ‘Gifted Wreckage’ audio cassette.⁹¹ It begins, pre-text, with these conversational lines:

McGough: It’s 8pm and we’ve just started work. [...] Sometimes when we’re travelling round, we think how nice it would be to have a proper job.
Patten: So here’s a poem called ‘9-5’
Henri: ‘9-5, or Cosy Biscuit’
McGough: I would ask you to watch out for the neat bit of choreography that takes part in the middle of the poem. People all over the country are excited about this.

(McGough/13/1/1/149)

Both Patten and Henri introduce the actual title, for what is a McGough poem. This announcement sets up the poem’s theme, and prepares the audience for the staging, the reason for which will become clear. What is particularly interesting about this instance is the lack of focus on any one of the poets – if one did not know that McGough had written the poem, it would not be clear that he was the author from this introduction. The poets share the poem in performance, much like taking lines in any of the other examples discussed here.⁹²

⁹¹ Originally published as ‘epilogue (or cosy biscuit)’, in Roger McGough, *Gig* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 34. The poem ends the ‘On the Road’ section (introduced as ‘Life on the road with one of today’s supergroups’, a series of poems named for the towns they were written in or about whilst on tour with the Scaffold and later GRIMMS), giving it a certain context which McGough’s introduction in Basildon seeks to replicate.

⁹² See fig 3.7 for a visual representation of the line break-down for the three poets.

However, the lines taken by each poet in the first two stanzas are revealed in the second half of the poem to have been specifically allotted. This poem, which opens ‘What I wouldn’t give for a nine to five’, switches deftly half way through, jumbling up all the comments made and items discussed so that it ends, as the title: ‘Ah, what I wouldn’t give for a cosy biscuit’. What is additional about this poem in performance – and in *collaborative* performance particularly – is that the ‘normal’ comments made by each poets in the first half are jumbled up in the second half in such a way that they each (more often than not) repeat the same words, even in their new, confused, order. So, for example: Henri longs for ‘Biscuits in the right hand drawer’ and a ‘Glass of beer at lunchtime’, then a ‘Glass of beer in the right hand drawer’; Patten sees the office as a place for ‘Teabreaks, and typists to mentally undress’, changing to ‘Teabreaks and a *pension* to mentally undress’ in the second half (McGough/13/1/1/149, see fig 3.7). The poets also speak the words with great relish, these ideas of ‘how nice it would be to have a proper job’, as McGough introduces it. Take these two lists, for example:

The same faces. Somewhere to hang
your hat and shake your umbrella.
Cosy. Everything in its place.
...
The same 2 kids. Somewhere to hang
your wife and shake your bit on the side. (McGough/13/1/1/149)

McGough speaks the lines in the first and second instances with the same inflections, the same tone, in order to heighten the comic effect of the second part as it deconstructs the first.

Collaborative performance can be a mixture of poems in a set, a dividing up of the lines of an individual poem, or a dramatization involving characters or staging, but whichever form it takes, these examples show that these poets go beyond what one might normally expect for a live performance of a poem, turning it into a theatrical experience. This, then, is a major aspect of this movement which must be considered in critical appraisal: the ability – and need – to promote poetry off the page into an audiovisual, three-dimensional, crossmedial experience. Be it via paralinguistic features in solo reading, transposition to duologue, or wider collaboration, the Merseybeat poets fully exploit the notion of what a live event can be.

VERBAL PLAY

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to McGough’s self-confessed tendency to speak too quickly. ‘At Lunchtime’ was used to demonstrate ‘runningallthewordstogether’ where the

words formed a single image or represented his speech patterns graphically. This tendency is also evident in the performance of poetry, where it is used for deliberate effect. Slippages of sound, where the aural effect is more important than the written text, are used by these poets to play with the spoken word. The choice of title for the 1997 *Words on the Run* tour foregrounds this tendency. Adalaide Morris uses the term ‘acoustical slide’,⁹³ Garrett Stewart refers to ‘verbal slippages’⁹⁴ or ‘cross-lexical drift’.⁹⁵ Either way, words frequently overlap in their vocalisation: the end of one word is held over into the start of the next; individual letters or syllables are elided or compressed together; aural recall links back to previous rhyme or assonance; individual’s speech patterns effect the flow; voices lilt and rush and mumble.

Garrett Stewart’s *Reading Voices* is concerned with ‘phonemic reading’: ‘to do not with reading orally but with aural reading’, as in what reading out loud causes to be voiced, separate from what is actually written down.⁹⁶ Although Garrett Stewart’s analysis relates to rhyming words rather than phrases, I believe that his work can be usefully applied here, alongside Tsur’s theories of orality. Whilst Ong’s observation that ‘sound exists only when it is going out of existence’⁹⁷ is true, the listener can also hold on to what Tsur calls ‘auditory traces’.⁹⁸ One of Tsur’s examples of a situation where ‘the auditory trace may be enhanced’ is when sounds are ‘continuous and periodical’ – as when a poem contains repetition, anaphora, or rhyme.⁹⁹ In such a situation, words are manifestly not only experienced for their linguistic meaning but also for their sound. This is, in short, the basis of the ‘Poetic Mode’.¹⁰⁰ Repetition of the same phrase forms a sound unit which, when heard again, recalls the previous instances of that sound – a ‘lexical edging back’.¹⁰¹ The ‘lingering auditory information about the most recent arrival’, in, for example, Henri’s ‘Love Is’ or ‘Without You’ can ‘appear to linger on even after the recoding of the acoustic into the phonetic stream of information’,¹⁰² so that the listener is reminded of the main theme of the poem whilst still comprehending each phrase (joining the ‘Speech’ and ‘Nonspeech’ Modes), and sensing, in

⁹³ Morris, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: literature and the phonotext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 2.

⁹⁵ Garrett Stewart, p. 8.

⁹⁶ Garrett Stewart, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 32. ‘I cannot have all of a word present at once: when I say “existence”, by the time I get to the “-tence”, the “exis-” is gone’ (Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 91).

⁹⁸ Tsur, p. 71.

⁹⁹ Tsur, p. 71.

¹⁰⁰ See Tsur’s introduction for a longer definition of the ‘Poetic Mode’: ‘It explains, for instance, the double – hushing as well as harsh – quality of the sibilants, the relative height and brightness of front vowels as compared to back vowels, the relative hardness of voiceless consonants, and much more’ (Tsur, p. viii).

¹⁰¹ Garrett Stewart, p. 66.

¹⁰² Tsur, p. 37.

hearing the start of that anaphoric phrase, both what will come next and that it will relate back to what they have heard before.

This is another kind of knowingness, where the audience have expectations of what they will hear next. The Merseybeat poets play on this not only with repetition but also with their use of clichés or familiar phrases. Verbal slippages or acoustical slides are utilised here as the listener supplies what they think will come next. Thus, alongside the example of ‘At Lunchtime’ given earlier to demonstrate how McGough links words together, there are other types of word play, which rely on being read aloud for their full force to be appreciated. ‘Let Me Die a Youngman’s Death’ uses auditory shifts, where syllables are added or subtracted: at 73 he hopes to be ‘in constant good tumour’, replacing the ‘h’ of ‘humour’ (the expected final word) with the ‘t’ to form a new meaning, connecting cancer with old age (*TMS1*, 91). This doubling of meaning is particularly obvious when read aloud, as the listener supplies the expected word. Likewise two meanings are formed by the phrase ‘short back and insides’: as he is in a barber’s shop, we expect the ‘short back and sides’ haircut, but the ‘short back and *insides*’ also describes the damage the ‘rival gangsters’ have done to him (*TMS1*, 91). The comic effect is produced due to what John Hollander describes as ‘our ear hesitating for a while between patterns’.¹⁰³

Edward Lucie-Smith includes five different dialogue poems by McGough in *The Liverpool Scene*, which demonstrates the importance of wordplay in the initial promotion of this movement. Consider the following:

Man:	Have you got any pet peeves?	
Woman:	Yes, I have a pet peeve. His name is Spot and he lives on a strict diet.	
M:	What of?	
W:	Stricts.	(<i>TLS</i> , 75)

The woman’s answers do make a kind of sense, deliberately misunderstanding the man’s intended meaning, turning the everyday sense through a syntactically possible but semantically non-sensical interpretation. Many of the sketches which McGough wrote, both during the 1960s and after, depend on wordplay such as this. ‘Verse Addict’, written and performed with Patten, uses the conceit that writing poetry is akin to taking drugs. The sketch is set up in the form of an interview, with McGough as interviewer, talking to an ‘early addict, Mr. Brian Patten’, about how he got involved.¹⁰⁴ It includes exchanges such as:

¹⁰³ John Hollander, *Rhyme’s Reason: A guide to English Verse*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ A typescript of the sketch is held in the Archives, McGough 1/1/35. The sketch was performed on a number of occasions, but I refer here to the 1984 *Liverpool Poets* tour.

McGough: Sonnets?
Patten: I was doing fourteen lines a night.
McGough: Fourteen lines a night!
Patten: Sometimes up to fifteen or sixteen. (McGough/13/1/1/22)

Knowingness is important here, as the joke only works if the audience have knowledge of both sonnet form and of the terminology of drug use. Later, when Patten mentions getting into the ‘harder stuff’ like ‘metaphysical poets’, McGough queries ‘Donne?’ and Patten answers ‘Once or twice, but off with a caution’. This homophone plays on ‘Donne’, the metaphysical poet, and ‘done’, a colloquialism for being arrested.¹⁰⁵

Twisted clichés, mixed metaphors, and acoustic slides are also the basis of many of Henri’s poems. In *Tonight at Noon*, Henri includes a section on ‘The reevaluation of the cliché’, where he defines the cliché as: ‘a living piece of language that has gone dead through overwork’, but he suggests that it can be ‘energized or revitalized’ (*TAN*, 80). He goes on to say that this is done by ‘putting it in an alien context, contradicting its apparent meaning’ (*TAN*, 80), giving as an example one of McGough’s *Summer with Monika* poems:

your finger
sadly
has a familiar ring
about it (*TMS2*, 102)

Henri also believes that several of his own poems work this way, such as ‘Morning Poem’:

‘I’ve just about reached
breaking point’
he snapped. (*TMS1*, 20)

This poem uses a cliché, a well-known phrase, and subverts it with the punning final line, where ‘snapped’ can be both the dialogue tag referring to a manner of speaking, or an indication that the speaker has indeed reached (or gone beyond) ‘breaking point’. In the third and fourth versions of *The Mersey Sound* this poem is part of an extended group of ‘Short Poems’, almost all of which contain some form of verbal joke or reimagined phrase or cliché, such as ‘Love Poem’: “‘I love you” he said/ With his tongue in her cheek’ (*TMS3*, 54). ‘Football Poem/Goodbye Poem’, from *New Volume*, recalls the Rodgers & Hammerstein song *You’ll Never Walk Alone*, from the musical *Carousel*, a number one for Mersey Beat group Gerry and the Pacemakers in 1963, and co-opted by Liverpool (Henri’s favourite team) as a football anthem. The poem reads in its entirety: ‘You never wore/

¹⁰⁵ John Donne also played on his name in ‘A Hymn To God The Father’: ‘When Thou hast done, Thou hast not Donne,/ For I have More’ (John Donne, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Robin Robbins [Harlow: Longman, 2010 rev. ed.], pp. 576-9, p. 577).

cologne' (*NV*, 66). The homophone pun is clear when the lines are spoken: the 'c' of 'cologne' connecting back to 'wore' to sound out 'walk' and 'alone', in an acoustic slide. This poem is clearly an example of an instance where the audience is expecting to hear the rest of the phrase, and, indeed, it depends on that knowledge. Henri also uses other known phrases, such as in 'Travel Songs', where he writes of 'Beautiful girls who/ can't tell stalks from buttercups' (*TAN*, 7), playing on the advertising slogan of Stork margarine, which claims that you 'can't tell stork from butter'.¹⁰⁶

Garrett Stewart sees advertising puns as 'in every sense arresting': 'Grabbed, we are to stop short, go back. If we get it, they've got us: that's the logic.'¹⁰⁷ This is true too of the Merseybeat poets. In 'getting' the joke, the audience form a sense of community, just as with the example cited earlier of 'Adrian Henri's Last Will and Testament', where the intention of the poet is to form an alliance with his audience. On the *Wellingborough Bootleg* recording, Henri introduced his poem 'Robins' thus:

It's um just coming up to Christmas, and those of you familiar with my *oeuvre* will know that there's an awful lot of Christmas poems – French for egg [laughter] – an awful lot of sad Christmas poems. (Patten/9/1/14)

The 'French for egg' comment calls back to '*oeuvre*', which is itself emphasized with an over-the-top French accent. The comment is said as an aside, and feels like an off-the-cuff response to the audience's response to the word '*oeuvre*' itself, an explanation, but is also a joke, an inclusive knowing piece of on-stage banter, drawing the audience in. The laugh comes precisely from the fact that they know '*oeuvre*' is not the French for egg, and he knows this too, while mocking himself for the pretention of using the French word. This chapter has already discussed ways in which the poets control interpretations or cue the listener in to particular meanings, but, here, 'knowingness' is used in that gap between the audience and the poet in order to assert knowledge and understanding.

Another kind of knowingness is evident in two poems which refer obliquely to potential unwanted pregnancy: as we have already seen, in 'Mrs. Albion' the daughters are 'worrying about what happened/ worrying about what hasn't happened' (*TMS1*, 55), and in 'Don't Worry, Everything's Going To Be All Right' he tells the addressee:

Don't worry
About what happened last night
Everything's going to be all right

¹⁰⁶ This same advertising slogan is used again for a different comic effect in 'Bomb Commercials' – see Chapter Five, p. 213.

¹⁰⁷ Garrett Stewart, p. 10.

They'll give you contraceptive pills shaped like jelly-babies with your
milk at playtime (TLS, 24)

On the *Scene* LP the audience laugh comes, crucially, after 'what happened last night' rather than at the end of the whole section – it is only in the last line that the reason for worrying is actually explained, but the audience already know to what he is referring. This is the case with many of these verbal plays. The audience need not only to 'get' the joke but also to *show* that they get it. Examples have been given of many instances where the poet has cued the 'punchline' or 'point' of a line, with a pause before, or an emphasis on, that word or line, or particular interpretations have been forced through choices in the phrasing of speech, but the audience also have to acknowledge and respond to this for the poem to be a success. Thus, McGough's 'For You, Everything's Gonna Be All Right', contains a number of jokes about contemporary figures, and on the *Scene* LP the audience laughter is in acknowledgement of their understanding of McGough's puns and plays on double meanings of phrases, such as:

The queen will head the bill
at the London Palladium
Val Parnell will foot the bill
at the London Palladium (TLS, 22)

This is a form of common cultural referencing, used in order to connect with the audience. The poets gain the audience's attention either by placing known phrases in a poetic context or by subverting their expectations in the 'reveal'. For Henri, 'poetry must relate to everyday life and language, to common experience and shared assumptions, and yet provide "the sound of surprise", the impact of something heard as if for the first time' (TAN, 81). Verbal play is clearly, therefore, at its most effective in the live event, where the poet can see and hear his audience's reactions. Common cultural referencing through verbal play – alongside the use of music and musicians (Chapter Four) and adverts and artists (Chapter Five) – is connected to control and knowingness through reciprocal flow of understanding between the poet and his audience.

CONCLUSION

As a sixth former at Manchester Grammar in 1969, Geoff Ward asked Henri to come and read at the school. Ward describes the event as follows:

I didn't feel we were getting a censored reading, or a talking-down reading, I thought he was doing 'a reading', seriously, as he would have done at a club or on

stage. Things were not being missed out because they were unsuitable. There's a lot of policing about what we're meant to read at that age.¹⁰⁸

This is exactly what this chapter has been trying to provide evidence for: the importance of live readings to these poets, considerations for connecting to a specific audience, and the performance of poetry as a means of dissemination. However, many of the critics of this movement have seen the live event in a negative light. Grevel Lindop believes that interrelation with the audience has a potential threat:

It presents the public – *any* public – with a temptation it cannot withstand, the temptation of having its own attitudes, its concealed anxieties and its complacencies, flattered by the poet. Not only the poet's subject matter, but his vocabulary, his very figures of speech, will be affected for the worse, because in bowing to his audience he is joining the whole throng of less scrupulous word-mongers whose daily business is to breed complacency and propagate a false vision of the world.¹⁰⁹

These poets clearly do seek an instant connection with their audience, and reading and responding to that audience in that moment is important. However this is not the end of the process. An instant connection does communicate *an* instant *version* of the poem, but further readings will provide new insights: one can return to the poems (in other verbal expressions or the printed text) and experience them again. Furthermore, Lindop's comment could also apply to any poetry – many audiences attend poetry readings because they want to hear their attitudes flattered. However, Merseybeat poetry is not about 'bowing' to the audience, but about taking their responses into account so that lines of communication can be created. They are not 'joining' the 'less scrupulous word-mongers' but subverting them. That specific performance of a poem produces a unique version which cannot be repeated, but is part of the network of instances which make up a poem's public life. And even when the audience does indeed affect the poet, it is not necessarily 'for the worse', as Lindop assumes, but rather:

When I started doing readings I used to find sometimes that I'd written bits in older, i.e., pre-reading, poems that I couldn't say. Obviously these were altered in the reading. The interesting thing is that in every case this improved the purely literary value of the line or phrase – it was simpler, clearer, more direct. (TAN, 69)

Moreover, as Peter Barry shows in his in-depth analysis of McGough's 'Limestreetscene '64' (discussed in Chapter One), this need to communicate doesn't exclude complexities in

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Geoff Ward, February 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Grevel Lindop, 'Poetry, Rhetoric and the Mass Audience: The Case of the Liverpool Poets', in *British Poetry Since 1960: A Critical Survey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop and Michael Schmidt (Oxford: Carcanet, 1972), pp. 92-106, p. 106.

the poems. There are ‘linguistically implied elements of cultural sophistication’¹¹⁰ and common cultural references, all bound up in the loco-specifics of the titular Lime Street:

St. George’s Hall
black pantheonic
like a coalman’s wedding cake (TLS, 15)

The poem is a ‘dialogic mixture’ of registers and referents, which McGough would have expected his audience to understand.¹¹¹ Henri also approaches his audience with the intent of reaching them on the same level, bringing poetry into the realm of the everyday, but without condescension. In fact, this desire to connect can also cause the audience to inspire the poet. Peter Finch, cited at the beginning of this chapter as being inspired by Henri’s performances, also published Henri in his little magazine *Second Aeon* several times. The poems included in volume twelve come with a postscript: ‘Lucy is a girl who said you couldn’t write poems about the kind of subjects they were given at school: these are 3 of them’.¹¹² Henri takes the ordinary situations suggested by the titles of these poems and transforms them. ‘A Sunny Afternoon’, for example, is not about *a* sunny afternoon, but conflates several different afternoons into one poem:

Crammed dark club hot bodies loud music
Following the movements of your body
on muddy paths through cornfields
Ovenhot windbreath through the streets of New York
Tiny movements in the silence under hedges
White summer
Jimmy Page bringing the sun down
over
Darkening spires and Georgian rooftops¹¹³

The poem is complex, referring back on itself and picking up on new images or memories over the course of nine lines. The ‘hot bodies’ of the club are revisited in the ‘ovenhot windbreath’ of summertime New York two lines later, but also segue into the ones immediately following, on a different afternoon, where the awareness of the ‘body’ comes in a ‘cornfield’. The club is ‘dark’, inside in the afternoon, and it may be that the reference to ‘Jimmy Page’ is music from the club, but in these last three lines, it is also ‘darkening’ in another city (‘Georgian rooftops’ suggests Liverpool – as Henri uses the architectural term as a characteristic in many of his ‘Liverpool 8’ poems – or perhaps somewhere else, but almost certainly not New York). Over these lines we have urban and rural, dark and light,

¹¹⁰ Barry, p. 140.

¹¹¹ See Barry, pp. 140-41.

¹¹² Adrian Henri, ‘Poems’, in *Second Aeon*, 12 (1970), p. 37.

¹¹³ Adrian Henri, ‘Poems’, in *Second Aeon*, 12 (1970), p. 37.

noise and quiet, all representative in their own way of a summer afternoon, from at least two different experiences.

This chapter, and the next two, demonstrate how much the Merseybeat poets value the live event in all its forms as a tool for communication. Henri's desire to communicate is inextricably linked to his aesthetic – a deliberate mix of both the ordinary and the extraordinary:

I don't write down. There's a kind of Ockham's Razor thing that I use, which is 'is there a simpler or better, one-syllable way of saying this? Is there a way that's going to communicate with a greater number of people than the way you've just thought of?' The crucial decision is the communication factor. If I leave in something obscure it's because I feel it's absolutely vital.¹¹⁴

The next chapter will continue to discuss performance, but will address performance accompanied by music, or performance that is specifically musical in form. It will consider many of the same poems as this chapter, precisely because, as stated in the Introduction, the mixing of artforms and modes of expression in this movement means that no one work is fixed to a particular format - and, indeed, should not be. Entertainment is crucial for these poets, and by using live performance (with their own voices, as here, or with the addition of music) they could both attract and keep an audience. Because, after all, as Henri says: 'If what I'm saying is worth saying it's worth saying to as many people as possible.'¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Mike Davies, *Conversations* (Birmingham: Flat Earth Press, 1975), p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Davies, *Conversations*, p. 6.

CHAPTER FOUR: MUSIC IN MERSEYBEAT

Liverpool is a city of sounds and music.¹ It is via the aural realm, with ‘foghorns and hooters’ (A, 12), that the docks are evoked at the beginning of Adrian Henri’s *Autobiography*, and, through the docks, a strong musical tradition – from Celtic folk through Country & Western to American Blues – has been brought into the city. For the period within which these poets were working the Mersey Beat or Mersey Sound bands are an obvious context, as the same venues host poetry and music, both separate and fused. It is not surprising, then, that from Henri’s dedication of ‘Tonight At Noon’ to ‘Charlie Mingus and the Clayton Squares’ (TMS1, 11) to Brian Patten’s ‘Interruption At The Opera House’, a wide variety of musical styles and genres appear in the work of the Merseybeat poets.

Liverpool’s musical past is full of overlapping and concurrent histories, with country, folk, jazz, skiffle, and rock’n’roll (as well as light music and classical) all playing significant roles in the creation of a local popular culture.² Michael Brocken laments the lack of attention to the city’s complete musical history, believing it to be ‘principally because these particular “roads” do not, at first examination, appear to lead to the Beatles (but of course in a roundabout way they do)’.³ It is the phrase in parentheses which is significant: all aspects of Liverpool’s ‘hidden histories’ feed into the explosion of art, music, and culture of the 1960s.⁴ This chapter seeks to place Merseybeat as a literary movement which both recognises, and has strong links with, the convergence of various music scenes.

Social listening is one of the most important aspects of musical consumption in Liverpool, be it listening to recorded music or playing together live. Both sailors and the Cunard Yanks (as discussed in Chapter One) present a key point of access to recorded music, particularly because of the strong transatlantic links from Liverpool which brought American music into

¹ For a discussion of sounds and noise as well as music in Henri’s poetry, see Helen Taylor, “‘Reelin’ an’ a-rockin’”: Adrian Henri and 1960s Pop’, *East-West Cultural Passage* 12.1 (2012), 109-25.

² Classical music in Liverpool is easy to overlook, when compared to the more prominent popular music scenes, yet the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (founded 1840, the oldest symphony orchestra in the UK) is an important part of the city’s musical heritage. Whilst the Orchestra was founded as an elite society, it has, since the 1940s, consistently provided community and schools events as well as a full programme of concerts open to the general public every year.

³ Michael Brocken, *Other Voices: Hidden Histories of Liverpool’s Popular Music Scenes, 1930s-1970s* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 5-6.

⁴ I disagree with Brocken that these histories are ‘hidden’: whilst wider national interest may only have been piqued by rock’n’roll, music was very much a part of everyday life in Liverpool. For research on the variety of musical scenes in the city see, for example, Kevin McManus, *Nashville of the North’ Country Music in Liverpool (Liverpool Sounds Series)* (Liverpool: Institute of Popular Music, 1994), and the work of Sara Cohen, such as Sara Cohen, *Decline, Renewal and the City in Popular Music Culture: Beyond the Beatles* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), as well as other works mentioned in this chapter.

the city. For example, Paul McCartney's introduction to *Liverpool Wondrous Place* says that there was 'a massive amount of music to be heard', with 'all these influences, from your home, the radio, the sailors and the immigrants, Liverpool was a huge melting pot of music.'⁵ Later on, as John Cornelius's memories of the bars and drinking clubs of Liverpool 8 suggests, the jukebox appears as a site of dissemination or contact with a wide variety of music. In O'Connor's Tavern, which Henri refers to as 'noisy Jukebox O'Connor's' (A, 31), the 'juke-box loudly pumped out the latest progressive rock and black music'.⁶ Charlie Landsborough, a country musician from Birkenhead (already cited in Chapter One on this subject) paints this picture of his exposure to country music:

My brothers of course were returning from their voyages with the first guitars I'd ever seen and wonderful country music ... They'd often arrive home with a group of friends and a crate of beer and I'd sit enthralled as they laughed and sang the hours away.⁷

This is a typical recollection, but two strands are particularly worth noting. First, the idea of social listening is foregrounded in the familial connection: the explicit reference to listening and singing as a group appears time and again in recollections of this era. Second – and connected to this fact – is the phrasing of 'My brothers *of course* were returning': this implies that Landsborough expects his family connection to the sea to be a familiar experience.

In *Bomb Culture*, Jeff Nuttall defines 'the so-called Mersey beat' as 'a Lancashire version of the heavily negroid Tamla Motown sound'.⁸ Rock historians such as Allan F. Moore note the 'stylistic congruence'⁹ of early British rock with its American antecedents, where British artists recorded their covers precisely following the originals. Certainly many early bands, including the Beatles, covered songs in this style. Bands at this time were likely to be playing dance halls, such as the Grafton, where the emphasis was on playing music that the

⁵ Paul McCartney, foreword to Paul Du Noyer, *Liverpool Wondrous Place: From the Cavern to the Capital of Culture* (London: Virgin Books, 2007), p. xi.

⁶ John Cornelius, *Liverpool 8* (London: John Murray, 1982), p. 35. Michael Brocken also records O'Connor's as 'the first "rock" pub in Liverpool ... where from 1969 rock groups took over where the Liverpool Scene poetry and rock collective had left off'. Furthermore, he states that in the 1970s the scene there 'tended to represent the taste cultures of the bohemian area of the city, Liverpool 8', congruent with the area the Merseybeat poets knew (Brocken, p. 224-5).

⁷ <http://www.charlielandsborough.com/biography.htm> [accessed 1 October 2012].

⁸ Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 132. The Detroit record label's name comes from the city's nickname as 'Motor Town' or 'Motor City', which gives it another link with Liverpool in that both Vauxhall and Ford were producing cars in the area at this time (Vauxhall, Ellsemere Port 1962-present; Ford, Halewood factory 1962-2000).

⁹ Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, rev. edn. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, rev.ed.), p. 73.

patrons could dance to – perhaps easier when it was a track they already knew.¹⁰ As sets became more affordable, radio (the American Forces Network, pirate radio, and local radio’s genre shows) and national television shows (such as *Jukebox Jury*, the *Six-Five Special*, or the *Five O’Clock Club*) would have been an important site of access for audiences who were either too young or without the income to go to live music venues, join clubs, or collect records.¹¹ Easy access to jazz and other genres of music is central to Henri’s common cultural referencing: when he dedicates ‘Tonight at Noon’ to Charles Mingus and the Clayton Squares, it assumes the audience’s knowledge of both Mingus’s own *Tonight at Noon* album and the local music scene.¹² The juxtaposition of these two is interesting: they represent two different styles of music – an internationally-acclaimed avant-garde jazz performer and a local rock group – which Henri subtly elides by evoking the ‘individual and his group’ naming style of many bands of this time.¹³

Bill Harry, who founded *Mersey Beat* magazine in 1961, remembers:

an amazing folk scene, too, and the biggest country music scene in Europe. Add the poetry and the black music scenes, and it was incredible what was happening in that city. I don’t think it ever happened anywhere else. You get books saying, ‘Oh, as soon as the Beatles happened, everyone was suddenly on the streets with guitars.’ But the whole thing happened prior to that.¹⁴

The ‘whole thing’ is important here: whilst outside media attention came to the city based on ‘Beatlemania’, these various scenes had existed for many years beforehand, both concurrent and collaboratively. Many venues held different genres of music on different nights of the week, merging the boundaries of social spaces. The Spinner’s Club, for example, met at Sampson & Barlow’s before moving to Gregson’s Wells. Sampson & Barlow’s was also

¹⁰ Spencer Leigh cites a document kept by the drummer John Cochrane, listing which songs other groups were performing to ensure that his own band would not duplicate numbers. See Spencer Leigh, *The Cavern: The Most Famous Club In The World* (London: SAF, 2008), p. 66.

¹¹ Whilst I disagree with Spencer Leigh’s dismissal of Cunard Yanks as a source of music imports, I do concur when he highlights Brian Epstein’s NEMS ‘superbly stocked record shop’ as ‘significant’ (Spencer Leigh, ‘Growing up with the Beatles’, in *The Beat Goes On: Liverpool, Popular Music, and the Changing City*, ed. by Marion Leonard and Robert Strachan [Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010], pp. 28-42, p. 35).

¹² There is a footnote explaining the title’s source in *The Mersey Sound*, but this does not appear in *The Liverpool Scene* anthology. In the Liverpool University Archive, within a folder marked by Henri as ‘Poems for P.M.P.10 (1st edition)’, his own fair copy of the poem contains the dedication ‘(for Charles Mingus)’ (Henri A Li), but not the (published) explanatory note: ‘The title of this poem is taken from an LP by Charles Mingus “Tonight at Noon”, Atlantic 1416.’ [TMS1, 11]). An early draft of the poem, in Notebook C1/5, also has ‘(for Charles Mingus)’ under the title, but without a further situating comment.

¹³ For example, the big bands of the 1930s and 1940s as represented by ‘Glenn Miller and his Orchestra’, and the early rock’n’roll bands such as the aforementioned ‘Gerry and the Pacemakers’. Furthermore, this is not a simple jazz/rock dichotomy, but rather avant-garde jazz from Mingus is paired with the Clayton Squares’ self-identification with R&B and soul.

¹⁴ Bill Harry, cited in Du Noyer, p. 69.

home to Hank Walters's Black Cat Country club, and the Merseybeat poets' Monday readings.¹⁵ Likewise, Patten started his own poetry nights at the Green Goose café, which was a folk venue for much of the week. The cross-fertilization of popular music scenes in Liverpool occurred simply because the different scenes were available: one could go to see a specific group or style of music in one venue and return to that venue on subsequent nights to hear something completely different.

Music was an integral part of the Liverpool scene in the 1960s: the variety of sources and influences were wide; the venues and outlets were diverse; the networks through which an audience could experience the music itself were various. What links the recollections listed throughout this section is the idea of music not just as entertainment, but as a social activity, as a way of connecting oneself to a community. As seen in Chapter Three, Merseybeat poetry is characterised by its use of everyday words and phrases. Part of Simon Frith's definition of pop songs is that '*they work on ordinary language*',¹⁶ but, at the same time, singers can draw on 'non-verbal as well as verbal devices to make their points – emphases, sighs, hesitations, changes of tone'.¹⁷ The Merseybeat poets speak to the audience directly through 'ordinary words' and also through other devices associated with musical performance: lyrics become something more than just those words through music's ability to add extra layers of meaning and emphasis to them. This lies behind the Merseybeat movement's focus on the performative act: poetry is lifted off the page through music, but more crucially by the *live* presentation of music and words.

MUSIC IN MERSEYBEAT

A distinction must be made at the outset between poems read with a musical backing and composed songs. Poems can be read against some sort of musical backing, but songs fuse the words and the music together. Collaboration, too, comes with the music, another aspect of the Merseybeat movement that has often been ignored. The live event not only encompasses different media for each instance of a poem's performance, but also different people. The key is multiple showings: it is the network of instances, when taken together, which make up the creative work.

¹⁵ See The Mudcat Cafe's internet forum (discussion and memories of the British folk revival), thread <http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=122842#2697649> [accessed 19 October 2012].

¹⁶ Simon Frith, 'Why do songs have words?', in *Lost in Music: Culture, Style, and the Musical Event*, ed. by Aaron Levine White (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 77-106, p. 99, author's italics.

¹⁷ Frith, 'Why do songs have words?', p. 97.

Throughout this chapter I shall be making reference to pieces which appear on two albums in particular. The first is *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene* LP, already used in Chapter Three.¹⁸ The second album is a double-CD compilation entitled *The Amazing Adventures of The Liverpool Scene*, comprised of the original *The Amazing Adventures Of... The Liverpool Scene* LP (1968) and other recordings by the band.¹⁹ That this became available in 2009 was entirely due to Andy Roberts's campaigning for the re-release of the original album as well as his desire to preserve other unreleased or non-album tracks. These two albums are important because they record the live, spoken, out-loud, and inherently vocal presentation of the poetry, and The Liverpool Scene are important because they exemplify the collaborative nature of Henri's aesthetic. This group was formed through the weekly meetings at O'Connor's Tavern, with the actual band evolving 'almost by accident',²⁰ according to saxophonist Mike Evans. The core was Henri, Roberts, Evans (some of whose poetry is included in *The Liverpool Scene*), and guitarist Mike Hart.²¹ The musical style which The Liverpool Scene used does not fall comfortably into either the 'rock' or the 'jazz' genres, but instead takes something from each.²² The members of The Liverpool Scene, prior to their formation as a band, were also involved in Henri's Events, and what Evans describes as 'a series of audacious mixed-media experiments incorporating the three Ps – poetry, painting, and pop'.²³ And although, as Du Noyer points out, 'rock star was perhaps the least successful of Adrian Henri's incarnations',²⁴ some of The Liverpool Scene's best material evolved from Henri's poems, and I will be discussing those songs precisely because they form a separate creative site yet are still firmly connected to the printed text and solo readings.

¹⁸ *The Incredible New Liverpool Scene* LP, prod. by Hal Shaper (CBS, 63045, 1967). Further references appear in the text as 'Scene LP'.

¹⁹ All references to tracks by The Liverpool Scene are the versions available on *The Amazing Adventures Of... The Liverpool Scene*, prod. by John Peel, Sandy Robertson, and The Liverpool Scene (Esoteric, eclec22138, 2009). Further references appear in the text as '*Amazing Adventures... CD*'.

²⁰ Mike Evans, Sleeve Notes, *Amazing Adventures... CD*. Later the group also had a weekly residency at the Cavern: 'Wednesday 10th April 1968: Start of a weekly residency for Liverpool Scene' (Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 169).

²¹ See www.adrianhenri.com/performer-music-liverpoolscene-gallery.html [accessed 19 October 2012] and Evans's Sleeve Notes to the *Amazing Adventures... CD* for images of posters advertising the group's performances, photos of performances, and publicity material.

²² Richard D. Lysons has shared with me his extensive unpublished research on The Liverpool Scene's gigography, which indicates their broad appeal, supporting, for example, such diverse acts as Fairport Convention (Roundhouse, London, 4 January 1969), the Roland Kirk Quartet (London College of Printing, London, 22 February 1969 – Kirk, an avant-garde jazz musician, appears in Henri's 'Me'), and Led Zeppelin (tour, summer 1969).

²³ Evans, Sleeve Notes, *Amazing Adventures... CD*. The Liverpool Scene formed as a band in 1968, but prior to this Henri often used Mersey Beat groups (such as the Roadrunners and the Clayton Squares) to accompany his readings. Individual members of these groups also took part in Henri's 'Events', which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

²⁴ Du Noyer, p. 102.

Henri's 'Love Is', for example, exists both on the page and aurally as an anaphoric love poem, but it was also recorded as part of the *Scene* LP with Roberts backing Henri on guitar, and later became a part of The Liverpool Scene's repertoire. With the addition of music, the poem takes on another layer of meaning: for example, the poem itself does not mention matrimony, but Roberts's backing on the *Scene* LP uses a phrase from Mendelssohn's Wedding March. His version of the phrase is slightly syncopated, and his playing falls between the stanzas read by Henri. The use of this musical citation – which the audience would have recognised as a popular choice of entrance music for brides – highlights the absence of marriage in the poem; perhaps that is not, then, what 'love is'. The effects of musical accompaniment are therefore subtle: musical citation can emphasize a theme within the poem; emphasize wording through phrasing (parts where only the speaker can be heard focus the audience's attention, while the approaching climax of the poem could be signalled by a crescendo or other musical touch); or construct another layer of meaning (or inspire interpretation) through adding what is not there in the original words.

The Liverpool Scene's version, recorded and released as a single in 1969, opens with a saxophone line of a similarly syncopated interpretation of the Mendelssohn, but this is then joined by percussion and other brass instruments, playing throughout the track as Henri sings. This syncopation plays with Mendelssohn's piece to subtly poke fun at the institution of marriage itself, rather than, as it were, playing it straight. Guitar, played by Roberts, enters after the fourth 'Love is' of each stanza, which highlights the fact that there are no words to this line at each stanza's end, and also serves to emphasise the anaphoric phrase 'Love is'. Here music is a way of cuing the audience's interpretations, by their focus on Henri's words. The lines are sung/chanted by Henri as in the printed version, with pauses after each four-line stanza. However, there is a middle-8 section after the third stanza, and when Henri's voice returns, instead of the printed poem's fourth stanza, we hear these alternative lines:

Love is opening Valentines
Love is when you read those awful lines
Love is when you read between the lines
Love is

(*Amazing Adventures... CD*)

The lines are tongue-in-cheek: the 'awful lines' refers to Valentine's Day cards as well as, perhaps, to pop song lyrics in general, and the innuendo of 'reading between the lines' also refers back to the previous line. The fifth stanza of the poem is the same as the printed text, but also moves away from the purely poetic source: whereas the printed text ends with an ellipsis after the final 'Love is' (*TMS1*, 19), perhaps to indicate that there is more to say on the subject, in the recorded song, Henri's final 'Love is' is followed by a coda bringing

together the instruments, with a slowed-down rendition of the theme, ending on a muted cymbal crash to fade out. The song starts and ends with music, returning to the Mendelssohn-inspired theme – and places what that invokes at the forefront of the listener’s experience.

Anaphoric structure is key to this poem, since it consists of a listing of phrases which Henri uses to define love. In both the printed and the musical versions, we encounter the riff. A riff, within music, is a phrase of repetition in the overall melody structure of a piece. Allan F. Moore describes its early meaning in jazz as ‘an idea that is repeated, and that can often be used over different harmonies with minimal alteration.’²⁵ So, the riff is the musical equivalent of anaphora, keeping the whole together by repeating a theme or an idea that binds the whole. This is exactly what we see in Henri’s writing of ‘Love Is’ as well as in the recorded versions. But more than this, the work itself is, in effect, a riff: Henri is using *different media* (instead of harmonies) with *minimal alterations* (of the original words) to explore an *idea*.

Repetitions of words, images, and phrases appear everywhere in Henri’s work, particularly in the early poems, which were mostly written during a period of weekly live readings when his oral poetics were being developed. When describing the key components of early rock’n’roll in *Rock: The Primary Text*, Allan F. Moore emphasizes the need for a beat, for stable repetition throughout a piece: it is the drum kit which ‘lays down the principle of pattern repetition’.²⁶ We can see this repeated in Henri’s writing: his vocalisations are often marked out by a strong beat, even when unaccompanied by musicians. Anaphoric structures also contribute to this. Anaphora exists in ‘Nightsong’, for example, both at the level of the individual lines, utilising the same phrase again and again to drive the point home, but also in its awareness of another repeated element of modern song form, the framing device which often appears as a chorus or, indeed, is itself framed as a ‘middle 8’. The poem alludes to Byron’s ‘So we’ll go no more a-roving’, which itself derives from a traditional Scottish folk song, ‘The Jolly Beggar’, which includes the same two-line phrase ‘So we’ll go no more a-roving/ So late into the night’.²⁷ Henri’s opening and closing frame for ‘Nightsong’ updates these lines:

*So we’ll go no more a-raving
So late into the night
Though the heart be still as loving*

²⁵ Moore, p. 40-1.

²⁶ Moore, p. 36.

²⁷ Susan J. Wolfson, and Peter J. Manning, eds., *Lord Byron: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 507.

And the neonsigns so bright

(TMS2, 55)

The presence of ‘neonsigns’ is supported in the closing frame by ‘the night is daylight-saving’ (TMS2, 35), bringing the ‘nightsong’ into the modern world. This move is signalled from the start by amending ‘a-roving’ to ‘a-raving’, referring to a new meaning of the word ‘rave’ from the 1960s as a party or way of acting relating to having a good time.²⁸ However, the main body of the poem (a sort of chorus) is typified by the *lack* of such things:

No more blues by Otis Redding
No more coffee no more bread
No more dufflecoats for bedding
No more cushions for your head

(TMS2, 35)

The repeated phrase ‘no more’ is similar to the ‘but no you’ of ‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’ (discussed later in this chapter), where the blues form fits the laments of lost love or the absence of a certain person.²⁹

MUSIC FOR MCGOUGH, THE SCAFFOLD, GRIMMS, AND PATTEN

Bomb Culture, Nuttall’s record of this period of British arts and culture, describes the Liverpool scene in this one sentence:

The Liverpool Poets, Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten, Mike Evans, Tonk, and their many local followers, formed a style for public reading with pop groups which ... constituted a sort of gentle music-hall surrealism.³⁰

This short comment contains a crucial perception: the readings are local and intermedial, and they bring together both the popular culture of music hall and the modern art culture of surrealism. What this ‘style for public reading’ consists of in practice is perhaps best represented by the readings at Hope Hall, which arose out of the 1962 Merseyside Arts Festival:

To a first-time visitor, some of these ideas must have seemed arty-farty, but humour and self-mockery were very much part of it. Audience involvement was an essential element of what we were all trying to do at the time, to break down the barrier between them and us.³¹

²⁸ Interestingly, the Oxford English Dictionary cites George Melly as a source for this new sense of the word in 1965: ‘The word ‘rave’, meaning to live it up, was as far as I know a Mulligan–Godbolt invention’ (George Melly, *Owning Up*, [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974], p. 75).

²⁹ This poem first appears in print in the 1974 edition of *The Mersey Sound*, so it is not inconceivable to think that Henri may have written it after Redding’s death on 10 December 1967, as a kind of elegy for the singer.

³⁰ Nuttall, p. 132. My research has found a number of poems by Tonk in *Underdog*’s first four issues (see Patten/6/1/1/2, /3, /9, and /10) but no other information about this poet.

³¹ Roger McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* (London: Random House, 2005), p. 156.

The ‘we’ that McGough refers to here is not only himself, Henri, and Patten, but also John Gorman, one of the organisers of the Festival, who formed the Scaffold with McGough and Mike McGear (McCartney).³² A 1967 spread on Liverpool in the *Daily Telegraph*’s Weekend section quotes McGough as saying that the Scaffold grew out of the Hope Hall readings ‘with Gorman’; then ‘Henri joined us as a happeningist and the poetry became dialogues and trialogues’: ‘That’s the thing here – there’s no preconceptions about what poetry is. The arts are all mixed up.’³³

McGough’s autobiography makes much of the Hope Hall events, not only for the genesis of the Scaffold, but also because they are representative of the fact that the arts should be, indeed *are*, ‘all mixed up’. The original set-up was: ‘satirical sketches and surreal dialogues, interspersed with a poet and perhaps a folksinger or guitarist’.³⁴ This was a multidisciplinary approach to entertainment, but with an emphasis on show and spectacle rather than the ‘poetry plus’ nights at Sampson & Barlow’s or O’Connor’s.³⁵ What McGough’s list sounds most akin to is music hall: sketches and dialogues appear, music has its turn, and a variety of acts can be seen in an evening. This coming together of artists from different areas of entertainment – all of whom had their own personae and attitudes towards the audience – in music hall is a key antecedent of Merseybeat. The strict lines between the arts are not observed: an evening’s entertainment in a Victorian Music Hall would be as likely to include an acrobat as an aria from an operetta.

At the peak of music hall’s appeal, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were a great number of music halls and concert venues in Liverpool, aimed at all class and income levels, as well as working men’s clubs.³⁶ The music hall was an important site of class mixing. Peter Bailey and J. Bratton’s two companion volumes of essays on music hall frequently stress the social nature of the industry, writing of music hall as ‘a highly charged

³² Mike McCartney performed under the name ‘Mike McGear’ in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the Scaffold and GRIMMS. This was partly in order to distance himself from his brother, Paul. In this thesis, I refer to ‘McGear’ when discussing his work at that time, but also include quotations from his autobiography, published under the name ‘McCartney’, and as such attempt to stay true to the most relevant persona in each reference.

³³ Facsimile cutting printed in P. Willis-Pitts, *Liverpool The 5th Beatle* (Colorado: Amozon Press, 2000), p. 73.

³⁴ McGough, *Said*, p. 153.

³⁵ Of the start of their nights at Sampson & Barlow’s, McGough’s account stresses the lack of organisation, the improvised nature of the event, but also the element of audience creation:

These ones were just different people coming along and reading now and again. Which was exactly what we wanted to do. What was good about it was there was suddenly an audience, because you were doing it regularly it kept you going. And because there were always good audiences, we brought our new poems, and a lot of it was very much Liverpool. (Interview with McGough, November 2012.)

³⁶ See G. J. Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall* (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1970), p. 22.

social space', bridging the gap between the pub and the theatre but also existing as a unique entertainment venue in its own right: 'the crowd were as much producers as consumers of a form of social drama, in which styles and identities were tried out and exchanged'.³⁷ Throughout these two volumes, essays repeatedly refer to the relationship between the audience and performer, with music hall breaking down barriers much as the Merseybeat poets sought to.

Nuttall's comment about 'gentle music-hall surrealism'³⁸ thus deserves more attention. For some, McGough was known more for the bestselling single 'Lily the Pink' than for his poetry (hence the occasional tagline: 'Roger McGough – of Scaffold fame'³⁹), but there is a clear music hall influence in his poetry's puns and quick jokes (discussed in the previous chapter). Take, for example, McGough's poem 'My Busseductress', upon which the Scaffold song 'Bus Dreams' is based.⁴⁰ McGough's poem tells the story of a bus conductor, who 'like everyone else/ ... has her busdreams too' (*TMS2*, 86), the subject of which are indicated by the aural wordplay of the title's elision of 'conductress' and 'seductress'. There are textual differences between the poem and the song, such as the opening couplet: 'She is as beautiful as bus tickets/ and smells of old cash' (*TMS2*, 86), which appears as the more direct 'She's my busseductress/ she smells of old cash' in the recording. The change could be explained as the need to fit syllables to beats in a bar, but it is also a shift to greater bawdiness, as are the other additions – the refrains, for example, which are a repeat of the last two lines of each stanza by Gorman and McGear: their almost growl on 'when the peak hour is over/ and there's nothing to do', intimates that she does indeed have something (someone?) to do. The entire piece is characterised by syncopated backing and rowdy singing (the opening line, for example, begins as a grace note in the previous bar, and the brass section swings throughout), to represent both the kind of burlesque set-up the eponymous 'Busseductress' wants – 'Three times a day/ she'd perform a strip-tease' (*TMS2*, 86) – but also mimicking the style of a music hall character song. The Scaffold use the music hall style to great effect, drawing on a tradition of cheeky humour and innuendo (as opposed to the sophisticated burlesque of the European cabaret). For example, at the end of the song they each shout out comments – such as 'My lovely baloney', 'Why don't you phone me', 'It's standing room only' – culminating in all three singing a final exclamatory

³⁷ Peter Bailey, 'Making Sense of Music Hall', in *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, ed. by Peter Bailey (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp. viii-xxiii, p. xvii-xviii.

³⁸ Nuttall, p. 132.

³⁹ Archive clipping, Henri K 1/7, 'Adrian Henri's world – from chip butties to Beatles', *Lincolnshire Echo*, 4 July 1972.

⁴⁰ All references to 'Bus Dreams' are from the version of the track which appears on the compilation album *Thank U Very Much: The Very Best of Scaffold*, prod. by Mike McGear (EMI Records, 724353847425, 2002). It was originally released as a single, Parlophone R5866, in October 1970.

‘Blueserged beauty!’ This – and the removal of McGough’s lines such as ‘say nicely “fares please”’ and ‘best clippie voice’ (*TMS2*, 86) – present the ‘Busseductress’ as part of a bawdy British music hall tradition.

Music hall is also evoked by McGough for the opening track of the *Scene* LP, ‘Knees Down Mother Brown’. In this song, McGough puts on a Cockney accent, and uses Cockney Rhyming Slang (such as the line ‘now I’m on the old King Cole’, meaning ‘Dole’, unemployment benefit). The title is obviously a play on the traditional song ‘Knees Up Mother Brown’, but here it addresses a mother embarrassing her son at his university graduation, where the son as singer asks ‘need you be so working class?’, wanting his family to play *down* their origins, as the title suggests.⁴¹ Andy Roberts called ‘Knees Down Mother Brown’ ‘just a sort of music hall thing’ which was ‘thrown in as a sort of traditional opener because it could involve everybody’,⁴² recorded for the *Scene* LP at the last minute, and used as the opening track by Hal Shaper. The piece was useful because it could ‘involve everybody’, just as communal singing was a way of getting the audience ‘on-side’ for music hall acts. Mike McCartney recalls: ‘The way for Scaffold was pretty easy. We just had to fulfil the demand for simple singalong comedy songs for a mass whistle-along audience.’⁴³ It is the mass appeal of songs such as ‘Lily the Pink’ (Christmas Number One in 1968) which brought Scaffold to the public’s attention, but their regular evenings in Liverpool presented a very different set. They also toured with musicians such as Zoot Money and Neil Innes, both of whom would go on to be part of GRIMMS, probably surprising the audiences who had only seen them on *Top of the Pops*.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Speech can be interpreted, and meaning added, by a listener’s own attitudes: Theo Van Leeuwen calls this ‘connotation’, believing that listeners infer ‘significance from provenance, from the associations that come with certain “accents”’ (Theo Van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 141, 150). So, here, a Cockney accent is used by the Scaffold intentionally for the listeners to associate the speakers with being working class. Whilst the student’s direct speech does use Scouse vernacular (‘Watch it, lar, that’s my mar you’re talking about’), the Cockney accent is used because it is not certain that a wider audience would understand the nuances of Liverpoolian accents and their area and class distinctions, whereas ‘Cockney as working class’ is a connotation they can rely on for full understanding of this song.

⁴² Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

⁴³ Mike McCartney, *Thank U Very Much: Mike McCartney’s Family Album* (London: Arthur Baker, 1981), p. 141.

⁴⁴ Spencer Leigh remains undecided on whether the Scaffold should be included in the Mersey Beat scene. He points out that ‘their stage humour was very different from their hit singles’ and ends his section on the subject with the comment: ‘Scaffold haven’t worked together in recent years, but Mike McGear has written his autobiography, Roger McGough has published books of poetry, and John Gorman has had television success on *TISWAS*.’ (Spencer Leigh, with Pete Frame, *Let’s Go Down the Cavern* [London: Vermillion, 2007], p. 171, 172). Whilst the phrasing puts McGough’s poetic career almost as an aside, it is interesting that Leigh makes the point of showing what has happened to these non-musicians in this book.

The *Scene* LP also showcases how McGough used music. ‘Let Me Die A Youngman’s Death’ is ‘intentionally rhythmical’, a collaboration which was ‘very successful right from the off’, as, according to Roberts, McGough ‘liked the way the accompaniment shaped it and gave it a structure’.⁴⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapter, recordings of McGough reading this poem place great emphasis on being ‘banned’ from the Cavern, savouring the ridiculousness of being banned from that most famous of Liverpoolian venues (and, also, of the idea of being 104 at the time), and this version is no different. The other consistent element of McGough’s readings of this poem is what Roberts calls the ‘snigger moment’ of ‘throw away every piece but one’, which is deliberately cued in for the audience and emphasised by the lack of musical backing for this line in the version recorded for the *Scene* LP. McGough usually pauses for comic effect in his readings before saying ‘but one’, but here Roberts also adds emphasis by coming to an abrupt halt after ‘piece’, so only McGough’s voice is heard ending the line (at which here, as in every live recording, the audience does indeed laugh). McGough commented on this collaboration, when interviewed in 2012, saying that Roberts ‘gave it some drama’.⁴⁶ Roberts’s stop helps the audience to hear the joke, but the performance also clearly includes an element of ‘knowingness’, of a shared anticipation of the punchline on the part of both audiences and performers.

The music Roberts and McGough chose emphasises each verse as referring to a different stage of life by having a different tune played for each, but music also unifies the piece as Chopin’s funeral march (the third movement of Piano Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor, Op. 35) is used as an opening phrase before McGough comes in with the first line: ‘Let me die a youngman’s death’ (*TMS1*, 91). Roberts continues playing quietly during the verses, changing the musical backing towards the end of each verse to start louder at each new age. After the final verse, there is a pause, and then a final ‘funeral march’ phrase and concluding flourish by Roberts. As Roberts suggests, the music surrounding ‘Let Me Die A Youngman’s Death’ serves as ‘a rhythmical punctuation around the words’⁴⁷ by which McGough has indicated to the audience what he wants to emphasise from his original text. McGough’s involvement with music is often quite separate from his poetry, but, as we saw in the previous chapter, there is a clear oral strain to his work, the importance of rhythm and pacing in his readings being inherently musical – with or without musical backing. The attention to sound is very much in evidence.

⁴⁵ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

⁴⁶ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

⁴⁷ Andy Roberts, cited in Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 93.

Patten was also an occasional contributor to the theatrical poetry, comedy, and music group GRIMMS, formed by members of The Liverpool Scene, the Scaffold, and The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band.⁴⁸ Whilst Patten was not as heavily involved in music in the early days as McGough and Henri were, Roberts talks of his ‘major contributions’ to GRIMMS, and remembers that he ‘embraced the theatricality of it all’, with his poems as ‘absolute highlights’.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a letter in the Penguin Archive tells us that Patten himself suggested that *The Mersey Sound* came with a record of ‘poets reading solo (on own) or backed by one of the beatgroups from the pool’,⁵⁰ emphasising both the importance of sound and music in this movement and Patten’s recognition of it. Patten’s ‘Interruption at the Opera House’ (first published in *The Irrelevant Song*, and included in the second edition of *The Mersey Sound*) was, no doubt, one of these ‘highlights’. It tells the story of ‘an important symphony’ interrupted at its beginning by a man:

... crashing through the crowds
 carrying in his hand a cage in which
 the rightful owner of the music sat,
 yellow and tiny and very poor;
 and taking onto the rostrum this rather timid bird
 he turned up the microphones, and it sang. (TMS2, 150)

What follows on the page is a blank line, and then the response of the crowd: we do not hear or read what the bird sang. ‘Interruption at the Opera House’ appears on GRIMMS’s self-titled first album in two parts.⁵¹ ‘Part One’ begins with a simple piano line, accompanying Patten as he reads through the poem up to ‘How sweetly the bird sang!’ (TMS2, 150). Here Zoot Money – as the bird – comes in initially with a scat vocal line, launching into lyrics which do not feature in Patten’s own poem, where (as we have seen) the bird is silent. His singing is accompanied by a drum kit, with a syncopated beat, and guitar and piano in a blues style. ‘Part Two’ completes the poem, with Patten adding the line ‘at the very end of the important symphony’, echoing his original opening, for this section about the aftermath of the concert. After the concert, the ‘fur-wrapped crowds’ are replaced by ‘the attendants, poor and gathered from the nearby slums at little expense’ (TMS2, 150), to emphasise clear class distinctions:

In all the tenement blocks
 the lights were clicking on,

⁴⁸ The name GRIMMS is an acronym of the main members’ surnames: John Gorman, Andy Roberts, Neil Innes, Mike McCartney, Roger McGough, and Vivian Stanshall.

⁴⁹ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

⁵⁰ Letter from Brian Patten to Anthony Richardson, n.d. (Penguin Archive at Bristol University, DM 1107/ D 103). ‘pool’ is a colloquial abbreviation for ‘Liverpool’.

⁵¹ GRIMMS, *GRIMMS*, prod. by Neil Innes (Island Records, HELP 11, 1973). This live album was recorded at St. George’s Hall in Liverpool.

and the rightful owner of the music,
tiny but no longer timid sang
for the rightful owners of the song. (TMS2, 151)

There is piano backing, but Zoot Money's 'Small Bird Theme' does not reappear. Instead, after this final line, Patten himself says 'that's you yeah' to the audience. The political charge is obvious: that the song belongs to the ordinary people rather than the elite.⁵² They are the rightful owners of the song, and, Patten intends them (a live audience at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, in 1973) to identify with the attendants rather than the opera-goers. Rather than treating it as an 'intrusion', they are open to this music: 'from somewhere inside them there bubbled up a stream,/ and there came a breeze on which their youth was carried' (TMS2, 150), and it is this attitude of the right of popular ownership of the arts that the members of the GRIMMS are celebrating in this piece.

One of the characteristics of Patten's collaborations is a very 'hands-off' approach to the musical composition. Whilst evidence of Patten's involvement in early Events and other interdisciplinary moments in Merseybeat history (as well as the readings and verbal play discussed in the previous chapter) does exist, the musical interpretations of his poetry are separate in a way that Henri's never are. His involvement in 'Interruption at the Opera House' is an example of his reading with music, but, in general, the music is not intrinsic to the work. However, there is always a link between Patten as the originator or author of a poem and the final composition, and although this is often as a performer rather than as part of the composition process, he is still involved with the music connected to the poetry.

Patten's work has been set to music on several occasions. The *Vanishing Trick* LP (1976), produced by Mike Steyn, is comprised of one side of Patten reading his poems and one of other Patten poems set to music (by Richard Thompson, Neil Innes, and Andy Roberts), most performed by female artists (Linda Thompson, Norma Winstone). 'Somewhere Between Heaven and Woolworth's', for example, moves away from Patten's original text, turning the titular lines into a chorus running throughout the song, which Innes and Roberts sing between Patten's spoken verses. Another work across media is *The Blue and Green Ark*.⁵³ This is an 'A-to-Z' style picture book with words by Patten and illustrations by a number of different artists. Ross Brown has also composed a soundscape which has been recorded with Patten reading – echoing, for example, 'O is for Ocean' with a seascape. In

⁵² When introducing this poem at the Poetry International 1984, Patten stated that he had written the poem in response to the fact that the Arts Council gave more money to opera than any other artform. His belief is that opera is elitist and 'it becomes an archaic form, outside of London, in the provinces' (Various Artists, *Poets Punks Beatniks and CounterCulture Heroes*, prod. by Chris Hewitt [Ozit Morpheus Records, OZITDVD11, 2010]).

⁵³ See <http://www.brianpatten.co.uk/media-page.html> [accessed 3 April 2012].

both cases, the work begins on the page and is then brought into another artform by another artist, creating a new instance of the work. *The Blue and Green Ark* is, for Patten, ‘the best of my poems with music or sound’⁵⁴ but it is also a visual experience, and an example of a different kind of collaborative network to that which Henri and McGough involve themselves in.

Du Noyer cites McCartney as claiming that ‘the tragedy of the Scaffold’ was ‘that we were known more for the silly songs because they reached more people, than the stuff we really enjoyed doing, the satirical comedy and the poetry.’⁵⁵ In his autobiography, McCartney states:

We’d tried the other theatrical, esoteric, word imagery way which succeeded at university and small theatre audiences, but on a broader front wouldn’t hang on the *Beyond The Fringe*, *That Was The Week That Was*, and (later) *Monty Python*, washing line.⁵⁶

The satire boom of the 1960s was very much the remit of the middle and upper classes, and it is here that the major difference between music hall and satire lies: making fun from without, or subversion from within. Satire was important in this period – for McCartney: ‘*That Was The Week That Was* was the only TV show that could get you out of the pub to watch it’.⁵⁷ Former public-schoolboy Richard Ingrams, co-founder of *Private Eye* in 1962, said that he didn’t think *Beyond the Fringe* was ‘anything all that special’, rather it was just ‘the kind of thing the rest of us were doing – undergraduates in sweaters making silly jokes’, but what it showed was that ‘it was possible to sell university humour’.⁵⁸ Alan Bennett, who wrote and performed as part of *Beyond the Fringe* also says that ‘it has always seemed to be that what was subsequently labelled “satire” was simply this kind of private humour going public’.⁵⁹ This is significant: satire is *university* humour, which is (despite Bennett’s own background) middle and upper class, rather than the working class tradition of music hall. *Beyond the Fringe* and its ilk were making jokes from the inside – middle class boys ‘taking off’ middle class authority figures (and also drawing on an upper class tradition of ‘theatre parties’) – rather than the outsider status of the music hall performer enacting a ‘swell song’. Whilst Carpenter’s record of the satire boom indicates the debt *Beyond the Fringe* owes to doing ‘silly turns’, there is no link between this and the ‘silly turns’ of Bailey’s music hall.

⁵⁴ Interview with Brian Patten, April 2012. When asked in this interview if he would consider producing another soundscape, Patten came up with other potential poems.

⁵⁵ Mike McCartney, cited in Du Noyer, p. 134.

⁵⁶ McCartney, p. 141.

⁵⁷ McCartney, p. 100.

⁵⁸ Richard Ingrams, cited in Humphrey Carpenter, *That Was The Satire That Was: The Satire Boom of the 1960s* (London: Phoenix, 2002), p.155.

⁵⁹ Alan Bennett, cited in Carpenter, p. 96.

George Melly describes the Scaffold in *Revolt into Style* as ‘satiric-pop’, aligning them with the 1960s satire boom, and states that their work ‘swings between catchy little top twenty singles and verbal and visual sniping at the establishment.’⁶⁰ But, crucially, the Scaffold are sniping from the outside. The events organised by the poets took their inspiration from the audience-led and localised humour of music hall, taking on social commentary as entertainment. Whilst they were certainly aware of avant-garde European traditions, such as Surrealism, and contemporary American movements, such as Happenings, the influence of these is softened, re-interpreted through Liverpool’s long tradition of humour. Roberts makes this point about the evenings at O’Connor’s:

Our traditional platforms were back rooms in pubs and I’m certain that nowadays we would be occupying the slot of an alternative comedian ... and people would come as much to laugh as to be moved in other ways by the poetry, but of course some of it was serious and people would react to that as well.⁶¹

The idea of alternative comedy is particularly important. Stand-up and the ‘alt comedy’ scene which developed in the UK in the 1980s comes very much out of what was happening in the 1960s, and the satire boom, but histories of this trajectory have rarely, if ever, considered music hall as an antecedent, and have certainly not considered the Merseybeat scene in this context.⁶²

MUSIC FOR HENRI

Phil Bowen notes Henri’s exposure to a variety of genres in his account of Henri’s early biography, citing a record shop in Rhyl which stocked: ‘Dixieland music, the big bands, and also Swing and Be-bop. Here, at the age of sixteen, with music already in his background, Henri began his lifelong vocation as a frustrated jazz musician.’⁶³ Later, whilst at Art College in Durham, Henri was involved with skiffle and ‘played in the College Jazz Band’, and he ‘stretched to singing a bit of blues.’⁶⁴ When Henri uses jazz in his work, it is loco-specific: jazz artists and their compositions are subsumed into Henri’s personal set of references, mentioned to his audience to produce a certain effect, or to evoke a particular milieu. Catherine Marcangeli remembers Henri’s desire to share his knowledge – both of art and of music, as well as literature – as specifically anti-elitist: ‘he always used to say “Oh,

⁶⁰ George Melly, *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts in the 50s and 60s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 132.

⁶¹ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

⁶² There is clearly more research to be done on this subject, particularly in relation to the insider/outsider divide, and the status of those involved.

⁶³ Bowen, p. 34.

⁶⁴ Bowen, p. 34.

you don't know that? You've got a treat coming!'"⁶⁵ Take, for example, Henri's poem 'Me'. The poem, subtitled 'if you weren't you, who would you like to be?', ending with Henri admitting: 'and/ last of all/ me' (*TMS1*, 28), is an enumeration of twenty-seven writers, twenty-eight artists, twenty-two musicians, and eleven public, political, or philosophical figures (not including Henri himself).⁶⁶ In creating the piece, Henri made a list of people he admired, including several contemporaries, before turning this list into a poem (fig 4.1a). At first glance, the final order appears to be random, but his notebook clearly shows deliberate workings-out (fig 4.1b). Similarly, on the page, there does not appear to be an obvious rhyme or rhythm scheme – the proliferation of names is itself enough. However, in performance, Henri uses a chanting voice and the pattern becomes obvious (as in the Penguin Audio Cassette recorded thirty years after the poem's first outing). The first half of the poem is split into four-line stanzas, following an 8-7-8-7 syllable pattern. The only deviation in this section is that of the third stanza:

Belà Bartók Henri Rousseau
Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns
Lukas Cranach Shostakovich
Kropotkin Ringo George and John (*TMS1*, 27)

The last line quoted here has eight syllables, which means a slight compression of the last line (the 'and' is almost lost in the Penguin Audio Cassette recording, as if reading 'George'n'John'). However, as a poem read aloud, each section appears to be made up of 4-stress lines, so that stress rather than syllables is the key to the rhythm of the poem. There is also humour in the juxtaposition of the names in each line – St John and de Sade, Kropotkin as one of the Beatles.

In the closing stanza, the lines are much longer than the previous lists (ten or eleven syllables each). Here the build-up of names is emphasized with three 'ands' before the final 'punchline', as it were:

Stéphane Mallarmé and Alfred de Vigny
Ernst Mayakovsky and Nicolas de Staël
Hindemith Mick Jagger Dürer and Schwitters
Garcia Lorca
and
last of all
me. (*TMS1*, 28)

⁶⁵ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, May 2012.

⁶⁶ One cannot help but be reminded here of Peter Blake's collages and, in particular, his cover art for the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Parlaphone/EMI, 7027, 1967), which includes a similarly culturally eclectic mix of people.

The chanting voice layers these proper nouns in a way which emphasizes the sheer quantity of people mentioned rather than their individual significance. In addition, the ear picks up on a variety of aural phenomena – such as assonance (‘Danilo Dolci Napoleon Solo’ [TMS1, 27]), alliteration (‘Bach and Blake’ [TMS1, 27]), and consonance (‘Kafka Camus’ [TMS1, 27]). The poem was a staple of Henri’s live readings in Liverpool in the 1960s, and for the poem to be successful there has to be an acknowledgement of the two-way exchange of the creative site: the audience not only bring their knowledge to the text, they also need to let Henri know that they know who he is talking about. ‘Me’ is perhaps the most inclusive and exclusive poem of the Merseybeat scene: inclusive in that it needs an audience in order to work, but exclusive in that it needs that audience to know who both McCartney and Mahler are. However, this could also be read (especially in the light of Catherine Marcangeli’s position, above) as non-exclusive, indicating a confidence in the audience’s cultural range. Henri’s use of common cultural referencing is in general a way of opening out a poem to an audience; mixing his specialised knowledge with more familiar cultural icons, and indicating the breadth of culture he could appeal to.

What is most interesting in the present context are the musicians and composers that Henri includes in ‘Me’ – the heroes whom he considers will be known to his audience. Aside from the Beatles already mentioned, other contemporary musicians appear such as Mick Jagger and Manfred Mann. There are also a number of classical composers, ranging from the Baroque with Bach, through Romanticism and after with Debussy and Mahler, to the important twentieth century composers Shostakovich and Stravinsky. The third group of musicians cited in ‘Me’ – the largest – are jazz artists and composers. The choices show his personal taste, as the entire poem does: we have the blues singer Bessie Smith – known to audiences through recordings of her own as well as being frequently covered locally by George Melly;⁶⁷ Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis are all be-bop musicians; and the other three were part of an avant-garde early 1960s jazz movement, Roland Kirk, Charles Mingus, and John Coltrane.

Pete Townsend, writing about the jazz scene in 1960s Liverpool, terms all these artists as ‘breakers of moulds’, and he says that what is noticeable about the choices is ‘how much it reflects the exceptional and the radical’.⁶⁸ Townsend also notes that all of Henri’s jazz icons are American. There are also a number of modern American artists and writers in the poem, which, for Townsend, ‘confirms an impression that the USA represents the innovation, the

⁶⁷ See Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 42.

⁶⁸ Pete Townsend, ‘Jazz Scene, Liverpool Scene: The Early 1960s’, in *Gladsongs and Gatherings: poetry and its social context in Liverpool since the 1960s*, ed. by Stephen Wade (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 168-76, p. 174.

rebellion, the intensity of experiment and self-expression that could only exist in a society unlike that of Britain in the first couple of decades after the war.⁶⁹ The poem also creates a picture of the kinds of music around Henri in Liverpool at that time, a city which has always looked out across the Atlantic instead of down towards London. It is unsurprising that the jazz icons are American, because that was where the music came from, and where new developments were taking place. Furthermore, the American contingent is countered by a far greater number from, for example, the European avant-garde.⁷⁰ What is important is not that they are American, but that they represent an international counter-culture. The people quoted are his heroes, part of his store of images and motifs, and what is noticeable is that these same artists and composers appear again and again in Henri's poetry, often used to evoke a particular time and place, or a personal memory, which is then shared with the audience.

In the poem (and the book of the same name) 'Tonight at Noon', Charles Mingus appears in the dedication alongside the Clayton Squares, as noted above, with the title itself directly referencing one of Mingus's own songs and albums. In 'I Want to Paint', in the *Tonight at Noon* version, there is a link between these two again, as Henri imagines 'Charlie Mingus playing the Mike Evans song book' (*TAN*, 21), Mike Evans being the saxophonist for the Clayton Squares and later a member of Henri's band The Liverpool Scene. In the *Scene* LP, 'Tonight at Noon' is performed by Henri and Roberts with a simple guitar backing, with a quiet repeated riff whilst Henri is reading and then Roberts adding louder sections between stanzas. This is a poem read with accompaniment rather than a song, but Henri utilises the performance to add oral elements such as his impersonation of Winston Churchill, noted in the previous chapter in other (non-accompanied) recordings. The whole poem plays on the idea of impossible love, and the music emphasizes this theme – such as the lack of accompaniment on the *Scene* LP for the important final couplet – 'You will tell me you love me/ Tonight at noon' (*TMS1*, 12). Roberts's silence is deliberate, allowing the listener to concentrate fully on the words which this entire poem has been leading up to. The music accompanying the poem is not Mingus's own 'Tonight at Noon', but, rather, music which accents the words and points the listener towards the most important lines.

⁶⁹ Townsend, in Wade, p. 175.

⁷⁰ This geographical delineation is not precise. Within the list of eighty-eight names (not including Henri) are also a number of Russian figures – certainly not American, but also not strictly European (this is also the group which has been most affected by my own decisions as to where to place certain figures between 'writers' and 'philosophers/politicians'). There are also figures who worked across continents, such as T. S. Eliot, born in America but who became a British citizen, or Marcel Duchamp, French and active in Europe before moving to America and becoming a citizen there, and religious and fictional figures, St. John of the Cross and Napoleon Solo, who are not easily placed geographically.

In ‘Adrian Henri’s Last Will and Testament’, dated ‘Jan. ’64’, with Charlie ‘Bird’ Parker and James Ensor as witnesses (*TMS1*, 14) – an American and a European, a musician and a painter – Henri leaves his ‘priceless collection’ including Charles Mingus records to ‘all Liverpool poets under 23 who are also blues singers and failed sociology students’ (*TMS1*, 13). Parker appears again in ‘Love Poem’, alongside Thelonious Monk and other musicians and composers listed in ‘Me’. ‘Love Poem’, from February 1965, is worth quoting from at length:

Monk takes his hands off the keyboard and smiles approvingly
 The Beatles sing lullabys for our never-to-happen children
 Quietly in the shadows by Central Station
 William Burroughs sits dunking Pound Cake in coffee waiting for the last
 connection
 and sees us through the window
 Bartók has orchestrated the noise of the tulips in Piccadilly Gardens for us
 Marcel Duchamp has added your photograph to the Green Box
 Dylan Thomas staggers into the Cromwell for one last one
 and waves across to us
 Kurt Schwitters smiles as he picks up the two pink bus tickets
 we have just thrown away
 Parker blows another chorus of Loverman for us
 Ensor smiles behind his mask
 Jarry cycles slowly behind us down Spring Gardens

Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns
 Bless the bed we lie upon (*TMS1*, 39-40)⁷¹

What these artists, writers, and musicians are doing, as the final couplet quoted here says, is blessing the union. But the poem goes beyond blessing Henri’s relationship, to celebrate another union: that of Liverpool and quotidian experience with the intellectual culture of American and European modernism. The choices of heroes demonstrate Henri’s knowledge, but there is also a romanticisation – in that Schwitters would smile at saving their particular tickets, or that Parker is playing especially for them.⁷² ‘In the Midnight Hour’ has a very similar section, revolving round music:

Andy Williams singing ‘We’ll keep a Welcome in the Hillsides’ for us
 When I meet you at the station
 The Beatles singing ‘We Can Work it Out’ with James Ensor at the harmonium
 Rita Hayworth in a nightclub singing ‘Amade Mia’
(*TMS1*, 49)

⁷¹ The only one of these who does not appear in ‘Me’ is William Burroughs.

⁷² This sense is also heightened by the knowledge that Parker hated the 1946 version of ‘Loverman’, recorded when he was suffering from ‘malnutrition and acute alcoholism’ – see Ross Russell, *Bird Lives!* (London: Quartet Books, 1972), pp. 221-4, 305 – and as such this may not have been the best choice of track.

Apart from James Ensor, all the references are to popular culture, but this line is also an example of Henri's lack of cultural hierarchies, imagining a nineteenth-century Belgian painter as a member of a popular music group.⁷³ The most obvious popular cultural reference for this poem is the 1965 Wilson Pickett song, 'In the Midnight Hour'. The two contain similar sentiments (meeting the girl at midnight, wanting to hold her, and talking about her eyes and the stars). In fact an early collaboration for live performances of the poem was with local soul group the Almost Blues playing Pickett's song to accompany Henri speaking. Indeed, Roberts recalls that this was the way that they performed the poem on the BBC show *Look at the Week* (which sparked Hal Shaper's LP).⁷⁴ Of course, to continue in this vein would have led to copyright issues, but more importantly, by using a pre-existing number, the poem and the song could not have been perfectly integrated. This, as has been stated in the Introduction, is Merseybeat's main criticism of poetry-and-jazz. Whilst there is a lack of recorded evidence for improvisation in the early performances, anecdotal evidence of it does exist. It is about the evolution of performance, changing elements to suit audiences and using a collaborative creative process. Roberts says of The Liverpool Scene: 'it was a sort of collective of writers and the whole thing was collaborative' with improvisation and spontaneity as key components of collaboration: 'somebody would start something and we'd join in and see where it went'.⁷⁵

When Henri uses an external source (such as the Pickett song, or Parker's 'Loverman') he deliberately brings the familiar music into his own personal space. In another love poem, 'Who?', written for his then-wife Joyce, whom we find 'waiting dark bigeyed/ in a corner of a provincial jazzclub' (*TMS2*, 38), music is used to represent their life together alongside domestic images. The poem is full of longing, the heavy enjambment of phrases drawing-out each question:

Who
can I
buy
my next Miles Davis record
to share with

⁷³ 'We Can Work It Out' (1965) features John Lennon on the harmonium. James Ensor did in fact play the instrument – there is a photograph by Maurice Antony of Ensor in his music studio with his painting *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889* (1988) hung on the wall behind the harmonium (Patricia G. Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* [Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002], p. 94). Both Ensor and this painting will be discussed in Chapter Five, in relation to Henri's 'Entry'.

⁷⁴ Furthermore, in a nice circular moment, when Wilson Pickett played at the Cavern (with the Tony Colton Big Boss Band), 20 November 1965, saxophonist Tommy Huskey from the Almost Blues was asked to play by Pickett (see Leigh, *The Cavern*, pp. 150-1).

⁷⁵ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

who
makes coffee the way I like it
and
love the way I used to like it (TMS2, 38)

It is a poem about sharing and partnership – indeed it begins ‘Who can I/ spend my life/ with’ (TMS2, 37), but the comment about making love ‘the way I used to like it’ changes the tone. There is a sense of searching in the repeated questioning, and this line suggests why. Henri twists the reader’s expectations, inserting a note of anxiety and melancholy into a poem which at first appeared to be a traditional love poem. It is also hard to ignore the fact that it is ‘my life’ and ‘my next Miles Davis record’ (the ‘I’ appears six times before the first ‘you’). Take, for example, the construction of these typical lines:

Who can I
listen to Georges Brassens
singing
‘*Les amoureux des bancs publiques*’
with (TMS2, 37)

The focus in this section is apparently rather more on Georges Brassens than Joyce. Significantly, the dedication ‘for Joyce’ comes at the end of the poem rather than immediately after the title. This simultaneously makes her part in the poem smaller and also much larger. Smaller, because we get only glimpses of the addressee between the authorial ‘I’, but also much larger because the bigger picture is being evoked by Henri through a set of personal images: kinds of music, a series of places, different seasons, and the everyday images which are, most importantly, *every day*.

As well as these references to jazz, rock, and classical music, Henri also refers to popular music. In ‘Mrs Albion You’ve Got A Lovely Daughter’, discussed in Chapter Two, the ‘beautiful boys with bright red guitars’ are playing at The Cavern or The Sink (TMS1, 55-6), and the Beatles appear in the poems quoted above, while other Mersey Beat bands have poems dedicated to them – usually bands that had themselves played with Henri and the other poets at their readings. Henri also asserts the equivalence of poetry and pop music: ‘Tonight at Noon’ includes the line ‘Poets get their poems in the Top 20’ (TMS1, 11), although within the context of the poem this is an impossible dream. In the *Tonight at Noon* version of ‘I Want to Paint’, Henri similarly wishes to see ‘Adrian Mitchell with 15 poems in the Top 20’ (TAN, 21). Pop music clearly fascinated Henri, as part of popular culture. In his ‘Notes on Painting and Poetry’ in *Tonight at Noon*, he cites the ‘degree of freedom of expression the new pop stars have’ as their main strength:

because of the whole pop aura that surrounds their work they could afford to allow themselves obscure or very personal images or sounds *and their public will accept it*. Whereas we always have to worry about the problem of communicating: what *can't* you allow yourself to say. I think this is a marvellous situation, for them.

(*TAN*, 79, author's italics)

As we have seen, this idea of communication is crucial for Merseybeat. The implication here is that music itself is a communication tool, and that the 'very personal images' are allowed because they are presented within that 'aura'.

Jazz is important to Henri in and of itself, as the music that he likes to listen to, the soundtrack to various love affairs and social occasions, but, more than this, the style itself has clearly influenced his writing. Marshall Stearn's definition of jazz is that it is 'a semi-improvisational American music distinguished by an immediacy of communication'.⁷⁶ Essentially, the development of a piece is determined by situational factors, rather than a rigid composition set out pre-performance. This could equally apply to Henri's poetry and his Events, inspired by Allan Kaprow's Happenings – the audience can affect where the reading goes and what is read, just like an improvised solo structured into a jazz piece. In his 'Notes on Painting and Poetry', Henri shows his own understanding of this. He states his belief that the "musical" values are what makes poetry poetry' (*TAN*, 68). The quotation is from a section about the misconception of spontaneity in Happenings (they do not just 'happen'). Henri uses the example of jazz improvisation to explain that there is 'freedom for the performer to alter the pre-determined sequence if necessary', but 'even jazz improvisation is usually "on the chords of" a fixed sequence' (*TAN*, 68). Both within a poem's internal structure and across variations and reworkings of these poems, Henri's use of anaphoric structure and a riff-like improvisatory mode allows him to explore a theme or an idea.

ADRIAN HENRI'S TALKING BLUES

As a self-described 'blues singer' (*TMS1*, 13), blues form is a particularly appropriate one for Henri. In poems such as 'Adrian Henri's Talking After Christmas Blues' not only the title but also the form of the verses is embedded in the 'talking blues' mode. 'Well I woke up this mornin'' (*TMS1*, 31) opens the poem, a common opening line or repeated chorus for the 'talking blues'. Henri also shortens 'morning' to 'mornin'', representing on the page the way the word is sung/spoken in a typical blues song. Big Bill Broonzy – who performed at the

⁷⁶ Marshall Stearn, cited in Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 16.

Cavern on 13th March 1957⁷⁷ – recorded a number of pieces which fall under the remit of ‘talking blues’, such as ‘Big Bill Blues’, which opens: ‘I got up this mornin’, feelin’ sad and blue/I lost my baby now tell me, what I’m goin’ to do’, which ‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’ echoes.⁷⁸ The overarching theme of Henri’s ‘talking blues’ is of him speaking to a lost love and telling her of how he misses her during the seasonal celebrations: ‘Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot?/ I don’t know girl but it hurts a lot’ (*TMS1*, 31). This echoes the sentiment of ‘Big Bill Blues’. In the third verse, for example, Broonzy sings: ‘Now I’ve got to walk by myself, and sleep by myself,/ on account the one I’m lovin’, she keep on lovin’ someone else’. One of the most distinctive elements of blues form is the repetitive nature of the chord sequence, combined with the repetition of the words, both of which the listener expects. In ‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’, Henri repeats ‘but no you’ at the end of every verse to reiterate the fact that ‘there was no one in your place’ (*TMS1*, 31).

One of the defining characteristics of blues, alongside the circular repetition, is ‘ordinary language’, which, for sociomusicologist Simon Frith, is ‘a kind of accumulated knowledge, a shared way of being’.⁷⁹ This is one of the reasons for Henri to utilise this form, part of his desire to communicate with people by using language which is accessible to them. ‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’ is a list of everyday objects and feelings, in a normal situation – here the aftermath of a break-up – that would have been readily understood by his listeners and readers. In the Penguin Audio Cassette, Henri uses a beat-driven, sing-song voice to emphasise the verse form of this poem, so that the listener is aware of the allusion to the blues even without musical backing.

Emphasis in blues form comes often from repeated words or phrases, picking up on, and reminding us of, the theme of the poem. As I argued earlier, the use of anaphora in the poems is effectively a verbal riff, showing how Henri clearly understood the blues medium. This section discusses several works by him – solo and collaborative – which use the form. According to Roberts, Henri was ‘absolutely steeped in blues and jazz’, he was a ‘walking encyclopaedia’, and the two men’s friendship developed in part because of their mutual love of the genres.⁸⁰ Because Henri was so familiar with the blues, Roberts found writing music to go with his lyrics almost intuitive, as the original words on paper were already written in a blues form. ‘Classroom Blues’, which also features on the *Scene* LP, with a 12-bar blues

⁷⁷ See Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 27-8.

⁷⁸ Big Bill Bronzy, *The Anthology*, prod. by Glenn Gretland (Not Now Music, NOT2CD401, 2011).

⁷⁹ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the value of popular music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 174.

⁸⁰ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

accompaniment from Roberts, includes the line ‘I call it pretty music but the old people call it the blues’, which is also the title of two songs by Stevie Wonder.⁸¹ Henri introduces the poem as being ‘for little Stevie Wonder and little Heather Wonder’, the former acknowledging his source and the latter referencing Heather Holden, one of his art school students with whom he had a relationship, and whose work is included in *The Liverpool Scene* anthology.

For the *Scene* LP, Roberts accompanied ‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’ in a slightly different musical style, whilst still keeping the ‘talking blues’ connection through the title and interjection-style phrases such as the opening ‘Well I woke up this mornin’ it was Christmas Day’ (*TMS1*, 31). Henri introduces the piece: ‘this is a kind of Liverpool hill-billy song from the mountains of Aigburth’. This introduction takes his knowledge of the Southern American source of the blues and merges it first with a different regional style (Country and Western), and then further, to another country entirely, combining it with Liverpool imagery. The *Scene* LP version highlights and heightens the American connection, with jokey references such as Roberts playing his accompanying country and western style riffs on a banjo, and Henri affecting a Deep South accent during his listing of stocking contents, ‘chocolates/ aftershave’ (*TMS1*, 31); using ‘gal’ instead of ‘girl’; and elongating the vowel of ‘spring’ at the close of the poem, with a slight US accent throughout to emphasise the American source.

The fun that Henri had with this version of the piece, taking a *Deep South* American musical source and replacing it with a *Mid Western* style, was partly in jest at his own displacement of the blues into Liverpool. Henri wrote ‘I’ve Got These Fleetwood Mac Chicken Shack John Mayall Can’t Fail Blues’ for *The Liverpool Scene*, a five and a half minute guitar-led piece which makes fun of the ‘white boy blues boom’⁸² of the time, and the appropriation of a traditionally black American style by artists from the ‘deep deep south of the river Thames’, referencing both the origin of the blues in the Southern United States and the north/south divide in the UK. The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band had a similar piece – ‘Can Blue Men Sing The Whites’, which picks up on the topic, discussed widely in the music press at this time, of white men singing the blues.⁸³ Roberts refers to the song as ‘gently ribbing the people who, to be honest, were our peer group’, who were part of the same

⁸¹ Released originally under the name Little Stevie Wonder, ‘I Call It Pretty Music But The Old People Call It The Blues (Part 1)’, with ‘Part 2’ as a B-side, which is not a continuation, but a completely different song. (Tamla Motown, T54061[A], May 1962). The first of the two tracks is quite standard rock’n’roll, whilst the second is much more bluesy.

⁸² Du Noyer, p. 300.

⁸³ Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, *Cornology*, prod. by Tim Chacksfield (EMI Records, 07779959525, 1992).

circuit in the late 1960s: ‘quite often we’d be on the bill with them and they loved it. They thought it was great that we were taking a liberty with the music that they were taking very seriously and they really enjoyed that.’⁸⁴

‘Adrian Henri’s Talking Toxteth Blues’, already mentioned in Chapter One for its Liverpool 8 connection, utilises the traditional ‘talking blues’ opener (‘Well, I woke up this morning...’ [PA, 39]), but the destruction of the city is mirrored in his subversions of the ‘talking blues’ format, with ellipses breaking up the rhythm of the verses. ‘Car Crash Blues, or Old Adrian Henri’s Talking Surrealistic Blues’ (dedicated to Jim Dine and Charles Baudelaire, again linking American and European art traditions) also moves away from a strict ‘talking blues’ format but still includes many of the same characteristics, including colloquialisms and anaphora (as well as referencing the form in the extended title). This poem first appears in print in *Tonight at Noon*, in 1968, and is included in the third, revised and expanded, edition of *The Mersey Sound*. The poem’s six verses follow a regular rhyme and rhythm scheme, comprised of two statements across three lines each, ending with ‘baby’, followed by three statements of a line each, and then a final ‘baby’. The first and second statements rhyme (on the second line of each section), and the following three lines of images also rhyme together:

You make me feel like
a Wellington filled with blood
baby
You make me feel like
my clothes are made of wood
baby
You make me feel like a Green Shield stamp
You make me feel like an army camp
You make me feel like a bad attack of cramp
baby

(TAN, 39)

The repetition of ‘baby’ throughout serves as a reminder of the poem’s theme – the endearment jars when juxtaposed with the ways in which the woman makes him feel (as opposed to, say, Nina Simone’s ‘My Baby Just Cares For Me’, where the endearment indicates the singer’s positive feelings) – and also provides a recall to the beat. The complexities of this poem, subtly twisting the endearment, are similar to another listing poem, ‘Without You’, discussed in the previous chapter, with its jarring and complicated mix of positive and negative consequences of being ‘without you’.

⁸⁴ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012. As well as performing alongside these groups in the late 1960s, both of the artists referred to in Henri’s title – ‘I’ve Got These Fleetwood Mac Chicken Shack John Mayall Can’t Fail Blues’ – performed in Liverpool earlier in the decade (see Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 135 and p. 120 respectively).

version and the printed version, and the following quotation replaces the first two phrases of the third stanza of the poem, represented here in the same format:

You make me feel like
a record by RCA
baby
You make me feel like
a young girl that's got in their family's way
baby⁸⁷

This piece, 'Baby', is a unique performance instance which blends the original Henri poem with The Liverpool Scene's musical abilities, forming a collaborative creative space that takes the words on the page and elevates them into another medium. The work 'Car Crash Blues or Old Adrian Henri's Talking Surrealistic Blues' is thus made up of three distinctive parts: a poem on the page, utilising a musical form but clearly able to be experienced as a text; a poem read aloud with accompaniment, emphasising the source musical form and incorporating both Henri and Roberts in the creative process; and a recorded song by a band which takes it away from the 'talking blues' and gives it back to the listener in the guitar-and-drum-led style of 1960s British popular music.

SETTING BAT-POEMS TO MUSIC

Comics and comic book characters are another important part of popular culture which the Merseybeat poets appropriate. Both Henri and McGough, with their respective musical groups, released tracks inspired by Batman, but specifically in his incarnation in the Adam West ABC TV show. 'Batpoem', from Henri's poem of the same name, was recorded by The Liverpool Scene in 1968. The band uses the theme from the ABC TV show. The theme, written by Neal Hefti, would have been immediately recognisable as belonging to this instance of the Batman canon, the ABC TV series, which sits firmly within a 1960s aesthetic, complete with Pop Art-esque 'Pow!' interjections during fight scenes. The poem brings the comic out of childhood into the political world of the 1960s and the Vietnam War. Here Batman is exhorted, as a specifically *American* hero, to:

Help us bomb those jungle towns
Spreading pain and death around
Coke'n' Candy wins them round
Batman. (TMS2, 40)

⁸⁷ *The Amazing Adventures Of...* CD. The significance of RCA – within the context of the song's negative similes – could be due to their attempts to introduce a new 'Compact 33' record format to replace 45rpm singles. The campaign folded only a year after its introduction in January 1961: therefore the phrase effectively means that he feels a failure, or unwanted.

The brand Coca-Cola and the Americanism ‘candy’ are used as obvious US popular culture references as part of a critique of American foreign policy. Their connective ‘and’ is itself contracted to ‘n’ to both link the two more closely (it appears as one word on the page) and ape contemporary word patterns, such as ‘rock’n’roll’. However, the poem goes on to reference a Liverpoolian location, ‘Flash your Batsign over Lime Street/ Batmobiles down every crimestreet’ (*TMS2*, 41). Henri brings the American superhero into everyday Liverpool life, figuring the local with the international both to further critique the war (Batman, being fictional, cannot go to Vietnam) but also because Batman *was* in Liverpool – in the television series and comics, but also brought into daily reality through adverts (see fig 1.3) and in the Merseybeat image canon (see fig 4.2).

A live television performance of The Liverpool Scene performing ‘Batpoem’ in February 1969 opens with Henri and Roberts singing in infantile voices ‘Rock a bye baby’, ending ‘when the wind blows Batman will drop’, which itself takes on a sinister edge with the later introduction of Napalm bombs. Roberts then plays the opening lines of the TV theme.⁸⁸ As Henri starts to recite the poem, Mike Evans takes over on saxophone playing the theme music on loop throughout. This is a live performance, and in its course Henri uses various movements to augment the audience’s experience, such as pointing his hand down and dropping the arm at the ‘drop that Batnapalm’ line, in reference to the US airstrikes on the Viet Cong. There is another addition to this version which highlights the Liverpoolian origins over the American ones. After the ‘Coke’n’Candy’ section, Henri adds an extra verse:

Help us out at Goodison Park, Batman,
Come down to Anfield just for a lark, Batman.
Help us save our gracious team,
Lois Lane for Norris Green,
Come and join the Liverpool Scene... Batman⁸⁹

This is a remarkably non-partisan request, giving equal footing to Liverpool FC and Everton, although the idea that Batman might need to ‘come down’ to Anfield could perhaps reflect the fact that in the early sixties Liverpool were in the Second Division of the Football League. The high status of football in this city is reflected in the adaptation of the National Anthem in the third line quoted here: ‘our gracious *Queen*’ is replaced by the assonance-led mondegreen of ‘*team*’. Furthermore Henri’s use of the inclusive pronouns ‘us’ and ‘our’ link

⁸⁸ ‘Batpoem’ was released in 1969 on *The Amazing Adventures Of The Liverpool Scene*. The video can be seen here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0GUbAImHuw&feature=related [accessed 10 August 2012].

⁸⁹ This extra verse was also included in the play *Love, Light and Adrian Henri* written by and starring Dhanil Ali (Unity Theatre Liverpool, 10-12 February 2011), which recreated the atmosphere of a 1961 Event (‘happening’).

him and the audience together. A local audience would also have noted the joke of ‘Lois Lane for Norris Green’ where the name of the Superman heroine is linked to the name of a local housing estate: ‘Lois Lane’ could be a street; ‘Norris Green’ could be a person’s name.

The album version of ‘Batpoem’ by The Liverpool Scene uses the same words as the printed version of the poem, but without the opening lullaby or this final football-centred verse. Henri’s vocalisation of the poem uses ‘Batman’, spoken after every request, as a way of imposing a strict rhythm (within the twelve bar blues format) on the verses, as the request lines are not uniform in length. Rather, the anaphoric ‘Batman’ falls at the same point in the musical score each time, regulating the song’s lyrics as well as bringing the audience’s attention back to the main theme. This could be said to mirror the layout of the printed text, where the imperative-led lines are followed by indented single-word lines for ‘Batman’, appearing almost in the centre of each page to further highlight the superhero’s name:

Take me back to Gotham City
Batman
Take me where the girls are pretty
Batman (TMS2, 40)

The theme as played by Roberts is slightly faster than that of the ABC TV show, with Bryan Dodson’s percussive beat giving a sense of urgency which (although present in the opening credits’ images of Batman and Robin chasing villains all over Gotham) is here contrasted with Henri’s style of singing – close to his speaking voice, elongating certain vowels for emphasis, and always aware of the beat inherent in his lines. For example, to make up beats in the short line ‘Help us smash the Vietcong’ (TMS2, 40), Henri draws out the ‘g’ at the end of ‘Vietcong’.

Furthermore, the aural versions of this piece are able to add layers of meaning that the words on the page cannot fill. For example, for the line ‘I want to be like you/ Batman’ (TMS2, 41) Henri puts on an American accent, imitating a child, pronouncing the phrase ‘I wanna’. By putting on this accent, Henri distances himself from the statement he is making – clearly telling the listener that he is playing a part for those lines, something which is not clear in the printed text (there are no quotation marks around the phrase). The stanza begins ‘Show me what I have to do’ (TMS2, 41), following the imperative-led structure of the poem, but Henri sings the line staccato, contrasting it aurally even further with the sing-song American accent later, charging his words with meaning, intimating that the American need to be a superpower has its origins in a childish (fictional) place. In terms of crossmedia, this recording adds layers to the original poem by drawing the audience’s attention to certain

elements, but the poem itself still exists separate from this, on the page, and does not depend on the musical accompaniment.

The same superhero, and the same television incarnation, was used by McGough for ‘Goodbat Nightman’. According to Mike McCartney:

We went to Brian [Epstein] in his NEMS emporium and said, we’ve got this idea and we’ve got to do it now. The Batman phenomenon is going to be even bigger. He hummed and ha-d and wanted us to do other things. It didn’t come out until the end of the Batman mayhem. The record didn’t reach the audience it should have done.⁹⁰

The Scaffold’s ‘Goodbat Nightman’ was released in December 1966, with the ABC TV series appearing on British screens in May of the same year.⁹¹ Perhaps the delay did harm the sales of the Scaffold song, as it is primarily a parody of this specific series, whereas Henri’s inspiration links the series to a wider American political movement. McGough’s lines tell a story of Batman and Robin at the end of a ‘hard day helping clean up the town’:

They’ve locked all the doors
and they’ve put out the bat,
Put on their batjamas
(They like doing that)

They’ve filled their batwater-bottles
made their batbeds,
With two springy battresses
for sleepy batheads.

(TMS1, 77)

Some neologisms are more successful than others, but these are clearly inspired by the series’ narrator, William Dozier, who ended each episode with ‘Tune in tomorrow – same Bat-time, same Bat-channel!’ The banality of Batman and Robin’s evening routine is sent up further in the Scaffold version of the poem by their use of the music. This also comes from the ABC TV show; but it is not the opening credits theme, rather it is an imitation of the ‘chase music’, making the filling of batwater-bottles all the more comic by placing it in direct aural comparison with the antics the two superheroes usually get up to on screen.

A key addition to the song is the prayer section, which falls in the space between the two ‘halves’ of the printed text (delineated by asterisks) in *The Mersey Sound*. The false American accents of McCartney and Gorman and the use of catchphrases (KA-POW!) deliberately link the superheroes to the Batman and Robin of the ABC TV series. The

⁹⁰ Bowen, p. 82.

⁹¹ All references to *Goodbat Nightman* are from the version of the track which appears on the compilation album *Thank U Very Much: The Very Best of Scaffold*. It was originally released as a single, Parlophone R5548.

additional lines in the song continue McGough's puns and neologisms, such as the exchange "Batman, how did Batwoman die? ... Suicide?"/ "*Batricide!*". The prayer section, as added by the Scaffold, evokes A. A. Milne's 'Vespers' (1924), but instead of praying for family members ('*God bless Mummy. I know that's right./ Wasn't it fun in the bath to-night?*'), Batman and Robin pray:

God bless all policemen
and fighters of crime,
May thieves go to jail
for a very long time. (TMS1, 77)

McGough's solo reading 'fades out' at the end as if not to disturb the two 'falling asleep' (TMS1, 77), just as Milne's poem (Christopher Robin's first-person prayer) is framed by the opening and closing lines '*Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!/ Christopher Robin is saying his prayers*'.⁹² Instead of fading out, in the Scaffold song the incidental music continues and so too does Batman and Robin's conversation, puns included – when Batman heads to the 'bathroom', to Robin's exclamation '*Holy-loo-ya*', the deliberate emphasis is intentionally sending themselves up, picking up on the camp of the television show.

The McGough (and Scaffold) use of Batman is very different to Henri's, lacking any political motivation and purely focusing on the camp aspects of Adam West's interpretation of the comic book character. However, both clearly depend on knowledge of that television show, and expect the audience to understand the nuances inherent in each work.⁹³

⁹² A. A. Milne, *When We Were Very Young* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 99, author's italics. 'Robin' provides another link between the two poems – the prayer is said by either Christopher Robin, Milne's son, or Batman's sidekick. Interestingly, the 1960 edition of the Liverpool University Rag Magazine, *PANTOSFINX*, includes this unattributed parody of 'Vespers':

Little boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on his little hands, little gold head,
Hush, Hush, whisper who dare,
Christopher Robin is having a swear.
"God bless Mummy, I know that's right,
Wonder who she's gone out with tonight.
If I open my razor a little bit more,
I can slash Daddy's face as he comes through the door."
Grandmother's face is a little bit bluer,
Christopher Robin is going to do 'er.

From *PANTOSFINX* 1960, p. 35 (Liverpool University Archive, SPEC R/LF379.5.P19.U55).

⁹³ Henri's own love of comic books has been captured on camera by Mike McCartney: 'this is Ade, plus Marvel comic' (Mike McCartney, *Mike McCartney's Liverpool Life: Sixties Black and Whites* [Birkenhead: Garlic Press, 2003], p. 70-1), see fig 4.3.

MUSIC AND EVOCATION

In 'Notes on Painting and Poetry' Henri refers to those 'traditionally "literary" people' (early critics) who 'feel that if the point can be got across at one hearing then it *can't* be any good' (*TAN*, 67). In contrast, what matters for Henri is 'audience-communication' (*TAN*, 67). The communication that pop songs get across so easily is mirrored in his use of that music in order to connect with his own audience. As we have seen, music is used within Merseybeat poetry as a way of adding meaning beyond the bounds of the printed text or what words-on-the-page can do. The evocation of music is used to indicate a mood or a type of person, or, most significantly, to conjure up a memory for both the poem's subject and the reader/listener themselves. In *Autobiography*, Henri mentions a set of musical references which remind him of his mother, powerfully evoking her through specific artists and kinds of music and sound:

once-a-year concerts of Beethoven. Blake's Grand March or selections from Gounod she'd play on the piano for me. Later there was only the drinking club, dirtyjoke comedians, the hideous songs from musicals. her bending over beautiful in the darkness to kiss me coming in from a dance smelling of perfume and gin-and-lime ... loving the children's popsongs but still sometimes listening to Caruso and John McCormack (A, 29-30)⁹⁴

Whilst this is clearly a set of personal signifiers, the reader or listener is also included in this nostalgia, intended to recognise the artists and situations and understand how Henri's mother is presented through this. Just as the success of 'Me' depends on the audience's knowledge of musicians, composers, and artists (not to mention names from other disciplines such as literature and politics), so here Henri is aware of the need to use references that have meaning for the audience and shows a trust in a common culture that exceeds the usual notion of 'popular' culture.

Autobiography also uses music as part of a list evoking the specific time and place of Henri's childhood in wartime:

carrying my gasmask to school every day
buying savings stamps
remembering my National Registration Number
(ZMGM/136/3 see I can *still* remember it)
avoiding Careless Talk Digging for Victory
looking for German spies everywhere
Oh yes, I did my bit for my country that long dark winter,
me and Winston and one or two others,

⁹⁴ 'Blake's Grand March' refers to Charles D. Blake's *Clayton's Grand March* (composed c.1877, sheet music published 1936).

wearing my tin hat whenever possible
singing 'Hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line'
aircraft-recognition charts pinned to my bedroom wall

...

after coming out of the air raid shelter
listening for the 'All Clear' siren
listening to Vera Lynn Dorothy Lamour Allen Jones and The Andrew Sisters

(A, 15)

Martin Stokes describes music as 'socially meaningful': it 'informs our sense of place',⁹⁵ as social boundaries can be created through a shared understanding of music and reference, creating identities and *spaces* out of places. For Henri, the place of a particular street and house in Birkenhead is evoked as a space firmly within his childhood through the discussion of images and sounds intrinsically linked to that time, and those who read the printed works with knowledge of the music and musicians he is talking about can thus provide an aural experience to accompany the words from their own memory. *Autobiography* supports de Certeau's idea that 'haunted places are the only ones people can live in'.⁹⁶ Henri even recognises this himself in 'Je Suis un Autre', collected after Henri's death in *Adrian Henri Selected and Unpublished, Poems 1965-2000*. The title is itself a deliberate misremembering of Arthur Rimbaud's 'Je est un autre', and deals with old age and Henri's fear of becoming 'that total stranger' in his own mind:

this constant useless
barrage of information
songs that only I could know
songs from my childhood
things we did at school
forties pop songs
rise unbidden from my head

(*Selected*, 292)

Now the music of his childhood is not a link with a community, but rather feeds a sense of isolation through age.

THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO LIVERPOOL (PART ONE OF TWO)

Noise and music abound in 'The Entry of Christ Into Liverpool', both the printed poem and the performance piece created by The Liverpool Scene. The noises build up a sense of the community as well as representing the procession. The opening prose paragraph gives us 'children's voices in the distance. sounds from the river', placing sound/hearing alongside sight ('headscarves. shoppingbaskets. dogs. '), multisensorially setting the scene (*TMS3*,

⁹⁵ Martin Stokes, 'Introduction', in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. by Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1994), pp. 1-27, p. 5, 3.

⁹⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 108.

46).⁹⁷ The poem is topographical, with the first ‘direction’, as it were, being ‘round the corner into Myrtle St’ (*TMS3*, 46), starting the procession in the heart of Liverpool.⁹⁸ The procession begins decisively with ‘then/ down the hill’ (*TMS3*, 46), and is then again pushed on by ‘down the hill past the Philharmonic The Labour Exchange/ excited feet crushing the geraniums in St Luke’s Gardens’ (*TMS3*, 47). It is interesting which landmarks Henri picks out, the pub and the place to sign-on, but not, say, the police station. The route does indeed go downhill (down Hardman Street), with the Gardens being the grounds of St Luke’s Church on the corner of Berry Street and Leece Street, opposite the top of Bold Street in Liverpool 1 – the ‘bombed-out church’ from air raids in World War II.

After these initial place names, the poem – and the procession – continues into the city, but without a specified route. There is a clear drive, with directions such as ‘down the...’ repeated throughout and movement from active verbs – ‘crushing surging carrying me along’, ‘crowding in’, ‘straining forward’ – as well as descriptions of the crowd’s actions which build up a picture of bustle and noise (*TMS3*, 46-8). The urban everyday within which Henri situates the poem in the opening prose-paragraph is a consistent backdrop: the procession is mixed in with ‘trafficlighs zebracrossings’ and ‘neonsigns’ (*TMS3*, 47, 48), and the final post-procession lines tell of the ‘last of the crowds waiting at bus-stops’ with ‘dustmen with big brooms sweeping the gutters’ (*TMS3*, 48). We know this is Liverpool from the title, and the poem emphasises a particular topography and details of everyday urban life.

One inspiration for the poem was the Orange Day processions which used to be a regular occurrence in Liverpool (and do still happen), and that Roberts remembers going to watch:

Adrian liked the idea – obviously the religious significance of it was not lost on him but he saw it in a more universal sense of as, you know, if Christ came again what would it be like and he thought well it would be like an Orange Day procession but all my friends will be marching instead of all these Protestants.⁹⁹

A key part of these processions was the drumming. Roberts recalls that it was Bryan Dodson, the drummer, who first started accompanying Henri reading the work at

⁹⁷ This poem, with the painting (fig 5.6) and poster-poem (fig 5.8) of the same name, will be discussed again in Chapter Five as part of an exploration of the visual aspects of not only Henri’s art but also his attention to the layout and appearance of words on the page.

⁹⁸ This is also near Liverpool University’s buildings grouped around Abercromby Square, and the procession route is similar to the maps of the Rag Week procession found in the *Sphinx* and *Pantosphinx* magazines produced by University students. Henri was well aware of the political power of marching: in a folder marked ‘Original notes for ‘E. of Christ into L.’ painting & poem 1962-66’ he has included a handbill for anti- anti-immigration march in London (Henri A.VIII.2 (3)), and he was also a supporter of the CND movement.

⁹⁹ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

O'Connor's. The 'terrific sense of pace and volume and excitement' of the original poem led to Dodson playing marching drums behind Henri reading, then Mike Evans 'played some stuff' (presumably the saxophone or trumpet, as he was a brass player, to complement Henri's line 'THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS'), and then Roberts himself decided to add a further layer of meaning by picking up on Henri's line 'the sounds of pipes and drums' and adding tin whistle.¹⁰⁰ But not just any melody line, the 'sound of pipes' is the sound of *Johnny Todd*, an old Liverpool folk song or sea shanty, which 'was one of the tunes that they used to play at the Orange procession' (made very familiar at this time as the theme music to the television programme *Z Cars*).¹⁰¹ Adding each element gradually built up into the version which they recorded in 1968.

Whilst they never performed the piece in front of the canvas itself, the inspiration from watching the Orange Day marches is translated onto canvas and page by Henri and then the musicians involved returned to that source of inspiration to add an aural element which in turn develops the text source into a performance piece. One cannot help but read Guy Debord's situationist anti-authoritarian agenda of *détournement* into Henri's appropriation of the Orange Order marches, reclaiming his city and his particular area of it, for himself and his friends in this 'Entry'. Walking as an act of claiming is an idea, explored in the first chapter, which is here very important in a political context, as a reaction against the Orange Order marches.

The Liverpool Scene's recorded version of 'The Entry of Christ into Liverpool' opens with marching drums, with drum rolls, getting progressively louder and then fading away, as if the listener were standing still and watching the procession go past. Then Henri begins reading the poem, and the first 'scene-setting' prose paragraph quoted above is read without any backing. Drums return, in the form of a single percussive line, when the description of the parade itself begins with Henri's 'then/ down the hill'. His voice cues in a trumpet with 'THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS', but this accompaniment continues through much of the piece as a way of marking time, repeating the same two-note phrase as Henri delivers each image, still in his speaking voice. The capitalized 'THE MARCHING DRUMS' does receive some emphasis, with Henri exclaiming the line and being almost drowned out by additional percussion and an electric guitar joining the original trumpet. Henri recognises the importance of the collaboration for his own performance of the text:

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Andy Roberts, June 2012.

The fact that I was reading it with music and that the group was putting music into the gaps changed its whole emphasis. There's that hysterical build-up in the middle and I can't think that I used to read it like that before the music was added it was just that they used to make so much noise that I had to yell to get over the top of them. I would never read it like that if it were not for the music.¹⁰²

This section is where the real benefit of the aural expression of this piece becomes clear. Henri's voice is blended with the jumble of musical instruments and sound effects which represent the clamour and action of the parade Henri is describing, with the individual wording of banners (of the poem and painting) 'read out', as it were, and further emphasized by the mixing of the vocal line on the recording so that Henri's voice comes first from one speaker and then from the other – the listener receiving (in the recorded version) information from all sides. All of this crescendos into a cacophony of noise and instruments – Henri's words also becoming faster and louder alongside a quickened percussive beat – culminating with the Guinness advert sections:

GUINNESS IS GOOD
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR
Masks Masks Masks Masks Masks
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU
brassbands cheering loudspeakers blaring
clatter of police horses
(TMS3, 48)

On the page, and in a solo reading, the reader or listener can experience only one word or phrase or line at a time. In the performance piece, Henri's vocalisation of this section extends beyond the words on the page, as if they are merely a stage direction, threading the reading of the Guinness line – 'Guinness is good for you' – across a full minute and twenty seconds, the section as a whole only coming to an end after a final 'masks' with an elongated 'a', drawn out to fade, with the rest of the music also fading out here. We have had two whole minutes of raucous noise accompanying the repetition of 'masks', almost ceasing to be a coherent word and becoming more a noise, an all-encompassing aural assault.

The final lines of the poem return to a calm speaking voice: Henri reports the scenes of the aftermath of the parade. Roberts plays a quiet melody line on harmonica (the same instrument with which he made the car horn sounds earlier), aurally evoking the evening quiet post-procession, an almost soporific accompaniment which perfectly matches the scene Henri has written about with 'streamers newspapers discarded paper hats' and the 'last of the

¹⁰² Adrian Henri, cited in *Conversations*, ed. by Mike Davies (Birmingham: Flat Earth Press, 1975), p. 3.

to our understanding of the Merseybeat scene and what they sought to achieve. Henri's poetry shows this particularly in the way the music evoked always has a purpose for bringing the audience to his work and augmenting their comprehension. His use of different genres of music and the name-checking of musicians is part of the public aspect of Merseybeat, as common cultural references are used to connect with the audience. A social position can be evoked through specific references, but what is also notable is that the counter-cultural heroes of 'Me' are treated as being of equal value to the British populist tradition of music hall.

This statement from Patten in 1967 perhaps best encapsulates the importance of vocal and musical aspects for the Merseybeat poets: 'It's not the man, it's what he's saying that interests me – and, of course, how he says it. I like him to sing it!' (*TLS*, 16). *How* he says it is connected not only to the word choices or images used but also the performance of the poem itself – with various kinds of musical accompaniment, as in the examples here, or via the range of vocal techniques and spaces used for performance discussed in the previous chapter. Either way, through music, oral expression, or background noise, Merseybeat needs the aural realm to fully connect with and speak (sing?) to the audience.

CHAPTER FIVE: VISUAL ART PRACTICE

In *Autobiography*, ‘Part Two 1957-64’, Adrian Henri comments on some of the modern art he experienced in this period:

seeing
my first Yves Klein
blue universes in a tiny artgallery
lumpen Paolozzi monsters
Newman horizonlight
Serene dark Rothko
Robbie the Robot
making ‘today’s homes
so different, so appealing’ (A, 36)

However, this does not do justice to the range of his art knowledge.¹ Just as the musicians and composers in ‘Me’ are from a wide range of musical genres, so too do the artists he mentions in his work represent a variety of visual inspirations: they range from Renaissance (Leonardo) and high Germanic religious artists (Grunewald), through the nineteenth century with Impressionism and after (Monet, Cezanne) and key early twentieth century figures (Gaudi, Magritte) to the contemporary arts scene from Duchamp through to Pollock, Rothko, and Pop Art.

This chapter will consider a variety of visual aspects which are at play in the work of Henri and the Merseybeat poets. Henri trained as an artist, attending King’s College, University of Durham, between 1951 and 1955, where one of his tutors was Richard Hamilton. He worked as a painter throughout his life, and also taught (as noted earlier, he met Heather Holden, to whom ‘Love Poem’ is dedicated, when a tutor at Manchester Art School).² As well as being a painter, Henri was also a collagist. ‘Merz’ is the ‘combination of all conceivable materials for artistic purposes,’ wrote Kurt Schwitters, ‘not only of paint and canvas, brush and palette, but of all materials perceptible to the eye and of all required implements,’ and the ‘artist creates through the choice, distribution and metamorphosis of the materials.’³ Schwitters was one of Henri’s ‘favourite artists’, according to his partner Catherine Marcangeli, partly because of the ‘metamorphic potential’ of his collages: ‘that bit of metro

¹ See, for example, his survey of modern art in Adrian Henri, *Environments & Happenings* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974), pp. 7-26, and art criticism such as Adrian Henri, ‘Strategy: Get Arts’ review, *Scottish International*, 12 (1970), pp. 43-4. For a survey of art in Liverpool, see John Willett, *Art in a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

² Henri exhibited and sold paintings throughout his adult life, and won a number of prizes (such as Second Prize at the 1972 John Moores Exhibition). See <http://www.adrianhenri.com/artist-painter.html> [accessed 8 May 2013] for a chronology and examples of his work.

³ Kurt Schwitters, cited in John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), p. 50.

ticket can become something else'.⁴ Like Schwitters, Henri's collage technique employs visual quotations of the everyday, and his practice involved recording found material: 'I carry a notebook everywhere and scribble in it. It's a pretty constant process. There's always something – the odd word, the odd bit – and that's an on-going process, the raw material'.⁵ This chapter will consider both collage (from Cubism to Schwitters) and found material (from Schwitters to Pop Art) as practices which Henri utilises in order to represent the visual in his work, quoting from his experiences in order to present his audience with an accurate image of his social space. There is also a third manifestation of Henri's visual art practice which is also crucial to an understanding of his work: his role as a Happeningist, inspired by Allan Kaprow, creating what he called 'Events'.⁶ These multidimensional performance pieces follow that tendency in Merseybeat to take an avant-garde inspiration and repackage it through British populist traditions, softening it in order to connect and have fun with the audience, rather than confronting or alienating them.

I WANT TO PAINT

The poem 'I Want To Paint' (first published in 1967) is a list of images or situations which Henri wants to paint. The ideas range from the hyperbolic – 'I want to paint/ 2000 dead birds crucified on a background of night' (*TMS1*, 51) or '10000 shocking pink hearts with your name on' (*TMS1*, 52) – to the impossible:

Thoughts that lie too deep for tears
Thoughts that lie too deep for queers
Thoughts that move at 186000 miles/second (*TMS1*, 51)

The poem is full of urban imagery, with details specific to Liverpool:

Enormous pictures of every pavingstone in Canning Street
...
I LOVE YOU across the steps of St. George's Hall
...
Père Ubu drunk at 11 o'clock at night in Lime Street (*TMS1*, 51)

⁴ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, April 2013.

⁵ Adrian Henri, cited in Mike Davies, *Conversations* (Birmingham: Flat Earth Press, 1975), p. 3. See fig 5.1 for an example of a notebook draft, for 'Liverpool Poems', showing the evolution of number four in the sequence: 'PRAYER FROM A PAINTER TO ALL CAPITALISTS: Open your wallets and repeat after me/ "HELP YOURSELF!"' (*TMS1*, 15).

⁶ Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones cite Henri as a key figure in modern British art on two separate occasions in their introduction to *Writing Liverpool* – first commenting that he 'had the vision and the energy to introduce the "happening" to Britain' and second that Henri exemplifies 'the streak of surrealism that informs a good deal of the work of the city's writers and artists' (Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones, eds., *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews* [Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007], p. 7, 17).

There are also additions to the 1968 *Tonight at Noon* version of ‘I Want To Paint’, such as adding in a number of people to the end of this first stanza. So, alongside the portrait of ‘The Installation of Roger McGough to the Chair of Poetry at Oxford’ (*TMS1*, 51), there is ‘Adrian Mitchell with 15 poems in the Top 20’, and ‘Butchers throwing bits of Jeff Nuttall and Robin Page at the audience’ (*TAN*, 21). The line ‘Brian Patten writing poems with a flamethrower on disused ferryboats’ (*TMS1*, 51) combines a Liverpool reference with a reference to Yves Klein, who, as cited in Henri’s *Environments and Happenings*, ‘made paintings using a flame-thrower’.⁷ The poem ends with an anaphoric list:

I want to paint
 Pictures that children can play hopscotch on
 Pictures that can be used as evidence at Murder trials
 Pictures that can be used to advertise cornflakes
 Pictures that can be used to frighten naughty children
 Pictures worth their weight in money
 Pictures that tramps can live in
 Pictures that children would find in their stockings on Christmas morning
 Pictures that teenage lovers can send each other
 I want to paint
 pictures. (*TMS1*, 52)

These are domestic, quotidian, and vary from the simple (a picture that could advertise cornflakes) to the extravagant (a picture as a house). Unlike Frank O’Hara, whose poem ‘Why I Am Not A Painter’ this recalls (and which will be discussed later in this chapter), Henri *was* a painter. Therefore when Henri uses either painting or poetry, it is in order to achieve something appropriate to that medium. Of ‘Love Poem’ Henri wrote that: ‘poetry consists for me of a means to say something that it would be impossible to paint’ (*TAN*, 72). His specific example here is the lines: ‘Kurt Schwitters smiles as he picks up the two pink bus tickets/ we have just thrown away’ (*TMS1*, 40) as being difficult to paint: ‘even if you could paint two pink bus tickets convincingly to scale with the figure how could you make it clear they had been thrown away by two people who had just walked out of the picture?’ (*TAN*, 72). ‘I Want To Paint’ is, in the end, about the difference between language and image. You can’t paint thoughts, and the hyperbole and amassing of images is more indicative of his exuberant need to re-present everything in his world than an actual listing of supposed paintings. Painting in this poem is used both to represent the desire to communicate and to articulate the differences inherent in painting and writing.

‘Lakeland Poems’ (1968) carries the dedication ‘for Kurt Schwitters, William Wordsworth, and Fiona Stirling Macfarlane’ (*TAN*, 13), These poems are inspired by and for a European avant-garde painter, a Romantic English poet, and a personal friend, and within the poems,

⁷ Henri, *Environments*, p. 140

we are told: ‘The landscape is full of other people’s paintings!’ (TAN, 13). Wordsworth, of course, made the Lake District popular with tourists: ‘I wanted to put a polythene daffodil on Wordsworth’s/ grave but didn’t know where it was, anyway’ (TAN, 13). The poem also records Henri’s visit to Schwitters’ *Merzbarn*, framed as a quest through a reference to the fifteenth century *L’Morte D’Arthur*:

At length came we to the Chapel Perilous/but
the King was dead/Empty barn smelling of
damp/a pile of dusty 78’s/camera eaten by
rust/an unfinished landscape twisted and buckled/
And the wall, half-finished./We said Goodbye
to the old man with plusfours and his dog
& cat & 6 hens & 3 geese/and his memories. (TAN, 14)

As this suggests, a poem can be another type of collage, another way of presenting the reader with visual images. John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* reminds us that ‘seeing comes before words’ and so ‘it is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world’.⁸ This is, in part, the sense that Henri recreates in his poems.⁹

Writing after Henri’s death for the *Selected and Unpublished* collection, Patten described the inter-involvement of Henri’s verbal and visual imagination:

The poet in him wrote poems containing images that the painter in him wanted to paint, and the painter in him painted images that the poet wanted to write. But really it did not matter which part of his spirit received the images first – Adrian would rush off with them to wherever it is Imagination cooks up its feasts, and, generous as ever, would return to share them with us all.¹⁰

This statement is important for two reasons: first, it recognises Henri’s movement between media; second, it emphasises sharing and communication.¹¹ Thus ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’ is important not only for its use of visual quotations of the everyday, but also because it is an example of an idea which bears fruit in a number of different modes – the painting and the poem are interconnected, the latter born out of notes for the former. There are also series, such as *Death of a Bird in the City*, which see the same idea reworked in a

⁸ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 7.

⁹ See also this description of Henri: ‘The lips purse, a sharp intake of breath: he has seen something he likes, a girl standing by a bus-stop, or a summer evening darkening over treetops. He sips it in fast, Pantagruel consuming the world’ (Michael Kustow, ‘Notations for an Audio-Visual Album’, in Adrian Henri, *Adrian Henri: painter/poet* [London: Fanfare Press, 1968], n.p.).

¹⁰ Brian Patten, in *Selected*, p. 7.

¹¹ For a survey of the links between poetry and painting, and the issues surrounding those links, see, for example, Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967), Franklin R. Rogers, *Painting and Poetry: Form, Metaphor, and the Language of Literature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1985), and Wendy Steiner, *The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

number of different ways. George Melly describes the paintings as ‘the most affecting image of the sixties’:

in each case a bird, inevitably white, once alive, then stuffed, is crucified by Henri against the picture, desolate, partly real plumage, partly white paint, sometimes a little blood. Sometimes too, some of the metal armature breaks through like a bone.¹²

Henri painted several of these, including one where the white bird is attached to a real door. The door is stencilled with the phrase ‘The Night Beware of That Dark Door’, a quotation from Djuna Barnes’ novel *Nightwood*.¹³ ‘Death of a Bird in the City II’ is printed in the *Collected Poems* with a reproduction of a drawing entitled ‘Death of a Bird in the City 1986’:

The last unbearable white bird
Spotlit, slowly struggling threshing against blackness
Crucified on the easel
SCHWEPPEES
GUINNESS IS...
The lights are going out...¹⁴

These references recall the section of ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’, which will be discussed later in this chapter, where between the Guinness advertisement sections there is a:

white bird dying unnoticed in a corner
splattered feathers
blood running merged with the neonsigns
in a puddle

(TMS3, 47-8)

The fact that the poem is called ‘Death of a Bird in the City II’ links the poem and the paintings together as being part of the same series. The two are also linked in the cover of *Underdog 4* (fig 5.2), where the words ‘death of a bird in the city’ and Henri’s name are printed over the top of a painted white bird taken from a drawing from the series.¹⁵

In terms of the inspirations behind the series, Henri is quoted as saying that the paintings came from a ‘mis-reading’ of a photograph of a work by Marcel Duchamp: ‘For some reason it suggested to me a bird. I played around with this image and came up with the idea

¹² George Melly, ‘Pop & Protest: Adrian Henri’s Pop Art of the Sixties’, in *Adrian Henri: Art of the Sixties* (Whitford Fine Art: London, 1997), p. 4. Melly’s choice of ‘crucified’ refers to both the death and also the way the wings are spread open.

¹³ This novel was clearly important to Henri, as it is used again in a collaborative work by Henri and Patten, ‘Night: A Poem With and Without Words’, performed by the two as a dramatic dialogue at Hope Hall in the 1960s (Patten/1/1/32/17).

¹⁴ Adrian Henri, *Collected Poems: 1967-85* (London: Allison & Busby, 1986), p. 4.

¹⁵ McGough wrote a poem with the same title for the 1962 ‘Death of a Bird in the City’ Event at Hope Hall – see Willett, p. 185. There is also an unattributed poem entitled ‘Death of a Bird (for A. Henri)’, dated September 1963, which I found loose in Henri C 1/8. The poem is full of allusions to Henri’s work.

of a white bird which was fluttering – and dying in a city somewhere.¹⁶ The paintings include text – ‘night’ and ‘bird’ on the instance included in the 1961 John Moores Exhibition – and some actual birds, as mentioned above (see figs 5.3 and 5.4). This line from ‘I Want To Paint’ also recalls the idea: ‘I want to paint/ 2000 dead birds crucified on a background of night’ (*TMS1*, 51). Henri also said that the series was inspired by ‘a translation of Garcia Lorca’s *Poet in New York*. There’s a whole section on birds dying in cities in that.’¹⁷ His notebooks also contain a note on ‘ideas for painting’ from 1961 which cites another inspiration, Eric Hosking’s photographs of owls, and he specifically states that there will be ‘Associated words (NIGHT, BIRD, DEATH, etc.) in background’ (see fig 5.5). Neither the ‘Entry’ nor ‘Death of a Bird in the City II’ could be described as ekphrasis of the paintings of the same name, but rather each is a different interpretative instance of their respective ‘original’ ideas. By this I mean that Henri does not write poems reflecting on the paintings, nor paintings illustrating the poems, but rather he places visuo-spatial and verbal manifestations of an idea on the same level. As Willy Russell said:

Adrian Henri the poet and Adrian Henri the painter were one and the same, the painter’s eye and the poet’s tongue a bonded, inseparable harmony whether turned upon the dreich of a northern afternoon, the shimmering African plains or the dull unlovely street suddenly kissed and made fine by the step of a smiling girl.¹⁸

This chapter considers the various ways in which Henri’s visual practice is manifested in his work, in painting, poetry, and performance, and how the verbal and the visual are indeed approached by Henri as ‘one and the same’. The previous chapter started a discussion of another ‘series’ – ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’ – in its manifestations as a performance piece by *The Liverpool Scene*. There the aural aspects of the poem were brought out in relation to the performance piece; this chapter will consider the painting of the same name alongside printed instances. As the audience (viewer, reader, listener) experiences each instance of the work, the separate visual, verbal, and aural elements become interlinked to add up to a total idea of what the ‘Entry’ is.

¹⁶ Adrian Henri, in *Adrian Henri: Paintings 1953-1998*, ed. by Frank Milner (Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 2000), p. 42.

¹⁷ Adrian Henri, in *Paintings 1953-1998*, p. 44. Henri may have been thinking of ‘Blind Panorama of New York’, with its ‘birds/covered with ash’, ‘the delicate creatures of the air/ that spill fresh blood in the inextinguishable darkness’, or of ‘New York (Office and Denunciation)’ which lists a number of animals which ‘Every day in New York, they slaughter’, including ‘two thousand pigeons’ (Federico Garcia Lorca, *Poet in New York*, trans. by Greg Simon and Steven F. White [London: Penguin, 2002], pp. 73, 131).

¹⁸ Willy Russell, in *Selected*, p. 145.

THE ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO LIVERPOOL (PART TWO OF TWO)

Henri's painting *The Entry of Christ Into Liverpool in 1964* (fig 5.6) directly references the Belgian painter James Ensor and his painting *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889* (fig 5.7), both in the title and the stencilled addition to the canvas itself: 'Homage to James Ensor'. In her monograph on Ensor's painting, Patricia G. Berman states that it is: 'one of the most important and enigmatic paintings of the later nineteenth century ... A phantasmagoria of color and motion'.¹⁹ The painting is crowded with celebrating people, banners, and dignitaries watching the procession. Both paintings have the people facing towards the front, with Christ in the background, almost in the centre of the frame but not quite, and riding a donkey as in his entry into Jerusalem. In Ensor's painting there is a great sense of movement, with the people passing the spectator out to the bottom right of the frame: the revellers cannot and have not seen Christ and are, therefore, unconcerned by his Entry. Whilst Henri's painting places the people (all portraits of friends and heroes) fully face-on to the viewer, the irony of Ensor's painting is lost, as Henri groups the banners and people close together with Christ, creating a sense that they are celebrating the Entry together.

Comparisons between the two paintings are obvious – the subject matter, the additive nature of the composition, the personal touches – and the links between each painting and the poem 'The Entry of Christ into Liverpool' are also clear.²⁰ Edward Lucie-Smith points up the link between the 'Entry' poem and the painting in *British Poetry since 1945*: a footnote informs the reader that Henri has painted a 'large picture of this subject, intended as a tribute to James Ensor', who was 'fascinated by the imagery of masks'.²¹ This is the first version of the poem printed in a book, but the first instance of the poem in print is the poster-poem designed for Henri's solo show at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1968. The design includes a reproduction of Henri's painting at the top (fig 5.8a), with the text centred on the page (as it is in other printed versions) and uses a variety of different fonts. The text of the poem is almost identical in each instance, apart from the poster-poem's splitting of Henri's connected words such as: 'dandelionseeds blowing from the wasteground' (*TMS3*, 46). What

¹⁹ Patricia G. Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), p. 1.

²⁰ See Berman, p. 14, and Diane Lesko, *James Ensor: The Creative Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 144. Personal touches for Ensor include images of his mother and grandmother as the two masked figures with white bonnets to the right hand side of the painting. When Henri writes of 'hideous masked Breughel faces of old ladies in the crowd' (*TMS3*, 46), it is almost certainly these to which he refers. Lesko sees Ensor's self-portrait in the yellow clown (on the left of the painting), whilst Berman believes that Ensor painted himself as Christ. Henri's Christ is also modelled on Ensor.

²¹ Edward Lucie-Smith, ed., *British Poetry since 1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 349.

is different across all of the versions discussed here is the typography and spacing – the actual look of the text on the page. A handwritten note by Henri on the Archive photocopy of the Lucie-Smith book reads: ‘the spacing of this poem could be much more generous when properly printed’ (A VIII.3 [2]), which demonstrates the importance of the layout to him. There are also other differences between this and *The Mersey Sound* version, such as whether the capitalised phrases use ALL CAPITALS (in *British Poetry since 1945*) or SMALL CAPITALS (in *The Mersey Sound*).

Ulricke Becks-Malorny sees Ensor’s painting, with its grotesque masks and caricatures of clerical and military figures, as political and autobiographical in that the figures represent Ensor’s anger at the society which rejected him.²² The painting’s importance for Henri (in both painting and poem) comes from two particular aspects: first, the multiple individual portraits, and second, the use of banners and adverts. Henri’s painting is entirely comprised of portraits of friends and heroes, in a positive and celebratory grouping: dominating the foreground are Alfred Jarry’s Ubu and Charles Mingus in a kimono-like gown; Roger McGough stands with his hands in his pockets on the right hand side of the painting; Brian Patten peers over Mingus’s right shoulder.²³ The poem also tells us of the characters in the procession:

familiar faces among the crowd
 faces of my friends the shades of Pierre Bonnard and
 Guilliame Apollinaire
 Jarry cycling carefully through the crowd (TMS3, 47)

The background of the painting is also clearly a view down Lime Street, towards St. George’s Hall (left) and the railway station (right). The poem ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’ also tells us that the ‘LONG LIVE SOCIALISM’ banner is ‘stretched against the blue sky/ over St George’s Hall’ (TMS3, 46) as it is in Henri’s painting.²⁴ Henri calls the

²² See Ulricke Becks-Malorny, *James Ensor 1860-1949: Masks, Death, and the Sea* (Köln: Taschen, 1999), pp. 48-9. See also Berman, pp. 3-6 on the *Brussels* painting as a subversion of two different contemporary paintings: Jan Verhas’s *The Review of the Schoolchildren in 1878* (1880), a Naturalist image of schoolgirls in procession in front of Belgian royalty (a highly symbolically patriotic painting, representing the success of modern Belgium), and Hans Markart’s *The Entry of Charles V into Antwerp* (1878), in ‘joyous entry’ tradition, featuring the Holy Roman Emperor riding into the city in high state.

²³ In the *Selected & Unpublished Poems* Catherine Marcangeli includes a pencil sketch entitled *Mingus* (1961), which shows the jazz musician in a similar robe (*Selected*, p. 196). There are also echoes of *Entry* in Henri’s painting *The Day of the Dead, Hope Street* (1998): there are banners, placards, and flags, and dead friends and heroes, such as Henri’s wife Joyce or the author Malcolm Lowry, whose 1947 novel *Under the Volcano* is set on the Day of the Dead. Lowry was, like Henri, originally from ‘over the water’ from Liverpool (New Brighton, on the same peninsula as Birkenhead), and it is not difficult to imagine that Henri would have known the novel. See *Paintings 1953-1998*, pp. 58-60 and 130 for an enumeration of the cast of both paintings.

²⁴ For other examples of loco-specificity in this poem, see Chapter Four, p 168-9.

painting a ‘visual diary’ of the years 1962-4 (specifically included in the long title), with the figures: ‘done on the additive principle for two years and sometimes I had to add beards or subtract them or change the girls’ hair-colour or style. People I quarrelled with even got painted out’ (*TAN*, 73).²⁵ On the other hand, whilst Henri’s figures are not masked, the poem proclaims ‘masks’ over and over again. The section of *The Liverpool Scene*’s piece with Henri shouting ‘masks’ repeatedly over the top of the musicians, discussed in the preceding chapter, is an oral representation of these crowds. This is a clear link to Ensor, both to the crowd of the *Brussels* painting, but also to Ensor’s family’s mask shop and to other artworks by him which contain numerous masks. Berman cites ‘the Symbolist poet Émile Verhaeren’ as giving Ensor the epithet ‘the painter of masks’,²⁶ and Henri repeats this in the poem’s statement (like a shop window description): ‘J. Ensor, Fabriqueur de Masques’ (*TMS3*, 47). The homage is also seen in the painting’s explicit politics: Ensor’s ‘Vive le Sociale’ is translated into ‘Long Live Socialism’, with the banners in similar positions in the two paintings, and there are other political references and topical images in Henri’s *Entry* such as the CND banner or the flags of Jamaica and Trinidad which had recently gained independence from Britain.²⁷

The poster-poem is obviously a visual experience. Most of the fonts used for the banners in the poster-poem stand out from the main body of text – deliberately catching the viewer’s eye, representing the banners in the painting. There are twelve references to banners and the like in the poem, such as the following, printed in the poster-poem to resemble graffiti or handwritten banners:

Keep Britain White
End the War in Vietnam
God Bless Our Pope

(see fig 5.8b)

The stencil font is also used for the Guinness adverts:

GUINNESS IS GOOD
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR
Masks Masks Masks Masks Masks
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU

(*TMS3*, 48)

²⁵ George Melly recalls that: ‘At this period my wife was experimenting by dying her hair, and over the two years the painting took to complete Adrian conscientiously re-coloured it every time’ (*Art of the Sixties*, p. 3). Furthermore, for the year 1963 in *The Art of Adrian Henri 1955-85*, ed. by Josie Henderson (London: Expression Printers, 1986), p. 16, there is a photo of Henri standing in front of the painting, which also shows the additive principle, as the painting was not ‘finished’ until 1964 – the canvas itself tells us it is ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool in 1964 Adrian Henri Homage to James Ensor 1962-64’.

²⁶ Berman, p. 9.

²⁷ Another political source has been explored in Chapter Four, of the Orange Order processions which provided the impetus for the ‘Entry’ (where the conceit of Ensor’s is Carnival, from the masks).

This quotation, from *The Mersey Sound*, centres every line of the main procession (with the opening and closing frames left-aligned), as does *British Poetry since 1945*. In the poster-poem, the Guinness adverts are indented but left-aligned, like this:

GUINNESS IS GOOD
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR
Masks Masks Masks Masks Masks
GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU

(see fig 5.8c)

This, coupled with the stand-out font, makes the additive nature of the repeated phrase more obvious. This version may be the closest textual representation of Henri's original idea. Henri said that the poem grew out of notes for a painting. He was: 'collecting all kinds of information and a lot was just written on pieces of paper':

There were things like the Guinness sign in Lime Street that went on and off one letter at a time. I found these bits of paper years later and started to work on it and it turned into a poem.²⁸

As early as 1957, Henri recorded the 'Guinness is good for you' advertising slogan in his notebook and, more specifically, the Lime Street hoarding which lit the phrase up sequentially (fig 5.9). Interestingly, a very early poem by Patten, preserved in a 1961/2 notebook in his Archive, contains something very similar: the word 'GUINNESS' appears with each letter crossed through, representing the Lime Street sign flashing on and off (see fig 5.10). Patten's 'Letter from the Editor' for *Underdog 5* tells the readership that 'while we are open to any creative work we are more concerned with writers involved with the city & its postnobbills / HALT / guinnessisgoodforyou reality' (*Underdog 5*, n.p.), showing how pervasive this advert was in the experience of the city.

VISUAL QUOTATIONS OF THE EVERYDAY

Two pages of notes preserved in the Archive entitled 'Notes on Cities' appear to be one of the earliest drafts for the 'Entry': the first page has headings for 'literature' and 'music' about cities, and then the second page (fig 5.11) contains sections which appear in the poem or painting itself – the Guinness advert, a description of Ensor as Christ – and there is also a list of urban visual and textual instances – 'drawings on walls drawings on pavements', 'HAVE AN EGG MEAL TONIGHT' (Henri A VIII.2(4) – which show the process of accumulation which would be transferred into both the poem and painting.

²⁸ Adrian Henri, in Davies, p. 3.

What Henri's use of adverts and specific quotations from the everyday also brings to mind is Pop Art. Henri saw Richard Hamilton as his 'most obvious influence', although he 'didn't realise till some years later the implications of some of the things he'd done at King's with us' (*TAN*, 77). Pop Art, a phrase coined by Lawrence Alloway, had its first British expression in Hamilton's collage *Just What is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?*, which appeared at the 1956 exhibition *This is Tomorrow*. The notebook list which is reproduced at the beginning of this thesis cites 'Hamilton's teaching' and 'This is Tomorrow' as the first two of the 'Things which have influenced me' (Henri C1/8). Pop Art can be either ironic or celebratory (or somehow poised between the two) in its appropriation of 'ready-mades' and consumer culture – David McCarthy described Richard Hamilton's use of adverts in *Just What is it...* as 'almost deadpan ... at once ironic and sincere, a duality that exists in most Pop art.'²⁹ Henri's use of adverts and brand names was clearly celebratory, embracing modern popular culture: 'The pop artist stands with one foot in the art gallery and the other in the supermarket.'³⁰

When Jeff Nuttall refers to the 'whimsy of the commonplace' in British Pop Art, he particularly mentions Peter Blake and David Hockney as exemplars.³¹ The 'commonplace' is also the most important aspect to Henri's visual art practice. Although Frank Milner calls it 'mundane consumerism',³² Henri's use of these popular cultural images links the works, both paintings and poems, to Liverpool, and is a way of recreating social space. Henri describes his approach as having 'more to do with pram wheels than chrome hubcaps',³³ signalling a domesticity rather than a look towards America. However, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns are acknowledged influences (they are in the notebook list, 'R'berg + Johns' [Henri C1/8], and also appear in the poems). Lucie-Smith described the two American painters as 'the link between Abstract Expressionism and the Pop Art which was to follow', and as 'the twin standard-bearers of the Dada revival',³⁴ three movements from which Henri took inspiration. Lucie-Smith's introduction to *The Art of Adrian Henri 1955-85* states that 'he parades rather than conceals his indebtedness to other artists' precisely

²⁹ David McCarthy, *Movements in Modern Art: Pop Art* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), p. 7. I have also found *High & Low* an excellent survey of popular culture's interactions with art: Kirk Varnedoe, and Adam Gopnik, *High & Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York and Harry N. Abrams, 1990).

³⁰ Adrian Henri, in *Paintings 1953-1998*, p. 11.

³¹ Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), p. 128. For example, Blake's *On The Balcony* (1955-7) and *Self-Portrait with Badges* (1961), as well as the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper*, are loaded with consumer culture and popular cultural images.

³² Frank Milner, in Intro to *Adrian Henri NMGM*, p. 10.

³³ Adrian Henri, cited in *Paintings 1953-1998*, p. 10.

³⁴ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Art Today: From Abstract Expressionism to Superrealism* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1977), p. 147.

because ‘he regards the experience of art as part of personal experience.’³⁵ Although inspired by a range of artists, it is the modernist collage medium which is most important to his aesthetic in the 1960s. Collage in twentieth century art began with the Cubists and *papiers collés*, where Pablo Picasso and George Braque applied coloured paper or newsprint to their paintings in order to represent objects but also to highlight the space of the painting. It was this dichotomy of reality and representation which was taken up by later artists. In Berlin Dada, photomontage used cut-up photographs ‘in provocative ways’, alongside newspaper, drawings, and ‘whatever happened to be lying around’, in order to ‘confront a crazy world with its own image’.³⁶ One of the reasons that the Dada artists liked collage was because it ‘displaces traditional creativity and artistic expression’,³⁷ highlighting that which the artist has not created, just as Marcel Duchamp did with his ‘ready-mades’. Later artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns also used words and objects in their painting, using found objects as the ‘detritus of the urban landscape’.³⁸

This sense of collage – as literal quotations from the everyday world – is recognised by Henri in an article in *Underdog*, entitled ‘Schwitters, the “Nowness” of Rauschenberg and the Portobello Road School’. He sees Kurt Schwitters as accepting:

urban rubbish impartially, with love, accepting chance with the dignity of the last aristocrat playing Russian Roulette. His work records what was on the streets of Hanover in 1920 or London in 1942. Young American painters are similarly concerned to create a picture of NOW from the controlled obsolescence of the American scene. (Patten/6/1/6)

To discuss his use of found objects, John Elderfield uses the metaphor of Schwitters as ‘a traveller to strange lands, bringing back with him a collection of exotic souvenirs’, but he does qualify this statement, adding that: ‘of course, the lands he visited were familiar ones’.³⁹ Dorothea Dietrich believes that Schwitters ‘treats his objects like ruins’,⁴⁰ and that the ‘maker of collages’ is one ‘who salvages fragments of the past’.⁴¹ However, the found objects which appear in, for example, Henri’s *Small Fairground Image 2* (1962), which includes actual prizes and flyers from the stalls at Rhyl Fairground where he worked, are not so much salvaging the past as celebrating the present. Certainly, the intention is also to preserve this for the future, but it is again about making present his own social space in its

³⁵ Edward Lucie-Smith, in *Art of Adrian Henri 1955-85*, p. 10.

³⁶ Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), p. 114.

³⁷ Dorothea Dietrich, *The Collage of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 3.

³⁸ Dorothy Kosinski, *Dialogues: Duchamp, Cornell, Johns, Rauschenberg* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 13.

³⁹ Elderfield, p. 57.

⁴⁰ Dietrich, p. 69.

⁴¹ Dietrich, p. 47.

own time. Therefore, where Elderfield sees ‘a kind of spiritual homelessness’⁴² in Schwitters’s fragments, Henri’s collages do rather the opposite, being another way in which Henri celebrates his relationships and his life in Liverpool and beyond.

Elderfield does, however, discuss the ‘specific, identifiable references’ in early works such as *Das Sternenbild* (1920), and refers to ‘an almost diaristic method’ in some collages, creating ‘miniature epistles of everyday life’.⁴³ Henri’s ‘Welcome to my world’, an epigraph to *Tonight at Noon*, similarly asserts the use of found materials as social documentary and personal diary:

‘Don’t find me’
snarl the poems
from the headlines
 ‘Ne me trouvez
pas’ cry
the objects
from the beaches. (TAN, viii)

This quality is also evident in the largest group of collages Henri produced, ‘the annual New Year’s cards, collages representative of what he’d been up to the previous year’,⁴⁴ such as that reproduced on the cover of *Wish You Were Here*. One of the reasons Henri saw collage and assemblage as ‘exciting’ is because of ‘how much personal content can go into a work of art and not violate its universal validity’ (TAN, 71). Collages can ‘echo reality’ (we can identify the bits and pieces, the printed ephemera, text, and images, which come together to embody that year’s travels and events) but also reimagine it: ‘If you’re caught between two different places, you can bring them together in collage. Same with people ... You want both Mingus and Patten so you bring them together.’⁴⁵ And just as the paintings and collages often include literal details of the space he inhabited – the *Liverpool 8 Four Seasons Painting* (1964), or *Small Fairground Image 2* (1962), mentioned above⁴⁶ – so too do the poems. ‘Fairground Poem’ is a jumble of quotations and referents to build up the sense of the fairground atmosphere. Specific lyric quotations, for example, build up the fairground soundscape:

⁴² Elderfield, p. 62.

⁴³ See Elderfield, pp. 63-4, 71.

⁴⁴ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, April 2013.

⁴⁵ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, April 2013.

⁴⁶ The drawings and still lifes of salad, flowers, and meat from the late 1960s to the 1970s come from the same impetus to record. One of these, *Painting 1* (1972) a photo-realistic composition of cut flowers and butcher’s cuts, received Second Prize at the John Moores Exhibition in 1972, and *Meat Painting (In Memoriam René Magritte)* (1967) caused controversy at the 1967 John Moores Exhibition when the Gallery wanted to purchase the painting but the Council’s advisory board vetoed the decision.

Deafened by music from all sides
Johnny, remember...
She's a square,
Baby, I don't care... (TAN, 19)

Henri presents the lyrics on the page as separated from the rest of the poem, indented and italicised. This same layout is used for lines of dialogue and shouts from the Fairground in the previous section, linking them as aural memories (including slight misquotations).

Schwitters not only used fragments of actual packaging and advertisements on paper (such as *Bild mit Raumgewächsen/Bild mit 2 kleinen Hunden* [1920, 1939], or *Untitled [This is to Certify that]* [1942] when he was living in England, recognisably made from Bassett's sweet packaging and bus tickets), but also collected what Elderfield calls 'banalities',⁴⁷ the slogans and found phrases which also appear in Henri's work. Schwitters' 'London Symphony' creates 'a narrative of the city'⁴⁸ through its words:

Preston Preston Preston Preston
 Bank
 Bovril the power of beef
 Bovril is good for you
 John Pearce
 Riverside 1698
 What you want is Watney's ...⁴⁹

Adverts are placed next to each other, building up the text in the same way as one experiences textual sources visually. Henri recreates this in 'Piccadilly Drawing' and his early stream-of-consciousness television drawings.⁵⁰ This technique also appears in the poetry, as in 'Part Two 1957-64' of *Autobiography*:

painting huge canvases of Piccadilly
 Guinness Clock MOTHER'S PRIDE
 bright garden yellow flowers grey buildings
 huge hoardings for eggs or cornflakes
 DAFFODILS ARE NOT REAL
 scrawled defiantly across the middle (A, 37)⁵¹

The 'Manchester Poem' section of 'Love Poem' has already been quoted in both Chapter One and Chapter Four as an example of Henri's amassing and appropriation of his heroes: 'Our love is watched over by all my masters' (*TMS1*, 39). The poem is also full of common

⁴⁷ Elderfield, p. 98-9.

⁴⁸ Emma Chambers, 'Schwitters in Britain', in *Schwitters in Britain*, ed. by Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2013), pp. 6-17, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Kurt Schwitters, 'London Symphony', in *Three Stories*, ed. by Jasia Reichardt (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), p. 17.

⁵⁰ See *Paintings 1953-1998*, pp. 38-41.

⁵¹ This is Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester rather than Piccadilly in London.

cultural referencing, mentioning brands as shorthands, as when he says he has seen ‘You and Père Ubu holding hands in Piccadilly/ Walking off into the COCA COLA sunset’ (*TMS1*, 38).

‘Love Poem’ is a series of small poems, with notes in the margin. One marginal note tells us that what follows will be an ‘Assemblage of Objects and Mementoes’. It begins:

An empty Colgate tube
An almond with ALMOND written on it
breakfastpink gingham shirt & red waistcoat like tomatoes
a bar of rock lettered all through with your name and a plastic flower
a pair of your old navyblue schooldrawers
an empty Drambuie bottle & an empty packet of export cigarettes
a signed copy of this poem ...

(*TMS1*, 39)

Each of these is an object or an image which is included as being representative of their love affair. This accumulation of images produces a personal love poem which is also public:

I’ve discovered that even the most personal section [‘Assemblage...’] means something to most other people because nobody else has exchanged these objects but everyone in love treasures some sort of small meaningless mementoes and recognises this quality if it’s clearly and simply put. (*TAN*, 72)

The irony of this is recognised in ‘Love Poem’, where ‘ANY RECORD IN THE TOP 20 ANYTIME IS OUR TUNE’ (*TMS1*, 38). By using brand names and adverts, his poems can be specific and personal but also general and universal at the same time.⁵²

Melly calls Henri’s quotations from the everyday ‘fragments of a journal’,⁵³ and the label of ‘notebook poet’⁵⁴ is particularly apposite here, given Henri’s practice of recording ideas, images, and memories in his notebooks. Henri said that ‘Collages gave me the opportunity to play with ideas before thinking about doing a finished picture’,⁵⁵ and the same could be said of the verbal/textual collages which appear as drafts in his notebooks. Lists – what Jonathan Raban referred to as ‘primary-coloured litanies’⁵⁶ – are important in Henri’s work. There are several examples of lists in the Archive which are clearly drafts for poems, such as the lists of names which I have already discussed in relation to the creation of ‘Me’ (see fig 4.1a and b). One of the most notable things about the first part of the Liverpool University Henri Archive (given, when Henri was still alive, in 1983) is the organisation of the papers

⁵² Adverts and brand names are often utilised by Henri for their specificity: in ‘See The Conkering Heroine Come’, the leaves are not just green, but specifically ‘the colour of the green sweets in Mackintosh’s Weekend’ (*TMS3*, 51).

⁵³ Melly, ‘Pop & Protest’, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Catherine Marcangeli, in *Selected*, p. xiv.

⁵⁵ Adrian Henri, in *Paintings 1953-1998*, p. 62.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Raban, *The Society of the Poem* (London: Harrap, 1971), p. 77.

by Henri himself. The bundle of papers surrounding *Autobiography* contains manuscript versions of the poem and sections at various stages of completion (as well as poems which were not included in the final version), but also includes the notes which were part of the composition process. For example, one page of notes, headed ‘1962-64’, lists 24 Falkner Square and 64 Canning Street alongside names such as Pete Brown, Hawkins/Byrne, the Clayton Squares, and Heather H, perhaps as *aides memoire* for writing the poem for these years (see fig 5.12). Elsewhere in the bundle, there are lists of songs, albums, and artists, and two pages listing plants and their months of flowering. The book’s series of vignettes centred around a person or a place (such as ‘Allen singing washing the morning dishes’ [A, 40]) evoke a time but also a *space*, and the fact that Henri chose to keep these pages – and include them in a bundle on *Autobiography* – shows the importance for him of the poem as a documentary record.

As well as the Pop Art links in the use of adverts, another American connection is important here, in terms of recording and listing: Frank O’Hara. The narrative of ‘The Day Lady Died’, with its record of mundane activities – such as ‘I go get a shoeshine’ or ‘I walk up the muggy street beginning to sun/ and have a hamburger and a malted’⁵⁷ – is echoed at the beginning of *City*:

Got up went to the telephone bought some pies and rolls for lunch thinking of you
 tried to phone you they said you weren’t there came home made some coffee had
 my lunch thinking of you (C, 2)

O’Hara’s poem gives specifics of consumer culture (he lists the shops he goes into, and what he buys), because he was concerned with recording moments as they happen. Indeed, as Geoff Ward states: ‘Whatever their differences, the Black Mountain, Beat and New York Schools shared a commitment to poetry as individualistic expression’, with ‘the right to a private language’ uniting ‘the poetry, painting and music of the postwar years.’⁵⁸ This commitment to individual life is present in the work of both these writers, but Henri’s poems can feel more nostalgic, recording visual images precisely because they are fleeting. Part Four of *City* is a celebration of ‘private language’ in the form of listing, detailing the contents of a room, beginning with what is ‘*on the mantelpiece*’:

1 travelling-clock at ten to twelve
 1 Ever-Ready U14 gas lighter
 half a packet of elastic bands

⁵⁷ Frank O’Hara, *The Collected Poems of Frank O’Hara*, ed. by Donald Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 325. Further references appear after quotations in the text as ‘*OHCP*’.

⁵⁸ Geoff Ward, *Language Poetry and the American Avant-Garde*, (Keele: British Association for American Studies, 1993), p. 12.

Pot of Nivea
 Jar of Pond's Cold Cream ('The 7-day Beauty Plan 42 grams net')
 Max Factor Eye Makeup Removal Pads
 1 packet Sungold 'Colaire'
 Pond's 'Fresh Start' New Medicated Cleansing Gel
 Body Mist Aerosol Perfume Spray
 Body Mist Lemon Bouquet Spray
 two not very sharp pairs of scissors
 1 postcard of a flowerpiece by Bonnard
 Coty 'L'Aimant' Hand Lotion
 Coty 'L'Aimant' Skin Perfume
 1 postcard 'In the Forest' by Douanier Rousseau
 1 postcard of a Dubuffet mindscape
 my keys to her flat
 leather purse
 Rentbook with 21 weeks paid
 a fountain pen (black)
 small Tupperware container with 7 shillings for the gasfire
 tube of Anadin (7 left)

(C, 22-3)

The reason I have quoted this passage in full (one of eight similar lists, interspersed with visual images and memories) is to show the meticulous detail which Henri uses. It is not just 'Body Mist', or even just a generic body spray, but two brand-specific ones. He also includes precise marketing slogans – 'Pond's Cold Cream ("The 7-day Beauty Plan 42 grams net")' – or the precise wording of the packaging – 'Pond's "Fresh Start" New Medicated Cleansing Gel'.⁵⁹

The precision is important because it is a record of a specific time and place. Henri piles up the stuff of the room but does not talk about the woman herself (the entire poem refers to 'you' without defining who that is). We know many peripheral details (what's on her draining board and what she's been wearing) but no details of the woman herself. The enumeration and accumulation of beauty products throughout the section quoted above and the rest of Part Four is matched by listing items of clothes:

pink lacy knitted sweater
 (pink nylon seethru bra
 small soft breasts underneath)
 blue skirt
 black furry slippers
 hair tied back

(C, 18)

⁵⁹ There are a number of drafts of this section in the Archive. Comparing the earliest drafts to the printed text shows just how similar they are, and Henri can also be seen to have added in specific or additional information during the original draft. The first list for '*on the mantelpiece*' (fig 5.13a) has been copied out (fig 5.13b) with the exact same information, preserving the original recording impetus. There are cuts from these drafts which do not appear in the printed text, but no amendments to the individual lines – see, for example, the colours of Drummer Dye, where in the second draft Henri has written '1 blue 1 navy' and then crossed out 'blue' and written 'turquoise', which is the colour which appears in the first instance.

of advertising but rather claiming it as part of his visual cultural field. Kirk Varnedoe calls popular urban culture ‘an alphabet for art’s new language’, with twentieth century art categorised as ‘a permanent circuit between high art and the low culture of the modern city’.⁶⁴ If collage, *papiers collés*, and assemblage (in Pop Art and before) are characterized by their use of fragments of everyday life, ready-made or existing imagery from mass culture, poetry can do the same. Henri’s links to this ‘found image’ aesthetic go back to Schwitters and earlier. Henri wrote in his ‘Notes on Painting and Poetry’ that as well as the ‘Long Live Socialism’ banner from *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889*, there was another ‘quote’ from an earlier drawing by Ensor: the Colman’s Mustard advert.⁶⁵ This advert is clear in the *Entry*, where Henri copies the company’s bright yellow tin and packaging imagery. It also appears in the poem, highlighted by being in all capitals: ‘COLMAN’S MUSTARD’ (*TMS3*, 47). Henri calls the Colman’s advert in Ensor’s drawing ‘the first bit of pop art’ (*TAN*, 73): the advert is not included just as a modern advertising slogan, it has a deeper meaning in its homage to Ensor. This is also evidence of Henri recognising that Pop Art sensibilities existed before the Pop Art movement itself. Just as the Merseybeat movement embraced Allen Ginsberg as legitimising what they were already doing, so too does Henri embrace Pop Art because he is already within this tradition, already taking visual quotations of the everyday. Marco Livingstone’s *Pop Art: A Continuing History* defines Pop Art as ‘the emblematic presentation of ordinary objects’.⁶⁶ This phrase can also be used to define Henri’s own aesthetic: ordinary objects are claimed by Henri as emblematic of his own life.

VISUAL POETRY

As suggested earlier, the printed page can also be a visual experience. Walter J. Ong argues that: ‘Print situates words in space more relentlessly than writing ever did’,⁶⁷ as the position on the page is locked in. This positioning is an image, for Johanna Drucker, precisely because ‘presence’ on the page ‘depends on visual means’, such as typography and white

⁶⁴ Varnedoe, p. 15.

⁶⁵ The drawing is *Alive and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem*, one of six black-and-white religious drawings by Ensor of 1885-6, and which can be seen as a study for the *Brussels* painting. Henri names the drawing as ‘“Hail, Jesus, King of the Jews” of 1885’ (*TAN*, 73), from the drawing’s large banner ‘Salut Jesus Roi des Juifs’ (see fig 5.14). The references in ‘Entry’ to ‘HAIL JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS’ and ‘BUTCHERS OF JERUSALEM’ also show Henri’s knowledge of this drawing, as these are not in Ensor’s later painting.

⁶⁶ Marco Livingstone, *Pop Art: A Continuing History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 11.

⁶⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 121.

space, which ‘can’t be translated into any other form.’⁶⁸ Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg have already been mentioned in terms of breath-measure, but the look of the work on the page was also important to both.⁶⁹

The layout of the poem on the page can give cues as to how it should be performed. Take, for example, McGough’s ‘fade out’ technique. Chapter Three has already considered his way of ‘runningallthewordstogether’ as being representative of his speech patterns, but it is also relevant in terms of page space, demonstrating Olson’s idea of the page space as score: ‘If a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before it, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time’.⁷⁰ Whilst the Merseybeat poets do not use the page space as a strict score in the way that Olson suggests, the visual appearance of the poem on the page, nevertheless, usually relates to how the poem is to be read. For example, in McGough’s ‘A lot of Water has Flown under your Bridge’, the page space is used visually:

but time has passed since then
and a lot of water
has flown
under
your
bridge. (TMS1, 62)

On the Penguin Audio Cassette, the ending is a clear diminuendo, just as the text’s short lines fall away. The visual effect of the poem on the page is representative of both the water flowing and of the poem gradually fading out. Patten’s ‘Schoolboy’ uses a number of different line lengths and indentations to represent the different moments and speakers. He also uses the ‘fade out’ technique:

The schoolyard’s full of people to hate.
Full of tick and prefects and a fat schoolmaster
and whistles and older and younger boys, but
he’s growing,
sadly
growing
up. (TMS1, 115)

⁶⁸ Johanna Drucker, ‘Visual Performance of the Poetic Text’, in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 131-161, p. 131.

⁶⁹ Olson talks of open verse as being ‘COMPOSITION BY FIELD’ (Charles Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, in *Collected Prose*, ed. by Donald Allen [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], pp. 239-49, p. 239). Ginsberg’s letters about the page layout of ‘Howl’ were also mentioned in Chapter Two as a way in which the ‘long line’ is both a visual and an oral phenomenon.

⁷⁰ Olson, p. 245

This is reproduced in *The Liverpool Scene*, too (TLS, 49). Coming after the longer lines, the short lines emphasise the individual words, which has the effect of slowing the pace. This use of page space is something which is also evident in Henri's work, such as in 'Me', where the poem ends:

Garcia Lorca
and
last of all
me. (TMS1, 28)

What these three examples show is how the white space is used effectively to create or reinforce meaning. The McGough poem flows like water, Patten's indents emphasise each word deliberately to give them extra force, and Henri's final lines function as either a 'fade out', making him less important, or as an emphasis, isolating 'me' on the page to make it stand out. This is much more impressionistic than Olson's strict space and pause instructions, but the visual layout of the poem is still 'a script to its vocalisation'.⁷¹

For some poems, the visual element is formed from their inception. Henri could not type, and often left notes for the typist which show what he intended. Henri's Archives give us access to the process, demonstrating that the look of the printed work has been given consideration. For example, a handwritten draft of 'In the Midnight Hour' has pencilled slashes added to the original pen draft to indicate whether the typist should use a single or double line space between the sections (/ or //), (Henri A I.1[11]). In the Bristol Penguin Archive, there are also a number of examples from all three of the poets that are attentive to the visual aspects of the page. Thus, as part of his suggestions for the second revised edition of *The Mersey Sound*, McGough sent in a photocopied double page from *After the Merrymaking* (1971) of '40-Love'.⁷² *After the Merrymaking* was the first instance of the poem in print, and the poem uses the physical barrier of the gutter to represent the net by printing the poem across two facing pages. However, McGough's handwritten amendment to this version, for inclusion in the next edition of *The Mersey Sound*, pushes the two columns much further apart, so that the couple playing tennis have a much larger gap between them, emphasising that 'the/ net/ will/ still/ be/ be-/ tween them' – see fig 5.15a. In *The Mersey Sound*, the gutter is used again to divide the two sides of the match and the two columns, but the columns are also right-aligned on the left-hand page and then left-aligned on the right-hand page abutting the gutter – see fig 5.15b. The two columns are set wide

⁷¹ Olson, p. 245

⁷² The performance of this poem and its tennis match conceit has already been discussed in Chapter Three, but it also works on the page, the columns of words acting as the bounce of the ball between partners – breaking up the syllables of words such as 'ten-nis' and 'be-tween' reaffirms this.

apart so as to emphasise the space between the couple. This poem has had another visual manifestation in *Liverpool Doors*, an exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool in 2012, which ‘explores the history and character of Liverpool through stories and memories symbolised by doors from across the city.’⁷³ ‘40-Love’ (fig 5.15c) appears across two doors, each being printed with a column of the text and painted green to represent a grass tennis court. The space between the two doors is representative of both the distance between the couple and the net of the match. In this visual manifestation, the word ‘net’ is highlighted just as in the vocalisations, by being the only word which is on the left-hand side of this door and also printed in red (as opposed to white), appearing as if this is the ball bouncing from one side to the other.

‘Adrian Henri’s Talking After Christmas Blues’ is another poem which has been discussed previously in terms of performance, but which also has a strong visual element on the page. This poem is particularly important because, from the very earliest drafts I have found, the visual is bound up with the text itself. The poem is, as previously stated, in the ‘talking blues’ mode. The layout of the poem uses indentations:

Well I woke up this mornin’ it was Christmas Day
 And the birds were singing the night away
 I saw my stocking lying on the chair
 Looked right to be bottom but you weren’t there
 there was
 apples
 oranges
 chocolates
 aftershave
 – but no you. (TMS1, 31)

Each verse takes the same basic form, with the list (including a pause represented by the ellipsis, spaced out on the page before the fourth item), and then the problem of ‘but no you’ is reiterated:

there’ll be
 Autumn
 Summer
 Spring
 and Winter
 – all of them without you. (TMS1, 32)

What is striking is that the layout exists in exactly the same format in the early notebook version of this poem – the indented layout is part of the poem from the first moment of

⁷³ See <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/exhibitions/liverpool-doors/> [accessed 1 March 2013].

creation (see fig 5.16a and b for two manuscript examples where the look is integral). As Johanna Drucker states, ‘visual and verbal codes are integrated in transmission on the page’.⁷⁴ Indentations and line breaks are important particularly for Henri as a way of spacing the poem on the page to cue oral performance, pause, sense, and so on. White space and typographical choices cannot be translated out of the visual realm, but a poem with visual elements such as this can – and indeed is intended to – be also read out loud.

As well as the use of white space, the Merseybeat poets were also concerned with other visuals. Within the English tradition, there are oft-cited visual poems such as George Herbert’s ‘Easter Wings’ (1833) or the ‘mouse’s tale’ in the shape of his tail in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). European examples which are similarly well-known include Guillaume Apollinaire’s *calligrammes* (such as ‘Il pleut’ [1916], where the lines of the text run down the page like rain), and Stéphane Mallarmé’s use of typography as a visual score. These examples function both as poems and also as pictures – the reader ‘sees’ the rain as well as reads the text.⁷⁵ McGough’s ‘Pantomime Poem’ (which appears in only the second edition of *The Mersey Sound*) uses the idea of the font size as a guide to volume, as the font size of the repeated word ‘more’ gets larger and larger until finally it cannot even fit on the page, representing the increasingly oppressive and gruesome cries of the children (see fig 5.17).

Henri’s ‘Pictures From An Exhibition’ is another clearly visual poem, both in its printed state and in the evidence of the process which can be seen from Archive material. The pictures are from a specific exhibition, which is included as a subtitle to the poem in *The Mersey Sound*: ‘Painting and Sculpture of a decade 54-64 Tate Gallery London April-June 1964’ (*TMS1*, 35).⁷⁶ A notebook shows the notes he took, reproducing the catalogue numbers for the paintings and sculptures as well as their titles (see fig 5.18, Henri C 1/6). These – explicitly titled as pictures *from* an exhibition – are both descriptions of the paintings and sculptures and short poems inspired by them, as these examples will demonstrate. Take, for example, ‘No. 291 Robert Rauschenberg “Windward” 1963’:

⁷⁴ Johanna Drucker, ‘Not Sound’, in *The sound of poetry, the poetry of sound*, ed. by Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 237-248, p. 238.

⁷⁵ On the subject of typography in literature, see, for example, Margaret Church, ‘The First English Pattern Poems’, in *PMLA*, 61.3 (1946), pp. 636-50, and the work of Johanna Drucker, such as *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁷⁶ The title also evokes Modest Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874), a piano suite inspired by a retrospective of the artist Viktor Hartmann.

printed oranges are painted
painted oranges are painted

Angry skyline over the gasworks
A Hawk sits brooding inside a painted rainbow. (TMS1, 35)

This poem highlights three aspects of Rauschenberg's painting (fig 5.19). The first two lines of Henri's poem clearly refer to the advertisement for Sunkist Oranges at the top of the painting, where one of the *printed* oranges has been *painted* over, and also to the section of the painting immediately below this, where there are a number of *painted* oranges in white, one of which has been *painted* over in orange. The lines of this poem could be described as straight ekphrasis moments: to describe the skyline as 'angry' is apt, because of the yellow and red Rauschenberg has added to this photo transfer, creating an effect of fire. Similarly, there is indeed a bird on the left hand side of the painting, with a roughly painted rainbow as its background. However, there is more: the bird appears to be perched on top of the blue-washed photo transfer of apartment blocks, which we do not get from Henri's poem, and also, with its the white-painted head, might signify a bald eagle rather than a hawk, particularly in light of the other 'American' iconography of the Statue of Liberty and Californian oranges. Ekphrasis has been defined by James A. W. Hefferman as 'the verbal representation of visual representation',⁷⁷ and by Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux as 'the poem that addresses a work of art'.⁷⁸ 'Pictures...' clearly represents visual objects verbally, and addresses works of art, but the individual poems are not always direct and comprehensive in their relation to the exhibits they are named after. The printed poems follow the initial notebook response, and therefore, as a group, as a selection of pictures of an exhibition, could be said to be more about Henri's own response to, and interpretation of, the exhibition, than the paintings or sculptures themselves.

'Pictures...' also recalls O'Hara's poem 'Why I Am Not A Painter', a comparison between the processes behind his own 'Oranges: 12 pastorals' and Mike Goldberg's painting *Sardines*. O'Hara watches Goldberg's painting during the composition process, which begins with the word 'sardines' painted on it, but, when he sees the finished painting in a gallery:

All that's left is just
letters. 'It was too much,' Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of

⁷⁷ James A. W. Hefferman, *Museum of Words: the poetics of ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux, *Twentieth-Century Poetry and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 1.

a color: orange. I write a line
about orange. Pretty soon it is a
whole page of words, not lines.
Then another page.

(*OHCP*, 262)

Both artist and poet go through a process of accumulation: O'Hara goes from 'a line' to a 'whole page', then 'another page', constantly adding to the original idea until 'My poem/ Is finished' (*OHCP*, 262). The obvious difference is the experience of seeing the painting as one whole plane, whereas in a poem, as O'Hara says, 'There should be/ so much more' (*OHCP*, 262).

'Why I Am Not A Painter' opens with the idea that: 'I think I would rather be/ a painter, but I am not' (*OHCP*, 261). O'Hara was connected to the art world as a curator and an art critic, but Henri was both a poet and a painter and as such can use either (or both) to explore an idea. This is also evident in his attention to page space. The Archive holds a typewritten copy of 'Pictures...' with handwritten notes specifically about the look of the words on the page. Here three different stages of the text demonstrate how important precise visuals are. The typewritten copy uses Henri's notebook titles, setting them on the page so as to mark the piece out as being inspired by the exhibition.⁷⁹ 'No. 10-13 Josef Albers Studies for "Homage to the Square" 1961-2', the text of which is simply the four titles of the four studies, is recorded in the notebook on four consecutive lines, but Henri has also written a note, 'space out' (see fig 5.18). On the typewritten copy, this instruction has been followed by the typist leaving a gap between each. Henri has then requested 'large space between each if possible' in his notes on the typist's copy, demonstrating that the 'spacing out' he requested originally needs to be greater, perhaps representing the space between each of the original paintings on the wall of the gallery (see fig 5.20). In *The Mersey Sound*, the space has been widened:

look.

see.

long ago.

now.

(*TMS1*, 36)

⁷⁹ The catalogue numbers Henri records are all correct, save for 'No. 73 Joseph Cornell "Hotel de l'Etoile"' which should be 72 (73 is Cornell's *Compartmented cubes* [n.d.] – see Alice and Peter Smithson, eds., *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54-64*, Tate Gallery (London: The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1964), p. 92.

Another of the responses, 'No. 84 Mark Rothko "Reds – No 22" 1957', uses typography to visually represent the painting, from top to bottom on the page:

SCARLET
ORANGE
ORANGE
ORANGE
SCARLET
CRIMSON
SCARLET

(TMS1, 35)

The original notebook records the colours, which describe Rothko's painting (fig 5.21), in capitals, which have been crossed out by Henri and re-written in lower-case letters (see fig 5.18). In the typewritten copy, two words have the word 'bold' next to them (he also indicates that the word 'crimson' should be indented a space more, see fig 5.20). In terms of representing the painting, the two bold words – 'orange' and 'crimson' – are indeed the two blocks which stand out for the viewer, drawing the eye first both in the poem and in the painting.

Henri approaches concrete poetry in this poem. For Wendy Steiner, concrete poetry is 'the most literal realization of the painting-literature analogy that I know', because it 'overcomes some of the barriers that stand between words and things'.⁸⁰ In this case, Henri's poem recreates the scarlet frame, blending first into the edge of the orange, then the intensity of the orange block itself, and then blends back into the background scarlet. His comments to his typist on 'Pictures...' show how important it was to the experience of the poem for the visual aspect to be right. The need for bold for certain colours, 'large' or 'more' space, or italics to break up and set apart some sections from others, are clearly deemed essential to the experience of the reader and increase the iconicity of the text, creating a sense that these poems are closer to 'text as image', to be experienced on the page. Drucker states that 'writing is not only an instance of language – it is also an image',⁸¹ and the use of the visual possibilities of type, as well as the instructions for these uses, demonstrate this. Henri wrote to Anthony Richardson about his selection for the original *The Mersey Sound* to say he wanted 'Pictures...' included because it is 'interesting because different i.e. for printing rather than reading.'⁸²

The visual performance on the page can be representative of voice, a score, structurally meaningful, or evidence of process. To return to Olson and 'Projective Verse', 'every

⁸⁰ Steiner, p. 198-9.

⁸¹ Drucker, *Figuring the Word*, p. 61.

⁸² Letter from Adrian Henri to Anthony Richardson, n.d. (Bristol Penguin Archive DM 1107 / D 103).

element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality'.⁸³ This is a call for totalisation, encompassing text as words to be spoken and text as image to be seen, and is what these examples of Merseybeat poetry have sought to demonstrate: a poem can, and indeed should, be verbal, vocal, *and* visual.

VISUAL ART PRACTICE IN PERFORMANCE

As well as the performances discussed in Chapters Three and Four, there are other live activities which have an inherently visual nature – such as those which have their roots in Dada and Surrealist performance, including the Events which will be discussed in the next section. McGough specifically mentioned Henri's silent poems when I asked him about the content of the Hope Hall evenings: 'Adrian might bring along a silent poem – you know, just stand there with a frame for five minutes.'⁸⁴ The live events of the Cabaret Voltaire were one of the main modes of dissemination for Dada. Writing in the first Dada publication (15th June 1916), Hugo Ball uses the idea of 'independence' twice in relation to the Cabaret Voltaire: first, in setting up the nightclub, he 'was sure that there must be a few young people in Switzerland who like me were interested not only in enjoying their independence but also in giving proof of it', and second, that the resultant Cabaret's 'sole purpose [was] to draw attention' to 'the few independent spirits who live for other ideals'.⁸⁵ This deliberate stance, of wanting to be recognized as being different, was a significant move, both focusing the energies of the artists and creating a space of their own that the audience knew was set apart from the rest of the art world. Movements often begin in terms of negatives – 'we are not them' – and this concept of independence can also be seen in the origins of the Merseybeat movement: not London, not Establishment, not Beat... Whilst they are perhaps not the most obvious precursor to what the Merseybeat poets were doing in Liverpool in the 1960s, Dada and Surrealism are nevertheless important in the background as one of the influences upon which they draw – American and European, high and low, literary and non-literary.

In *Environments and Happenings* Henri describes the Cabaret Voltaire as forcing artists to 'evolve a new style of performance' (including 'poems without words' or 'silent poems'), thus: 'Walter Serner performed a "poem" which consisted of placing a bouquet at the feet of

⁸³ Olson, p. 243.

⁸⁴ Interview with McGough, November 2012.

⁸⁵ Hugo Ball, cited in Richter, p. 13-4.

a dressmaker's dummy.⁸⁶ Henri's 'Summer poems without words' ('To be distributed in leaflet form to the audience: each poem should be tried within the next seven days') are reproduced in *The Liverpool Scene*, composed of instructions such as: 'Travel on the Woodside ferry with your eyes closed. Travel back with them open' (*TLS*, 73). Henri created many of these 'poems without words' as performance pieces, usually with one or two props. Many are printed in *Tonight at Noon* (pp. 28-30), and the Archive also includes several lists (although it is not certain whether these are running orders or simply lists recording them), such as the two titled 'Love Poem I' and 'Love Poem II': involving holding up, first, a bunch of artificial lilies, or second, either 'navy blue schooldrawers' or a slip.⁸⁷

Henri was clearly influenced by Dada and Surrealism. He even performed the Dadaist manifesto 'Zang Zang Tuumb' several times alongside Paul O'Keefe and Geoff Ward – for example, at the Imperial War Museum in November 1991, as part of 'Zang Zang Tuumb: Futurist and Vorticist Poetry & Manifesti', with Ward as Tristan Tzara, O'Keefe as Wyndham Lewis, and Henri as Umberto Boccioni. O'Keefe and Henri were 'struck by the idea that Wyndham Lewis's *BLAST* with its huge typography and so on was surely something to read aloud, not just look at' and of 'going back to manifestos, to perform them':

We had quite different voices, with me, quite a soft and not so strong vocal range, particularly at that time; Paul could bring the house down, shake it down, had this actor's voice, a natural actor; and Adrian was quite different again.⁸⁸

The cabaret format (of having different acts one after another) suited the fragmented nature of the Dada aesthetic. However, where Dada was deliberately provocative, Merseybeat's performance format is more about camaraderie, about allowing anyone to participate. Indeed, Mike McCartney's memories – which are, significantly, all about performance, about live events – are of there being all kinds of performances and performers. 'Satire' was 'very important' for sketches, paintings were exhibited 'hot off the easel', and poems were read out loud on the same bill as folk singers and musicians: they had an 'intense following', the audiences 'loved it', the organisation and performance choices were 'loose', 'just a group of interesting people getting together'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Henri, *Environments*, p. 17.

⁸⁷ See fig 5.22a for an example of a list, and fig 5.22b for a running order of 'Poems without words for Edinburgh'. The former lists props or *aides memoire* next to each – '11. Love Poem II (slip)', Henri A.I.3(6) – and the latter goes into more detail for each title, Henri A.I.3(16). The 'Liverpool Drinking Song' asterisked in here is printed in *Tonight at Noon* as: 'drinks glass of beer. Rapidly, without stopping' (*TAN*, 30). See also the instructions used by Fluxus – see Henri, *Environments*, pp. 159-61.

⁸⁸ Interview with Geoff Ward, February 2013.

⁸⁹ Interview with Mike McCartney, May 2013.

There are a number of different activities which can be seen as having their root in Dadaist and Surrealist performances which Henri knew of.⁹⁰ The Dadaists produced ‘the first simultaneous poem’,⁹¹ performed at the Cabaret Voltaire on the 30th March 1916 by Tzara, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Marcel Janco, ‘L’Amiral cherche une maison à louer’.⁹² Hans Richter records Ball as saying that simultaneous poems demonstrate that noises ‘are existentially more powerful than the human voice’,⁹³ with three source poems combining to make a nonsensical whole. Whilst not strictly a simultaneous poem, in that the different voices use a question and answer format which makes sense (rather than the deliberate acoustic onslaught of ‘L’Amiral’), the Merseybeat poets do perform as a group cutting together different works (as well as those collaborative performance instances discussed in the previous chapter). The ‘Gifted Wreckage’ cassette contains a ‘cut-up’ of a Scaffold sketch, ‘Who Are You?’, with Henri’s poem ‘Me’:

McGough:	Are you a milkman out for the night?
Patten:	Are you a bishop coming home tight?
McGough:	Who are you?
Patten:	Yeah, who are you?
Henri:	Paul McCartney Gustav Mahler, Alfred Jarry John Coltrane...

(McGough/13/1/1/149)

By splicing these two together they create new meaning, ending with an ‘oh’ of recognition from McGough and Patten at Henri’s final words, ‘and last of all me’. Another element of Dada performance which clearly influences the Merseybeat poets is the idea of performance as being an essentially visual medium. The ‘collision impact’, as Annabelle Melzer calls it, was not only present in simultaneous poems because of the noise:

At the very least there were the facial expressions of the performers as they moved mouths and focused eyes on their reading of the texts. Crimped eyes, gaping mouth and focus askew were not the usual diet of a poetry-hungry public.⁹⁴

The idea of the milieu and the unique event has already been considered in the previous chapters, but what is clear here is that performing should be a total experience, with costume, set, and action being just as important as the oral elements.

⁹⁰ This is not to say that the European avant-garde or Henri’s Art School education was the only source for such activities. John Gorman was organising events for the Merseyside Arts Festival independent of Henri, and both music hall and variety have always been strong in Liverpool. As I have argued, it is important to consider these as background sources of influence for this movement.

⁹¹ Annabelle Melzer, *Dada and Surrealist Performance* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 35.

⁹² See Melzer pp. 38-40 for both the text and an interpretation of ‘L’Amiral’. The printed text of ‘L’Amiral’ is set out like a score, with the page space as indicative for performance. Page space is therefore not only visual but also functional, as in poems discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

⁹³ Hugo Ball, cited in Richter, p. 30.

⁹⁴ Melzer, p. 36, 38.

Chance was also an important element of both the Dada and Surrealist manifestoes. Chance, for Richter, is represented by the story of Jean Arp becoming frustrated and tearing up a drawing, seeing how the pieces fell, and accepting ‘this challenge from chance as a decision of fate’, he ‘carefully pasted the scraps down in the pattern which chance had determined.’⁹⁵ Chance was embraced by the Surrealists as a stimulus alongside collective action in games such as *cadaver exquis*. These could be seen as the visual equivalent of the poetry made by cutting up words to put together into random sentences. And if chance made them ungrammatical it was, as Richter says, ‘exactly this that Tzara wanted’.⁹⁶ This is how to make a Dadaist poem, according to Tzara:

Take a newspaper
Take a pair of scissors
Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem
Cut out the article
Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
Shake it gently
Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag
Copy consecutively.⁹⁷

There are two examples of Merseybeat poetry where links to this ‘paper-bag poetry’⁹⁸ can be seen. First, in ‘cut-up’ poems such as ‘On the Late Late Massachers Stillbirths and Deformed Children a Smoother Lovelier Skin Job’, a ‘Cut-up of John Milton Sonnet XVIII On the late Massacher in Piemont/TV Times/CND leaflet’, published in the first edition of *The Mersey Sound*. The version printed in *Sphinx* magazine, dated ‘2.v.62’, has a slightly different title (and some textual differences), but also prints the text as clearly formed from three different source materials (whereas *The Mersey Sound* only uses some capitalisation to typographically differentiate between the lines), which makes the *Sphinx* version much more obvious, visually, as a (literal) cut-up (see fig 5.23). The *Sphinx* version also contains a note: ‘The written bits are not invented: the original cuttings had been lost + it was not possible to find duplicates. Also only 1 CND leaflet was available + hence back + front had to be used’ (Patten/6/1/6). It is obvious where the different phrases have come from (the title shows clearly the three different typefaces of the three sources), creating juxtapositions such as: ‘In seven days I promise you the bombing of Guernica by Franco’s German bombers’, where the opening phrase (‘In seven days I promise you’), a common marketing phrase for beauty regimes, is juxtaposed with the text of the CND leaflet. Elsewhere, the source material is

⁹⁵ Richter, p. 51.

⁹⁶ Richter, p. 54.

⁹⁷ Tristan Tzara, cited in Melzer, p. 70. Henri’s ‘cut-up’ poems may also be inspired by William Burroughs.

⁹⁸ Melzer, p. 67.

interrelated: when Milton's poem refers to 'The triple tyrant' he means Pope Innocent III,⁹⁹ but Henri's cut-up places Milton's label (including semi-colon) next to three contemporary politicians taken from the CND leaflet so it seems that *they* are the referents – in *The Mersey Sound*, this appears as the line: 'The Triple Tyrant Macmillan Kennedy Watkinson' (TMS1, 22), all in the same typeface, removing that visual contextualisation.

Another kind of 'cut-up' – which Henri called 'audience poems' – brings us closer to performance. In these pieces, the individual words are not cut from articles but are contributed by the audience: 'We'd get everyone to write a word or sentence, collect them at the interval, then read out the results later.'¹⁰⁰ Several are preserved in the Archive: the two envelopes labelled by Henri as 'Audience Poem (Sampson & Barlow's)' could be the earliest examples, one containing cut-up bits of paper (flyers, etc.) with one word written on each in various hands, the other containing squares of paper with a mixture of single words, phrases, and whole sentences.¹⁰¹ There is no way of knowing the exact composition of the poems; the performance on the night was based entirely on chance.

These performance activities are all used by the Merseybeat poets to further their own agenda of connection with the audience, contributing to the experience of the live event. This chapter will now discuss Events as an important aspect of both Henri's visual art practice and the performative nature of the Merseybeat movement.

EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

Henri's initial knowledge of the New York scene's Happenings came, specifically, from 'Kaprow's thing in N. Y. "Art News" on Happenings 1961' (Henri C1/8). Allan Kaprow's article, 'Happenings in the New York Scene', is intended as an introduction: 'If you haven't been to the Happenings, let me give you a kaleidoscope sampling of some of their great moments.'¹⁰² Kaprow paints a picture of a fresh, vibrant new community and artform, and the article tells the reader what the most important elements of a Happening are. Audience interaction and participation are emphasised: 'You come in as a spectator and maybe you

⁹⁹ See the textual notes to Sonnet XVIII in John Milton, *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey (Harlow: Longman, 2007 rev. ed.), pp. 341-3.

¹⁰⁰ Adrian Henri, cited in Phil Bowen, *A Gallery To Play To: The Story of the Mersey Poets* (Exeter: Stride, 1999), p. 52.

¹⁰¹ Envelopes preserved are: Henri B/6 (1), unlabelled; Henri B/6 (2), 'Audience Poem (Sampson & Barlow's)'; Henri B/6 (3), 'Audience Poem Everyman 8-xi-66'; and Henri B/6 (4), 'Audience Poem (Sampson & Barlow's)'.

¹⁰² Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. by Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Originally published as 'Happenings in the New York Scene' in *Art News* 60.3 (1961), pp. 36-9, 58-62, p. 15.

discover you're caught in it after all'; the audience are 'comingled in some way with the event ... There is thus no separation of audience and play'.¹⁰³ There is a clear visual element to the experience, both in terms of the spectacle of live performance and also because 'this kind' of Happening 'grew out of the advanced American painting of the last decade, and those of us involved were all painters'.¹⁰⁴ In his 1966 *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*, Kaprow describes how Happenings evolved as a trajectory beginning with assemblage, then Environments – 'Assemblages may be handled or walked around, while Environments must be walked into'¹⁰⁵ – and finally these Environments incorporated activities and people, creating Happenings, 'a collage of events in certain spans of time and in certain spaces'.¹⁰⁶

Kaprow's 1961 article says that 'Happenings are events that, put simply, happen', that 'their form is open-ended and fluid',¹⁰⁷ 'a Happening has no plot', and 'is materialized in an improvisatory fashion'.¹⁰⁸ The statement clearly had an impact on Henri's conceptualisation of his Liverpool Events. Whilst chance is still an element in Henri's Events, they are not completely spontaneous, as he tells the reader in *Environments and Happenings* (1974):

My own 'events' were cued from tape or live sound. This is not to deny that chance-operations played a part in the planning of a number of early happenings, especially in details: a drive-in movie screen in the background, a couple of suspicious policemen interrupting the show, a corner empty at rehearsal filled with people.¹⁰⁹

The naming of his performances as 'Events' instead of 'Happenings' could therefore be seen as a distancing from Kaprow's specific brand.¹¹⁰ Michael Kirby's writings on Happenings seek to dispel the 'prevalent mythology' about Happenings: 'It has been said that there is little or no planning, control, or purpose. It has been said that there are no rehearsals. ... these myths are widely known and believed. But they are entirely false.'¹¹¹ Kirby's writings can be seen as an attempt to reformulate Kaprow's own statements, such as those quoted above from the 1961 article about spontaneity, which could be misconstrued – he stresses that the

¹⁰³ Kaprow, 'Happenings', p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ Kaprow, 'Happenings', p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Kaprow, *Assemblage*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁶ Kaprow, *Assemblage*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁷ Kaprow, 'Happenings', p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Kaprow, 'Happenings', p. 18.

¹⁰⁹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 89.

¹¹⁰ In fact, the term 'Happening' itself comes from Allan Kaprow's 1959 '18 Happenings in 6 Parts', and Kaprow later claimed that: 'I had no intention of naming an art form and for a while tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent its use' (Kaprow, *Assemblage*, p. 184n).

¹¹¹ Michael Kirby, *Happenings: an illustrated anthology* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1965), p. 9.

action of Happenings is ‘often *indeterminate* but not improvised’,¹¹² utilising chance but always having some form of script.

This thesis’s main argument revolves around the public and performative aspects of poetry, and Dick Higgins – whose term *intermedia* and its ‘conceptual fusion’¹¹³ has helped form my own ideas about crossmedia for Merseybeat – refers to Happenings as an ‘intermedium, an uncharted land that lies between collage, music and the theatre.’¹¹⁴ He also uses the term ‘receiver, as we might call the listener, viewer, or reader collectively’.¹¹⁵ This seems to me a useful term to describe the audience of a performance instance, as there are a number of different stimuli and both visual and aural elements at play, but it could also imply a one-way communication – that the audience is passive in receiving information – whereas a crucial part of a Happening is the audience’s participation. Here I refer back to Chapter Four, and its discussion of the Music Hall tradition. One major difference between the traditional theatre and the Music Hall audience was the particular engagement with the audience that Music Hall acts encouraged. This type of performance instance might also be usefully referred to as a source for Merseybeat’s own Events. In fact, John Gorman’s involvement in the Merseyside Arts Festival (a forerunner of the Scaffold’s sketch antics) would point more to the Music Hall tradition than to Kaprow. Gorman was in the audience at Yoko Ono’s performance at the Bluecoat Chambers in 1967, where Ono invited the audience to wrap her in bandages. Gorman’s attitude to this kind of avant-garde performance art is clear: ‘When she was covered, John Gorman of the Scaffold shouted out, “You’re wanted on the phone.” Liverpool audiences see through avant-garde pretension.’¹¹⁶

Moreover, before the New York scene’s Happenings, the same ideas were being explored elsewhere. John Cage’s 1952 “‘mixed media” event’ at Black Mountain College, ‘Theatre Piece No. 1’, was ‘possibly the very first anywhere’.¹¹⁷ Henri’s history of Happenings acknowledges this (though not the Music Hall thread), referring to a ‘separate tradition’ with Cage’s ‘music-pieces’ as an example of these ‘tightly programmed’ events.¹¹⁸ The term ‘event’ used here may also indicate Henri aligning himself more with the programmed than the random, as he sees it. Richard Kostelanetz makes a distinction between ‘pure

¹¹² Kirby, p. 19.

¹¹³ Dick Higgins, *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 15-6.

¹¹⁴ Higgins, p. 22.

¹¹⁵ Higgins, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ Spencer Leigh, with Pete Frame, *Let’s Go Down the Cavern* (London: Vermillion, 2007), p. 107.

¹¹⁷ Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An exploration in community* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p. 358.

¹¹⁸ Henri, *Environments*, p. 156-7.

happenings’ and ‘staged happenings’ which is also useful. Pure Happenings are ‘meant to be as formally disorganized and serendipitous as life itself’.¹¹⁹ Staged Happenings ‘occur within a fixed space, usually on a theatrical stage’ but do, like pure Happenings, follow a script ‘sufficiently indeterminate to ensure that events can never be precisely duplicated’.¹²⁰ Kostelanetz goes on to define a number of different forms of live event, but it is this distinction which is most useful for my purposes. The Event that I will discuss in detail later in this section, ‘Bomb Event’, is an example of a performance which is more rigidly organised, a ‘staged happening’. Furthermore, as mentioned above, Kaprow was not the only impetus for Happenings to be translated into the Liverpool scene of the 1960s. In *Environments and Happenings*, Henri states that the ‘first happenings in England were done by a group of artists and poets in Liverpool in 1962, as a result of my reading an article by Allan Kaprow earlier that year.’¹²¹ The reference to ‘artists and poets’ is significant, as their backgrounds affect what the ‘Event’ becomes. In ‘Bomb Event’, for example, many musicians were involved. The places where the Events took place should also be considered – when Jeff Nuttall refers to ‘Adrian Henri’s romantic collage-events in Liverpool’s Cavern Club’¹²² it may be ‘Bomb Event’ which is on his mind.

Whilst Happenings ‘do not just happen’, there are two interlinked reasons why they are – intentionally – impermanent. They are usually performed only once, i.e. are not repeated, but also cannot be *exactly* repeated because of the inherent element of chance.¹²³ Happenings *are* scripted (and usually rehearsed), but the scripts are often comprised of brief instructions which are open to interpretation by the enactor (and therefore cannot be repeated exactly) or are open to chance due to, for example, environmental factors.¹²⁴ One consequence of this fleeting nature is the lack of concrete evidence for discussing a particular event. Martin Duberman’s study *Black Mountain: An exploration in community* contains an analysis of Cage’s ‘Theatre Piece No. 1’, demonstrating some of the issues surrounding writing about or recording Happenings. He presents the reader with five different records, from performers

¹¹⁹ Richard Kostelanetz, *On Innovative Performance(s) Three Decades of Recollections on Alternative Theatre* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1994), p. 5-6. The lack of initial capitalisation on ‘happenings’ is here an indication that Kostelanetz is writing about general happenings rather than Kaprow’s Happenings. I have chosen to always use a capital for the term in order to make it clear I am discussing these particular kinds of events as opposed to other forms of performance.

¹²⁰ Kostelanetz, p. 6.

¹²¹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 116.

¹²² Nuttall, p. 127.

¹²³ Of course, there are records of Happenings in video and photographic form (see, for example, the many photos in Kaprow’s *Assemblage*), and have been performed again (such as the 2006 performance of ‘18 Happenings in 6 Parts’ in Munich).

¹²⁴ Here I am thinking particularly of Kaprow’s ‘18 Happenings in 6 Parts’ (the ‘parts’ of which can be chosen and their order changed around), and ‘Fluids: A Happening’ (which relies on the environment to determine how and when the blocks of ice will melt).

and audience members, ranging from a diary entry written on the evening itself to interviews more than a decade later.¹²⁵ Collating the evidence, Duberman is able to pin the events down:

We now know there was a ladder – or at least a lectern – and if M. C. [Richards] wasn't on it (and she probably wasn't, since she was riding a horse, or in a basket) then Rauschenberg or Olson was. Except that Olson was also in the audience. But possibly that was after he delivered his poem; or maybe he came down and sat in the audience in order to deliver his poem, since that, as you'll recall was broken into parts and it may be that he himself delivered only one of those parts (that part was in French, perhaps).¹²⁶

Of course, it is impossible to rely on the memories of the audience members after the fact, but there will also be inconsistencies (other than the comic discrepancies listed here) because nobody views the event with the same eyes or from the same position. Happenings are a kind of spectacle, and recognise that audiences do not always have the same view of an event. This was exploited in Cage's 'Theatre Piece No. 1' by having the seats arranged in the centre of the room and the action taking place in more than one area, so even if the memories had agreed that, say, Rauschenberg was on a ladder, they would each have had a slightly different view of it. Therefore, my discussion of 'Bomb Event' must be read in light of these comments on the transient nature of Happenings and the unreliability of memory as an accurate record. This section will discuss this particular Event in order to consider Henri's own interpretation of 'Happenings', and also how performance art provided the Merseybeat movement with another access point for audience engagement.

Henri's Events usually revolved, as already suggested, around music. The Introduction has already mentioned that the idea of pairing local rock or r'n'b music with live poetry was reached, in part, as a reaction to the disjunction perceived in poetry-and-jazz. What the Events added was attention to the physical environment. Nuttall's description of Happenings as 'three-dimensional paintings'¹²⁷ is apt: the addition of a physical space which the audience inhabit added a spatial and temporal dimension to the visual. Indeed, Henri refers to happenings as a 'natural extension'¹²⁸ of the assemblages he had been making. The live readings might incorporate a backdrop or have paintings hung on the wall, but the all-encompassing environment creates a visual experience which moves the work towards 'total art'. At the same time, the Events 'quickly became a popular form of entertainment: a mixture of poetry, rock'n'roll and assemblage'.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ See Duberman, pp. 350-8 on the event, and pp. 352-7 for the individual records.

¹²⁶ Duberman, p. 357.

¹²⁷ Nuttall, p. 127.

¹²⁸ Henri, *Environments*, p. 116-7.

¹²⁹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 117.

The first Event, ‘City’, was part of the 1962 Merseyside Arts Festival: ‘the Event featured various poets, dancers, a backdrop which Adrian painted “live” during the proceedings, and an aural background of taped jazz recordings’.¹³⁰ These elements – visual, spatial, and aural – recurred in future Events. In *Environments and Happenings* Henri specifically mentions the shift from taped music to ‘live music by local “Merseybeat” groups, for instance the Roadrunners and the Clayton Squares’.¹³¹ In both Mike Evans’s and Henri’s recollections, the Events are seen as a step towards The Liverpool Scene, the early Events figured as a starting point for the crucial creative period of the 1960s. McGough (interviewed four decades after the Events themselves) remembers individual pieces from the early Events, performed at the Cavern or Hope Hall, such as ‘Brian sitting somewhere tapping out this performance – him typing a letter, a poem, alone. Often girls were involved, dancing.’¹³² At one such Event ‘the television people came in and saw us’, resulting in a mock-Event deliberately staged and filmed for a BBC programme:

They said, ‘We need to catch the essence of it, we’ve only got three minutes, so just do elements’. It was for one of those six o’clock programmes, ‘What’s the latest? What are the beatniks up to now in Liverpool? Let’s go north.’¹³³

The Event was filmed in a studio in Manchester, a room set up with only a stepladder (possibly a reference to Cage’s ‘Theatre Piece No. 1’):

So you’ve got me on a stepladder reading poems, and Karen Misonovic ... dancing very sexily around. Mike Evans was playing sax and Adrian throwing paint everywhere and that was it, they just filmed that.¹³⁴

Obviously this recording was a set-up, but what McGough remembers of both this and the actual Events – what he calls the ‘real thing’ – was that they were ‘just fun really’:

It would always end up as a party. There was always music, always a band involved ... it was always fun, everybody was involved. There was a bit of theatre type stuff and painting, all these different things.¹³⁵

What is practised in New York as an avant-garde art movement becomes here a ‘party’.

¹³⁰ Mike Evans, Sleeve Notes, *The Amazing Adventures Of... The Liverpool Scene*, prod. by John Peel, Sandy Robertson, and The Liverpool Scene (Esoteric, eclec22138, 2009).

¹³¹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 117.

¹³² Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

¹³³ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

¹³⁴ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

¹³⁵ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

‘Bomb Event’ takes a serious subject – nuclear warfare – and puts this same spin on it. It was performed at the Cavern, on Monday 14th December 1964.¹³⁶ Spencer Leigh includes the Event in his history of the Cavern:

The Cavern was full and ... in darkness. There was an explosion, girls screamed while the lights flickered, and the Clayton Squares broke into Ray Charles’s ‘Danger Zone’. Welcome to Adrian Henri’s Bomb Event.¹³⁷

The pieces which were included in the event vary from those which are specifically about nuclear warfare – McGough reading ‘A little piece of heaven’, the Clayton Squares playing Charles Mingus’s ‘Oh Lord Don’t Let Them Drop that Atomic Bomb on Me’ – and those which are coloured by association – such as the contribution of the Excelles:

who sang ‘Don’t Say Goodnight and Mean Goodbye’, and then went straight into ‘Silent Night’. For four minutes they sang the standard Christmas carol. All the time they were singing, the countdown of a four-minute warning was given over the PA.¹³⁸

At the end of the four-minute warning, the bomb dropped:

The lights went out and there was a tremendous explosion. Girls were screaming again as a false ceiling, made of paper and powder, representing fall-out, collapsed. After the bomb had supposedly been dropped, the event ended with two mutants, dressed in black, wandering round the audience to the accompaniment of very eerie music on the organ.¹³⁹

The article in *Mersey Beat* magazine, from which this description comes, also includes a photograph of the Event, of ‘Poet Adrian Henry [sic]’ being attacked by a monster (fig 5.24). In another account, by Mike Evans, Patten was wrapped in bandages: ‘He looked like the Invisible Man and he was a post-Bomb zombie’.¹⁴⁰ The *Mersey Beat* article refers to Henri ‘taking the mickey out of an actual Civil Defence pamphlet’, and affects an air of amusement over the whole set-up. A major part of the event was Henri’s lecture on Civil Defence. The Archive holdings for ‘Bomb Event’ include a copy of *Civil Defence Handbook No. 10* ‘Advising the Householder on Protection against Nuclear Attack’, with Henri’s notes

¹³⁶ I have chosen to discuss this Event because evidence does exist of what occurred, and also because of the ‘Bomb Commercials’ which came from it and were printed in a number of collections after the Event itself had passed. For other Events, see <http://www.adrianhenri.com/artist-happenings-list.html>, and <http://www.adrianhenri.com/artist-happenings-gallery.html> (the latter shows nine examples from 1962-79, with posters, photos, and information, including the 1979 ‘Funeral of Adrian Henri’ with Rob Con and Lol Coxhill) [accessed 8 May 2013]. ‘The Black and White Show’ is recorded in Leigh (2008), p. 143, and ‘Nightblues’ appears in Willett, p. 183-4. See also Sue Whatmough, *No Copy of the Script* (Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2010), p. 77, for a description of an Event organised by Henri in Southampton.

¹³⁷ Spencer Leigh, *The Cavern: The Most Famous Club In The World* (London: SAF, 2008), p. 141.

¹³⁸ ‘The Night The Bomb Dropped’, *Mersey Beat*, 19 December 1964, p. 10.

¹³⁹ ‘The Night The Bomb Dropped’, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ Mike Evans, cited in Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 141.

for which parts to read out (the running order lists ‘CD Lecture’ parts I and II, Henri/8/2/80). The notes completely reorder the original pamphlet in order to highlight the contradictions and potential problems with the advice, such as the section which the reporter from *Mersey Beat* records: ‘Whitewash your windows and ram the dressing table up against the door. All in four minutes...’.¹⁴¹ In fact, he played around with the pamphlet so much that his performance of this lecture had to be aided by pasting parts of the pamphlet onto other sheets of paper (fig 5.25). This example, which tells us to: ‘Prepare your fall-out room for a stay of at least a week, but remember to leave enough space to move about in’, is immediately followed, in Henri’s lecture, by the long list of ‘basic furniture and equipment’ they recommend, along with the first aid supplies (which on this sheet is handwritten, copied from the back page of the pamphlet). The items on the list include sensible basics but also such instructions as ‘bowls, various, three’ and ‘teaspoons’.

The *Mersey Beat* article also mentions ‘a natural break ... and I mean a natural break, with Bob Wooler and Ray McFall satirising TV commercials such as PAD – Prolongs Active Death!’¹⁴² These commercials are Henri’s ‘Bomb Commercials’, five different pieces satirising contemporary advertisements. The political force of the Event is obvious, and this poem continues this political campaign after that performance, as it is included in both *Tonight at Noon* and the last three editions of *The Mersey Sound*, as well as being performed by Henri many times after ‘Bomb Event’. At the Final Academy reading with William Burroughs – two decades after the original Event – Henri read ‘Bomb Commercials’ with this introduction: ‘This is another golden oldie, you’ll forgive me for doing this... I always think that when the situation that caused me to write this is over, I’ll stop reading it. This is a set of television commercials for the next Great War’.¹⁴³ This performance instance is a solo reading, with Henri putting on a number of different voices to indicate the different characters. In print, the lines are attributed to speakers ‘A’ and ‘B’. For solo readings Henri differentiates between both separate commercials and the characters within them by adopting different accents and voices. For example, he always puts on a high-pitched, working class accent in order to represent the female character speaking in number three:

... so then I said ‘well let’s all go for a picnic and we went and it was all right except for a bit of sand in the butties and then of course the wasps and Michael fell in the river but what I say is you can’t have everything perfect can you so just then there was a big bang and the whole place caught fire ... (TMS2, 36)

¹⁴¹ ‘The Night The Bomb Dropped’, p. 10.

¹⁴² ‘The Night The Bomb Dropped’, p.10.

¹⁴³ Recording of the Final Academy event, 5 October 1982, Centre Hotel, Liverpool [accessed via the British Library Listening Service, T7411, T7413].

The absurdity of the commercials is clear – ‘sand in the butties’ is just as annoying as nuclear war – and even Henri himself breaks off to laugh here:

... I don’t know what happened to my Hubby and its perhaps as well as there were only four pieces of Kit-Kat so we had one each and then we had to walk home ’cos there weren’t any buses ...
(TMS2, 36)

This stream of dialogue – which is delivered in all recorded versions as if all the events were of no great consequence (and with attendant audience laughter) – is followed by a ‘voice-over’ announcing ‘HAVE A BREAK – HAVE A KIT-KAT’ (TMS2, 36).

The commercials are comic for their absurd imaginings of what life would be like after the Bomb: it would be unlikely that we would survive the Bomb and the Fall-out by following the Civil Defence pamphlet’s instructions, and, if we did, that the advertising agencies would be in a position to carry on as normal. That one could ‘Get the taste of the Bomb out of your mouth with OVAL FRUITS’ (TMS2, 36) is a fantastic image, but one must remember that along with the threat of the Bomb which was present at this time, the strategies and formats of commercials would have also been noteworthy: ‘We’re so used to it now, but at the time it was new ... so that got incorporated into these Events as well.’¹⁴⁴ Gorman, interviewed by Leigh, also comments on the use of television commercials, recording them and playing only the sound to audiences:

They just sounded so stupid so people would be laughing. We played them all the way through, and then we played them again 20 minutes later and some people laughed. Then we did it again and nobody laughed.¹⁴⁵

When asked why they had been repeated, Gorman said it was precisely because ‘that’s what happens on television.’¹⁴⁶

The first printed instance of the ‘Bomb Event’ poems, in *Tonight at Noon*, keeps the connection to the Event, being titled ‘Commercials for “Bomb Event”’, but Henri submitted a photocopy of this page to Anthony Richardson when choosing poems for the revised edition of *The Mersey Sound*, renaming them ‘Bomb Commercials’ (fig 5.26), removing that link. However, the poems are still very much meant to be performed. At the Poetry International performance in 1984, Henri introduces the poems as being inspired by ‘this very good, very useful leaflet called “Protecting the household from nuclear attack”’, linking

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

¹⁴⁵ John Gorman, cited in Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁶ John Gorman, cited in Leigh, *The Cavern*, p. 141.

these poems to the original Event's 'CD Lecture'.¹⁴⁷ In this instance, Henri is joined by McGough and Patten which adds an extra dimension to the performance: for example, it is Henri who tells the audience of 'General Howard J. Sherman', who has a 'BIG job with BIG responsibilities', the man who presses the button, deciding between life and death, but the full effect is felt only when McGough immediately delivers this advertisement's punchline: 'But he can't tell Stork from butter' (*TMS2*, 36). This performance also includes an extra advert, which is not in any printed version, for 'apocolipstick', a new 'holocosmetic', because, after all, as McGough's advertisement voice-over tells us: 'when he takes you in his arms for that final, four-minute kiss, you need an extra special lipstick'.¹⁴⁸ There also exists a copy marked up for performance where *four* different performers are named, despite the fact that the typed copy is subtitled 'for two voices' – this would suggest that when these extra performers are available, they are used in order to make the commercials more realistic, in the sense that they are more representative of the many different voices one hears on actual television and radio commercials (see fig 5.27). And, similarly, the 1984 *Liverpool Poets* show in Basildon (which has already been mentioned in Chapter Four) also includes 'Bomb Commercials' with sound effects in order to heighten their status as commercials.¹⁴⁹ The poems are inspired by, and reference, common marketing slogans of the period. Adverts mask the reality of the threat of nuclear destruction, as if life would go on the same post-fall-out, and the irony comes from the fact that both the audience and the performers know this not to be the case.

Henri's *Environments and Happenings* – described by Lucie-Smith as an 'authoritative book'¹⁵⁰ – gives us an insight into his own attitudes to the movement and its antecedents. The Cabaret Voltaire required a 'new style of performance' with the kinds of activities mentioned in the previous section, which are specifically described by Henri as 'communal activities'.¹⁵¹ The Surrealists are, for him, 'perhaps the most obvious forerunners of many of the most recent kinds of art-activities', because 'the street was the focus of many of their activities'.¹⁵² Henri tells the reader that his reason for including 'this very selective history of the modern movement' is because:

¹⁴⁷ Various Artists, *Poets Punks Beatniks and CounterCulture Heroes*, prod. by Chris Hewitt (Ozite Morpheus Records, OZITDVD11, 2010).

¹⁴⁸ *Poets Punks Beatniks* DVD.

¹⁴⁹ The Archive also holds a marked up copy which includes the notes 'commercial TV sting' at the beginning and end of the poems, (Patten/5/4).

¹⁵⁰ Lucie-Smith, *Art Today*, p. 400.

¹⁵¹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 17.

¹⁵² Henri, *Environments*, p. 22.

I feel that the works that make up the rest of this book stem from a tradition of ‘total art’. That this tradition is seldom made clear in histories of modern art makes this recapitulation all the more necessary.¹⁵³

This is therefore the attitude with which he approaches his own ‘total art’ manifestations. This thesis has discussed a number of performance instances, and ways in which the Merseybeat movement used the live event, but what this publication makes clear is how much Henri valued ‘total art’ and also his interpretation of it. It is ‘the street’ where the Surrealists activities take place, and the Cabaret Voltaire is likewise about ‘communal activities’. Henri’s Events are similarly intentionally public and participatory. Kaprow’s influence is clear as a catalyst, but there are also other considerations. The activities and Events at Hope Hall were ‘another world’ to Mike McCartney: it was a space where ‘all things were possible’, but he also remembers there being some distinction between their activities there and that of the rock’n’roll groups, and says, of the decision to stage ‘Bomb Event’ at the Cavern that ‘they weren’t expecting it... but we got away with it’.¹⁵⁴ Evans also remembers this Event as ‘more “stagey” than previous ones, with less overall audience participation – until the end when the false ceiling collapsed!’¹⁵⁵ This Event is not a ‘pure Happening’, but then very few of Henri’s Events were. The very fact that so much evidence remains for it is indicative of its special status, blurring the lines between a Happening and a traditional theatre piece. Henri’s Events are an evolution of, and a companion thread to, the live readings which are the main thrust of the Merseybeat movement. I have previously used the term ‘poetry plus’ to describe the nights at O’Connor’s, and I see the Events as being just another performance instance in which ideas can be explored and, more importantly, the audience can be engaged.

CONCLUSION

Speaking of his poetry, Henri said that he uses ‘words which carry with them associations with other contexts, to evoke overtones from other people’s work.’¹⁵⁶ This is equally true of his visual art. Collage work draws attention to the individual elements which have gone into the creation of the whole, and Henri’s practice often revolves round this: there is the creation of a community, drawing in a diverse range of heroes and friends; there are the references to the urban environment and its advertisements and objects; and there are the various influences, inspirations, and sources upon which he draws – Futurist performances inspire Dada, Dada and Surrealism inspire Happenings, Cubism and Schwitters inspire both

¹⁵³ Henri, *Environments*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Mike McCartney, May 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Mike Evans, June 2013.

¹⁵⁶ Adrian Henri, cited in Davies, *Conversations*, p. 5.

Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, and, alongside these avant-garde practices there is Music Hall, Variety, and the modern urban everyday. Henri's painter's aesthetic is, therefore, made up of a combination of different visual art practices, which have also affected the other spheres of art in which he is active.

Paul Wood's introduction to *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde* specifically lists both positive and negative connotations for the term 'avant-garde' as 'a kind of evaluation is implicit': it is 'forging ahead, breaking down barriers' but is also associated with 'difficulty and incomprehensibility'.¹⁵⁷ The Merseybeat movement takes those avant-garde influences and re-frames them within the British populist tradition, mediating the audience's exposure to these potentially 'difficult' ideas – it is hard to imagine Allan Kaprow giggling behind the curtain as Mike McCartney told me he did at one Event, enjoying the audience's perplexity at what this Event entailed.¹⁵⁸ This irreverence is important. The referents of all three of the Merseybeat poets are plural and inclusive. The poetry is clearly connected, as the previous chapters of this thesis have shown, to Liverpool and the spaces in which they lived, but the visual element of this movement is present in more than just the awareness of their physical environment. There is also an awareness of how the poetry can be presented visually, both on and off the page, in order to create an engaging experience for the audience. Visual elements and page space can carry meaning and value additional to the experience of the words as verbal entities – this is work which is not just available in performance, but also to be read after, instead, or as well as, the fact. One of the elements at work in the performance of poetry is clearly the audience's visual experience, and this chapter has sought to expand on Chapter Four's discussion of the break away from traditional readings in order to demonstrate this movement's concerns with the live event. A performance of a text can exist both out loud and on the page, and the Merseybeat movement uses both page space and literal space in order to engage their audience and create a totalising experience – poetry as 'total art'.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Wood, ed., *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Mike McCartney, May 2013. McCartney claimed that the organisers of the Event left the audience in a darkened room whilst they 'went to the bar for a pint – they were still there waiting when we got back'.

CONCLUSION

1967 was, as Adrian Henri says, ‘the year that changed my life’,¹ with various publications, the attendant media attention, and exposure to a wider national audience. Yet, significantly, he continues: ‘it wasn’t the beginning, but a culmination of something for my generation in Liverpool.’² As I have argued throughout this thesis, the movement was a site-specific confluence of the alternative avant-garde and the British populist tradition of art, and the important events (Events) and moments I have discussed were almost all contained within this decade in this city, or found their first explorations and expressions here.

I have alluded to the ‘Beatlemania’ of the late 1960s, and certainly the Mersey Beat music scene attracted much media attention from outside, but the Merseybeat poetry scene, active from the beginning of the decade, thrived on its local – loco-specific – expression. As Edward Lucie-Smith wrote in his introduction to *The Liverpool Scene*: ‘the poetry now being written in Liverpool differs from other contemporary English verse because it has made its impact by being spoken and listened to, rather than by being read’.³ Lucie-Smith makes much of the ‘enthusiastic local audience’,⁴ who accept both poetry and beat music: ‘no distinction is made between the two forms. Indeed, the audience is hardly conscious that there *is* a distinction: the poetry and the music are judged by precisely the same criteria.’⁵

In his *Art in a City* report, published in 1967, John Willett stated that Liverpool ‘not only contains perhaps the best municipal art gallery in England but has long harboured an active body of professional artists’.⁶ As Chapter One of this thesis showed, the life of the city is bound up with the port. Many of Liverpool’s music scenes come from immigrants creating social spaces for themselves – and the atmosphere in the 1960s can be seen as a continuation of this spirit. At the same time, ‘what was special’ about the 1960s, for Henri, was ‘the feeling that anything was possible’,⁷ a feeling created for this generation, in part, because of the changes in British culture after the Second World War, and a growing freedom which the counter-culture (represented by, for example, the Beats in America, or Michael Horowitz’s *Children of Albion* in Britain) seized as an opportunity – although this idea is also gently mocked by Roger McGough in his poem ‘Decade’, published in his autobiography:

¹ Archive clipping, Henri/1/4/12/33, Adrian Henri, ‘Our flowers died’, n.d.

² Archive clipping, Henri/1/4/12/33, Adrian Henri, ‘Our flowers died’, n.d.

³ Edward Lucie-Smith, in *TLS*, p. 3.

⁴ Edward Lucie-Smith, in *TLS*, p. 5.

⁵ Edward Lucie-Smith, in *TLS*, p. 7.

⁶ John Willett, *Art in a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁷ Archive clipping, Henri/1/4/12/33, Adrian Henri, ‘Our flowers died’, n.d.

We never wore kaftans or put flowers in our hair
Never made the hippy trail to San Francisco
Our Love-Ins were a blushing, tame affair
Friday evenings at the local church-hall disco
Heard it on the grapevine about Carnaby Street
Looked for Lucy in the sky, danced to the Mersey Beat
There were protests on the street and footprints on the moon
Times they were a changin', but the changin' came too soon

Those were the days my friend, there was something in the air
Though we never wore kaftans or put flowers in our hair.⁸

So why did this movement emerge in Liverpool, and why then? In the same article in which he claimed that 1967 changed his life, Henri also answered this question:

How did it all happen? Liverpool was, and is, a place where everyone knows everyone, goes to the same pubs, clubs, cafés. It came as naturally to put words to music by the bands we listened to, as for a painter like me not only to write poems but stand up and read them in bars to an audience of fellow Scousers.⁹

This article encapsulates much of what this thesis has aimed to demonstrate. The traditional boundaries between artforms and cultural hierarchies are not upheld by these poets. Instead, we have instances of poetry parodying the actions of TV characters, references to all kinds of music in poems which then become songs themselves, and avant-garde art movements repackaged and utilised for their entertainment value. These poets are clearly informed by a wide range of registers and planes of culture and the variety of media through which these are disseminated. The Merseybeat poets take their inspiration from diverse sources and represent it to their audiences, crossing media, styles, and artforms in order to both entertain and engage.

In *Environments & Happenings*, Henri refers to both performance art and 'the new poetry movement' as coming 'from a provincial rather than a London context',¹⁰ and telling his readers that 'both "Pop" poetry and "concrete" poetry in England are almost exclusively non-metropolitan in origin'.¹¹ Lucie-Smith also noted this in *The Liverpool Scene*:

The relationship between metropolitan and provincial culture is, in fact, one of the basic themes of this book. Poets in Liverpool, like provincial writers and artists everywhere in England, seem to hover between two contradictory sets of attitudes. London inspires fear and resentment – a fear of being brushed aside, a resentment of slights either real or imagined. It also arouses mockery for its inhibitions and its

⁸ Roger McGough, *Said and Done: the autobiography* (London: Random House, 2005), p. 191-2.

⁹ Archive clipping, Henri/1/4/12/33, Adrian Henri, 'Our flowers died', n.d.

¹⁰ Adrian Henri, *Environments and Happenings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 111.

¹¹ Henri, *Environments*, p. 112.

pretentiousness. Liverpool poets feel a real sympathy for their environment, but an even greater loyalty.¹²

When interviewed for *The Liverpool Scene*, the poets reveal a pride in being from Liverpool, but it is not so much specific to Liverpool as specific to their lives, their own experiences, and a specific version of Liverpool city life – summed up in the shorthand of ‘Liverpool 8’. For example, McGough articulates both the loyalty to which Lucie-Smith refers, but also the poets’ involvement in ordinary urban life:

In Liverpool you’re a poet one minute, but the next minute you’re talking about football, or you’re buying bus tickets, or someone’s kicking your head in down at The Blue Angel. It’s all part of living. If you have an experience you go home and write the poem about that experience, then you go out and get drunk, or you meet friends and things.¹³

In *Contemporary British poetry and the city*, Peter Barry notes that poetry about cities, and particularly inner cities, tends towards the negative, mirroring recent trends of urban decay and images of inner-city deprivation.¹⁴ Yet even faced with slum clearance, riots, and the general decline in the period after the Second World War, poetry about Liverpool by these poets – and especially by Henri, who lived there all his adult life – is generally positive. And the poetry is not only focused on the urban, but the urban everyday, on people and experiences, both personal and public. Indeed, Arthur Adlen (a near contemporary of the Merseybeat poets, already cited in the Introduction and Chapter One of this thesis) told me that the poets which they read at school, such as Dylan Thomas or Wilfred Owen, ‘were great poetry but not part of my own life experience’, and that ‘having our own poets encouraged us’.¹⁵ For him, in the 1960s, in pubs and clubs, with Henri, McGough, Brian Patten and the rest of the scene:

poetry was about real life. Poetry in Liverpool to me was about real life but expressed beautifully. There was no problem saying you were going to poetry nights, it was all mixed up – you’d be at a poetry night on a Wednesday and at the football on Saturday.¹⁶

By focusing on the work of these poets specifically in Liverpool, in the 1960s, this thesis has shown that the Merseybeat movement was born out of and relied upon a culture of live readings as entertainment, where the dissemination of the work depended on public and multiple showings. As a result, the ‘pop poetry’ label is reinterpreted and reclaimed: first, because the movement is bound up in a crossmedial context, reliant on more than the words

¹² Edward Lucie-Smith, in *TLS*, p. 6.

¹³ Roger McGough, cited in *TLS*, p. 14.

¹⁴ See Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 8-11, and Chapter Two, ‘The roads to hell’, pp. 23-44.

¹⁵ Interview with Arthur Adlen, March 2013.

¹⁶ Interview with Arthur Adlen, March 2013.

on the page, and therefore cannot be evaluated on only the print output; and second, because to be ‘populist’ or ‘popular’ is, for these poets, to be successful, indicating that their communication mode (common cultural referencing, direct contact with the audience) has reached the people that it was intended for.

The culture of democratic literature and live events which these poets promoted has continued – the Blackie (the Great George’s Project) and the Windows Project are just two examples of movements inspired by what was happening in the 1960s, not to mention the 1980s identification with ‘Toxteth’ by black writers such as Levi Tafari.¹⁷ And, of course, Henri, McGough, and Patten continued their work – as Barry concludes in his discussion of poetry in Liverpool, the three poets are ‘major writers and performers still, and their work has, of course, not remained fossilised in the long-ago moment of 1965 when Liverpool was the centre of the human consciousness’.¹⁸ All three went on to write poetry for both adults and children, plays, and other literary works. Whilst these three poets went their separate ways after the end of the decade, they would also continue to work together in other ways as well as uniting for tours such as *Words on the Run*, *Liverpool Poets*, and the 30th anniversary tour.

In his autobiography, McGough states that ‘neither Brian, Adrian, nor I liked the original Penguin Mersey Sound cover’, because the ‘black-and-white photographs of a teenage girl screaming orgasmically and Yellow Submarine-type typography’ was ‘too close to the pop music scene’.¹⁹ This justification of the rejection of the ‘pop’ look is legitimate – the typography and image clearly aimed to evoke the Beatles – but the Penguin Art Department were looking for a national angle, and it was in part because of ‘Beatlemania’ that attention had focused on Liverpool in the first place.²⁰ Each of the subsequent three editions of *The Mersey Sound* retain some link to either the ‘Mersey’ or ‘Sound’ aspects – the second is a close-up of a guitar, the third uses a photograph of the three poets next to the Mersey, and the fourth uses an illustration of, one assumes, a Mersey ferry. It is interesting that the first two are linked to the contemporaneous ‘Sound’, whereas the latter two rebrand the book

¹⁷ See, for example, Dave Ward, ‘The Windows Project’, in *Gladsongs and Gatherings: poetry and its social context in Liverpool since the 1960s*, ed. by Stephen Wade (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 150-4. See also David Bateman, ‘Open Floor! Live Poetry Nights in Liverpool, 1967-2001’, in Wade, *Gladsongs*, pp. 111-137. The timing of this article is significant, choosing 1967 as the cut-off point for discussing ‘post-Merseybeat’ events, showing again that the focus must be not only on this decade but also the early part (before national acclaim, before Patten moved away, when they were all three present and performing regularly to local audiences).

¹⁸ Barry, p. 163.

¹⁹ McGough, *Said*, p. 222.

²⁰ This is also true of the Beatles dedication of *The Liverpool Scene*, considered at the end of Chapter Two.

with a focus on the ‘Mersey’. Whilst this thesis has referred to these three poets as constituting a movement, I would argue that this makes sense only in the context of live performance and collaboration in the 1960s in Liverpool. It is the attempt to keep the ‘Liverpool Poets’ label post-Liverpool, post-1960s, that McGough and Patten react against. In an interview with me in 2012, McGough said that the publications and national attention happened ‘after it had all been happening – 1967 was the end’,²¹ echoing the words of Henri cited above. A review from the early 1970s entitled ‘The Mersey Echo’ refers to ‘a new generation of poets and readers, who, having climbed over the bodies of Ubu, Batman and the American Beats, realised that they were being spoken to in a dialect that was their own, and on subjects that involved them.’²² It is ‘being spoken to’ which is important here, both in terms of the audience connection which these poets sought but also in relation to my emphasis on live events in the 1960s: ‘If you want to communicate with twenty people, go ahead and do it that way. I want to communicate with two million.’²³

In the Introduction, I stated that this thesis was an attempt to achieve a ‘thick description’ of the Merseybeat movement as both a literary and cultural phenomenon.²⁴ Clifford Geertz states that what most prevents us ‘grasping what people are up to’ is not ignorance, but rather ‘a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs.’²⁵ Therefore, this project has undertaken much archival research and interviews with those involved in the movement in order to recreate the imaginative universe of ‘Liverpool 8’ in the 1960s. ‘The Entry of Christ into Liverpool’ can be used as an exemplar, as it encapsulates the main themes this thesis has sought to bring to light. First, because of its connection to multiple planes (both common cultural referencing and the appropriation and accumulation of other people and works into one’s aesthetic); second, because it is an example of the ‘total art’ and crossmedial elements of the movement (being a poem, a posterpoem, a performance piece, and a painting); and third for its focus on loco-specificity (both in the content of the poem and painting and the context of readings and performances).

As well as the music, visual art, performance, and audience interaction which make up this movement, the poetry does not rely on reading out loud something which is fixed in print, but rather involves reassessing the text to create a new interpretative site in direct relation to

²¹ Interview with Roger McGough, November 2012.

²² Archive clipping, Henri K/7, Hayden Murphy, ‘The Mersey Echo’, *Hibernia*, 17 December 1971.

²³ Mike Davies, *Conversations* (Birmingham: Flat Earth Press, 1975), p. 6-7.

²⁴ ‘The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics.’ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 2nd. edn. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 28.

²⁵ Geertz, p. 13.

the atmosphere of a particular event. What this means for the Merseybeat movement is that the place and space of reading are of equal importance to the text itself: loco-specifics can be used to ground a poem in a particular time and place, but also the reading of the poem brings it in dialogue with a particular place and atmosphere. The reception of the live event is also significant: 'It's not surprising that people would say "I was there" in the way that they would about a gig. It's not so much about the performance itself, as about the reception. People remember that energy.'²⁶ Charles Bernstein refers to the printed page as 'textual performances',²⁷ recognizing that it is possible to have multiple versions of a printed poem. To interpret a work in Merseybeat poetry we can look at a network of instances – including print, oral, and performance expressions – which together create the poem. It is the content in conjunction with the context which makes each reading specific and special, and no one artistic expression could be said to be the primary mode, as each new site presents the reader or listener with a different experience.

This thesis began by listing some of the various labels attached to Henri in order to demonstrate the diversity of outlets of the Merseybeat movement. However, whilst throughout this thesis the idea of the 'Merseybeat poets' has been joined by their manifestations as musicians, artists, and entertainers, what has come to light is that none of these labels are quite enough. In fact, Henri's own 1968 label of 'painter/poet' (*TAN*, 77) makes the two roles simultaneous and does not give higher status to either one. As Catherine Marcangeli said of Henri, in response to that question of labels:

People ask, 'Was he mostly a poet or mostly a painter, which one first?' He felt that it didn't matter and you just need to be creative and do stuff. That's why he was interested in a lot of different forms of art, because they were forms of the same thing. The form that that took didn't really matter, he just did it.²⁸

The Merseybeat movement created poetry both about and for a community, using the live event as a way of communicating and engaging with that audience, disseminating their works through a variety of media and artforms. Merseybeat is, as the title of this thesis states, about performance, poetry, and public.

²⁶ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, April 2013.

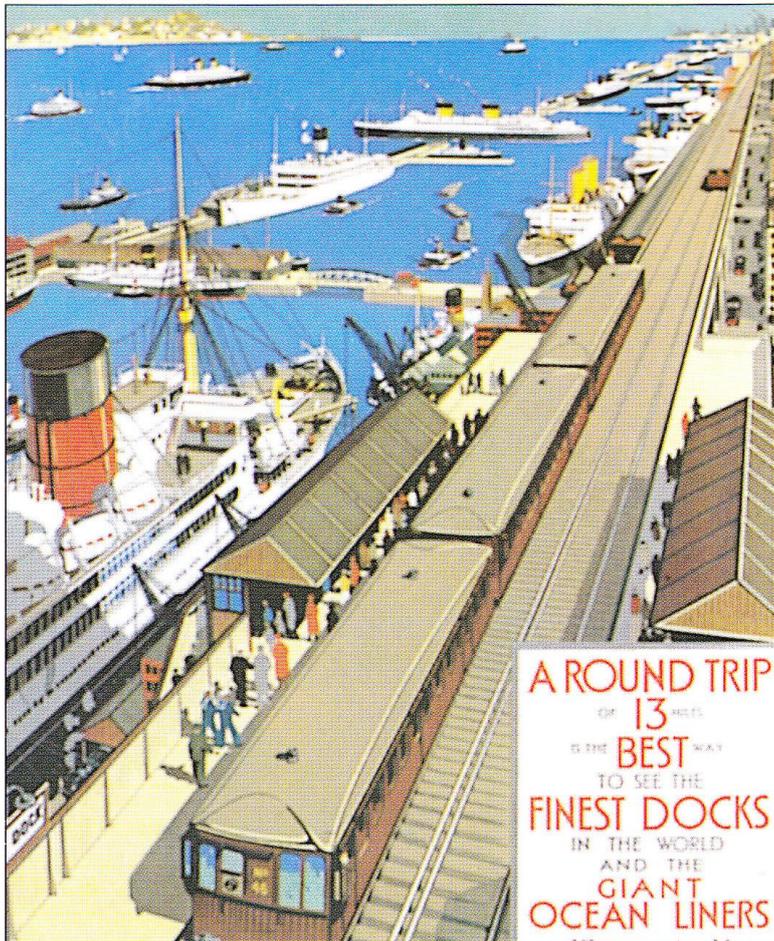
²⁷ Charles Bernstein, 'Introduction', in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, ed. by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-26, p. 8.

²⁸ Interview with Catherine Marcangeli, April 2013.

APPENDIX

CHAPTER ONE FIGURES

Figure 1.1
Liverpool Overhead Railway poster:



From *Both Sides of the River: Merseyside in Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Gladys Mary Coles (West Kirby: Headland, 1993), plate 12.

Figure 1.2
Frequently used descriptors from both fiction and non-fiction accounts of Liverpool's docklands and city:

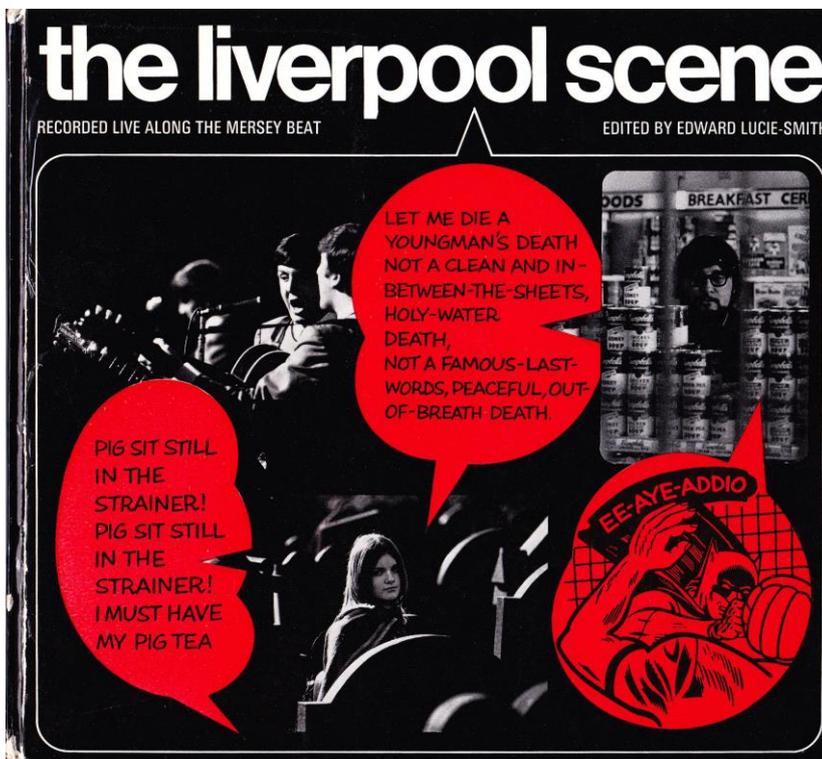
	Industry		Size	
Pre-1800			'Such immense docks', Johanna Schopenhauer, <i>A Lady Travels, Journeys in Scotland and England</i> (trans. 2007, from 1787), <i>MM1</i> , pp. 65	
1800	'it [the pier] was thronged with people', Washington Irving, <i>The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon</i> (1820), <i>MM1</i> , pp. 22	'commercial bustle ', 'noisy, bustling scene', J. G. Kohl, <i>Ireland, Scotland and England</i> (1844), <i>BS</i> , pp. 64 and <i>MM5</i> , pp. 57	'dock after dock, like a chain of immense fortresses', Herman Melville, <i>Redburn</i> (1849), pp. 230	' vast commerce', Rev. Francis Kilvert, <i>Kilvert's Diary</i> (1944, of 20 June 1872), <i>BS</i> , pp. 96
	'nothing can exceed the bustle and activity', Herman Melville, <i>Redburn</i> (1849), pp. 233	'perpetual bustle ', Zangara, <i>Slavery Illustrated In the Histories of Zangara and Maquama</i> (1849), <i>MM5</i> , pp. 90	'the immense buildings', Zangara, <i>Slavery Illustrated In the Histories of Zangara and Maquama</i> (1849), <i>MM5</i> , pp. 90	'the shops and warehouses are on a vast scale; the streets are vast ', Hyppolite Taine, <i>Notes on England</i> (1874), <i>MM2</i> , pp. 60
	'the streets are lined with handsome buildings and thronged with people', John Wellborn Root, <i>His Life and Work</i> (1896), <i>MM1</i> , pp. 54	'All is bustle , animation, exultation', Harriet Beecher Stowe, <i>Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands</i> (1854), <i>MM1</i> , pp. 10	'docks, quays and immense warehouses', Rev. Francis Kilvert, <i>Kilvert's Diary</i> (1944, of 20 June 1872), <i>BS</i> , pp. 96	'I admired its public buildings, its vast docks, its stately shipping', Richard Acland Armstrong, <i>The Deadly Shame of Liverpool</i> (1890), <i>MM1</i> , pp. 13
		'picture of the bustle of a port' Julius Rodenburg, <i>An Autumn in Wales</i> (1856), <i>BS</i> , pp. 85	' immense multitude of ships', Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>English Notebooks</i> (1883), pp. 13	
		'the very busiest bustle of commerce', Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>English Notebooks</i> (1883), p. 14		
		' bustling pushing vulgar men', Rev. Francis Kilvert, <i>Kilvert's Diary</i> (1944, of 20 June 1872), <i>BS</i> , pp. 97		
	1900		'life and bustle ', Hugh Walpole, <i>The Crystal Box</i> , (1924), <i>BS</i> , pp. 130	' immense reinforced-concrete struts' of Met Cathedral, Grevel Lindop, <i>LA</i> (1996, of c.1960), pp. 61
		'a bustling maritime city', Grevel Lindop, <i>LA</i> (1996, of c.1955), pp. 62	'stale grandeur of those immense pools' of Docks, Grevel Lindop, <i>LA</i> (1996, of c.1960), pp. 62	'The impression of vastness , strength and height no words can describe', of Anglican Cathedral, John Betjeman, <i>Today's Cathedral</i> (1978), <i>MM4</i> , pp. 63
			'Everything was immense : the warehouses, the harbour board, the shipping lines, the insurance firms, our two cathedrals', Linda Grant, <i>Still Here</i> (2004), pp. 1	

Figure 1.3
Photograph of Adrian Henri and Roger McGough, outside a shop using Batman for advertising:



From *The Liverpool Scene*, ed. by Edward Lucie-Smith (London: Rapp & Carroll, 1967), p. 24 [detail].

Figure 1.4
Front cover of *The Liverpool Scene*, with Pop and superhero imagery:



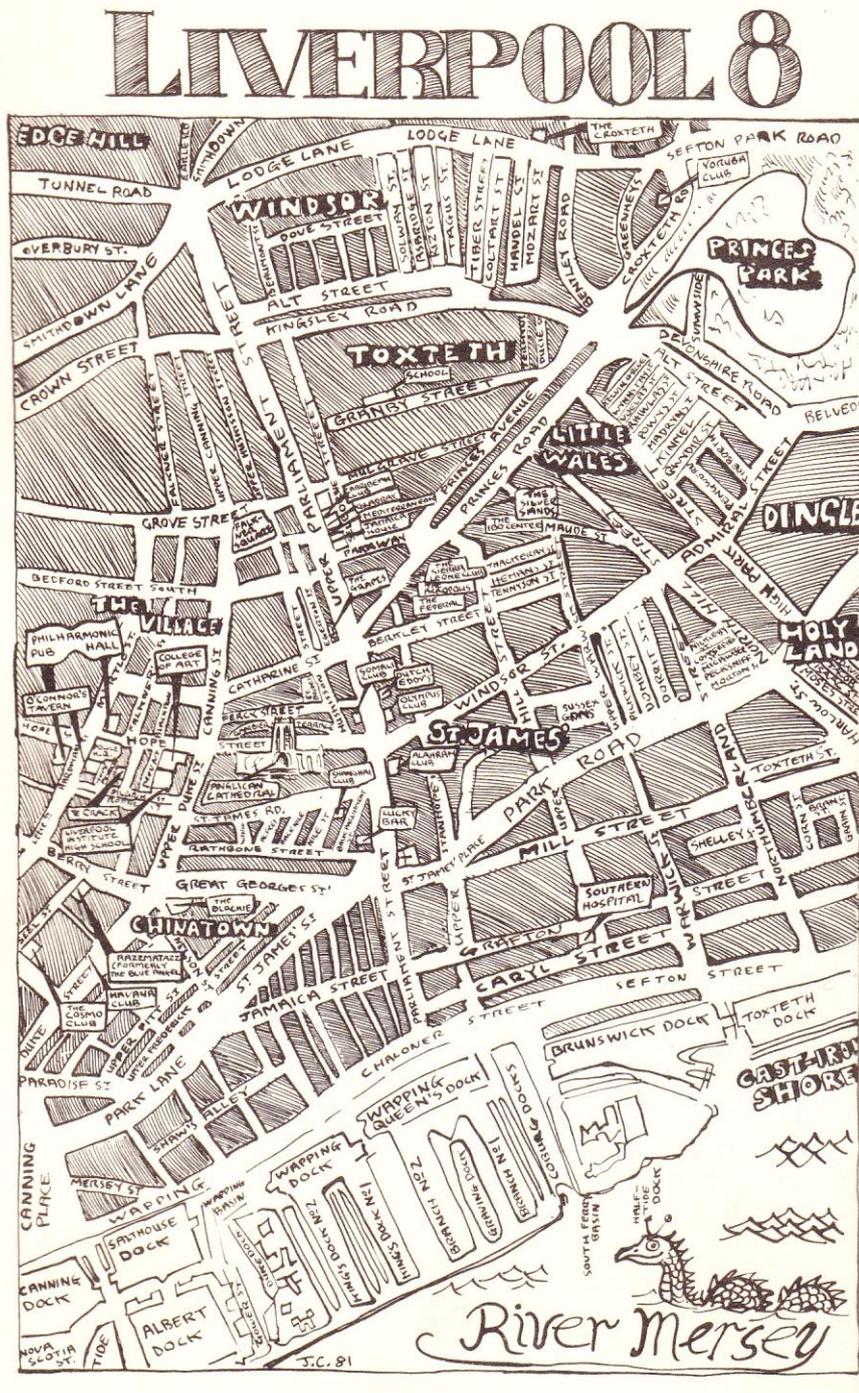
From *The Liverpool Scene*, ed. by Edward Lucie-Smith (London: Rapp & Carroll, 1967).

Figure 1.5
Detail of the 1965 *Geographia* map of Liverpool, with postcode boundaries marked in red:



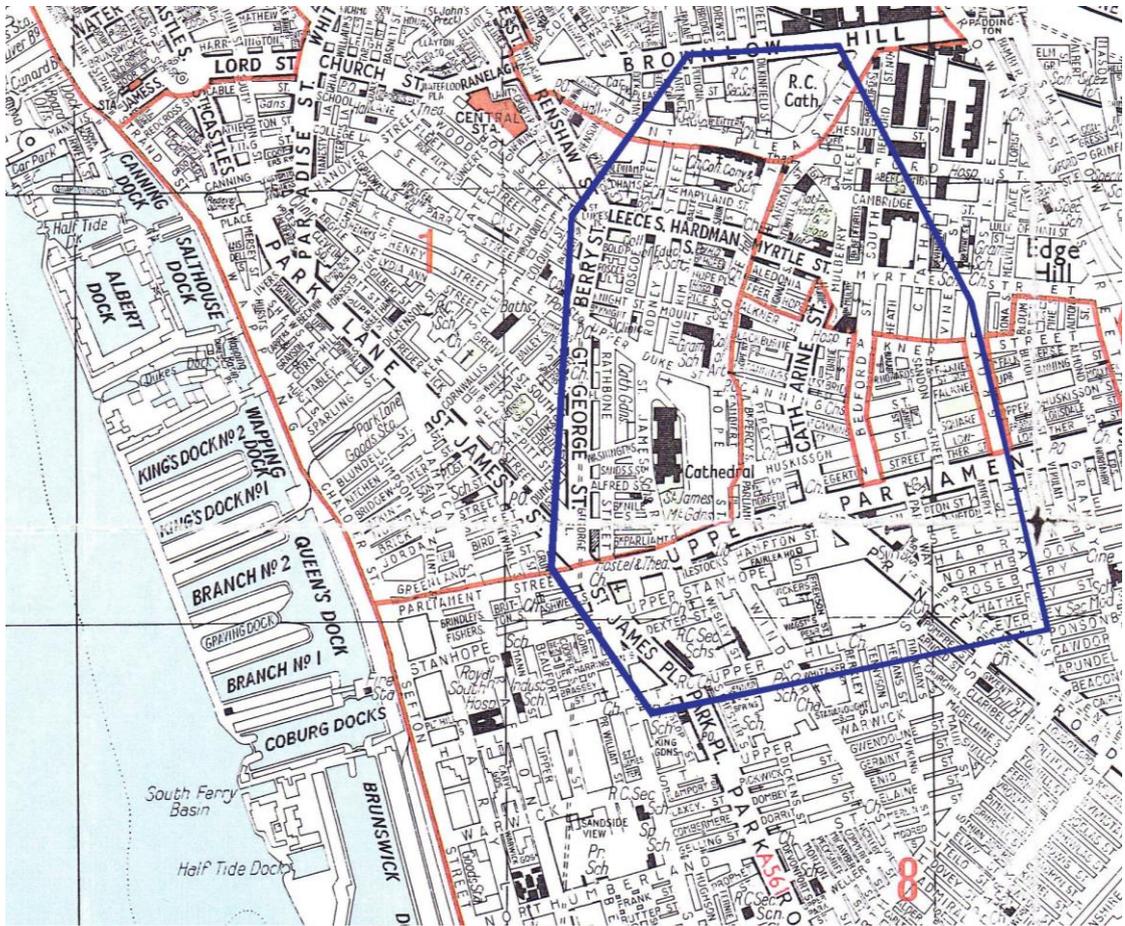
From Liverpool Records Office (V Hq 912 1965), 1965 *Geographia* 'City of Liverpool Large Scale Detailed Street Plan', this section corresponds to Ordnance Survey reference 1:10,000 SJ 38 N.

Figure 1.6
Map of Liverpool 8 by John Cornelius:



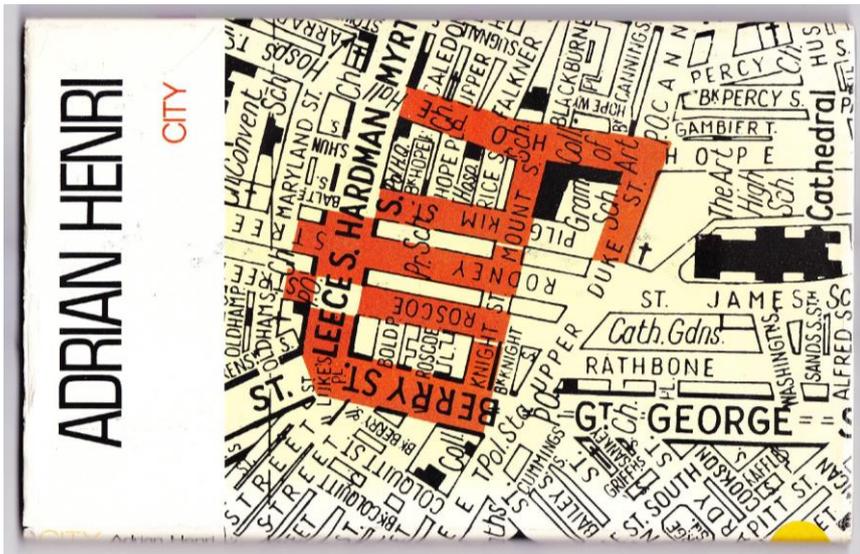
From John Cornelius, *Liverpool 8* (London: John Murray, 1982), inside front cover.

Figure 1.7
 Detail of the 1965 *Geographia* map of Liverpool, overlaid with blue markings to show the area which the poets refer to as ‘Liverpool 8’ (information from poems and other sources), clearly outside the actual postcode boundary (lines in red):



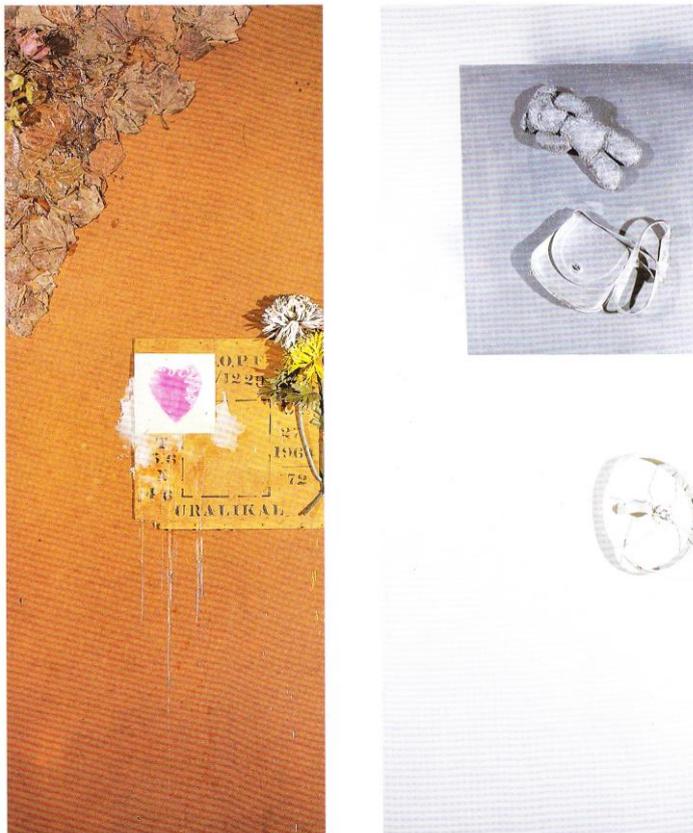
From Liverpool Records Office (V Hq 912 1965), 1965 *Geographia* ‘City of Liverpool Large Scale Detailed Street Plan’, this section corresponds to Ordnance Survey reference 1:10,000 SJ 38 N. Marked area addition by author.

Figure 1.8
City dust jacket, designed by Lawrence Edwards with Adrian Henri:



From Adrian Henri, *City*, (Rapp & Whiting, 1969).

Figure 1.9
Autumn and Winter from Adrian Henri's *Liverpool 8 Four Seasons Painting* (1964):

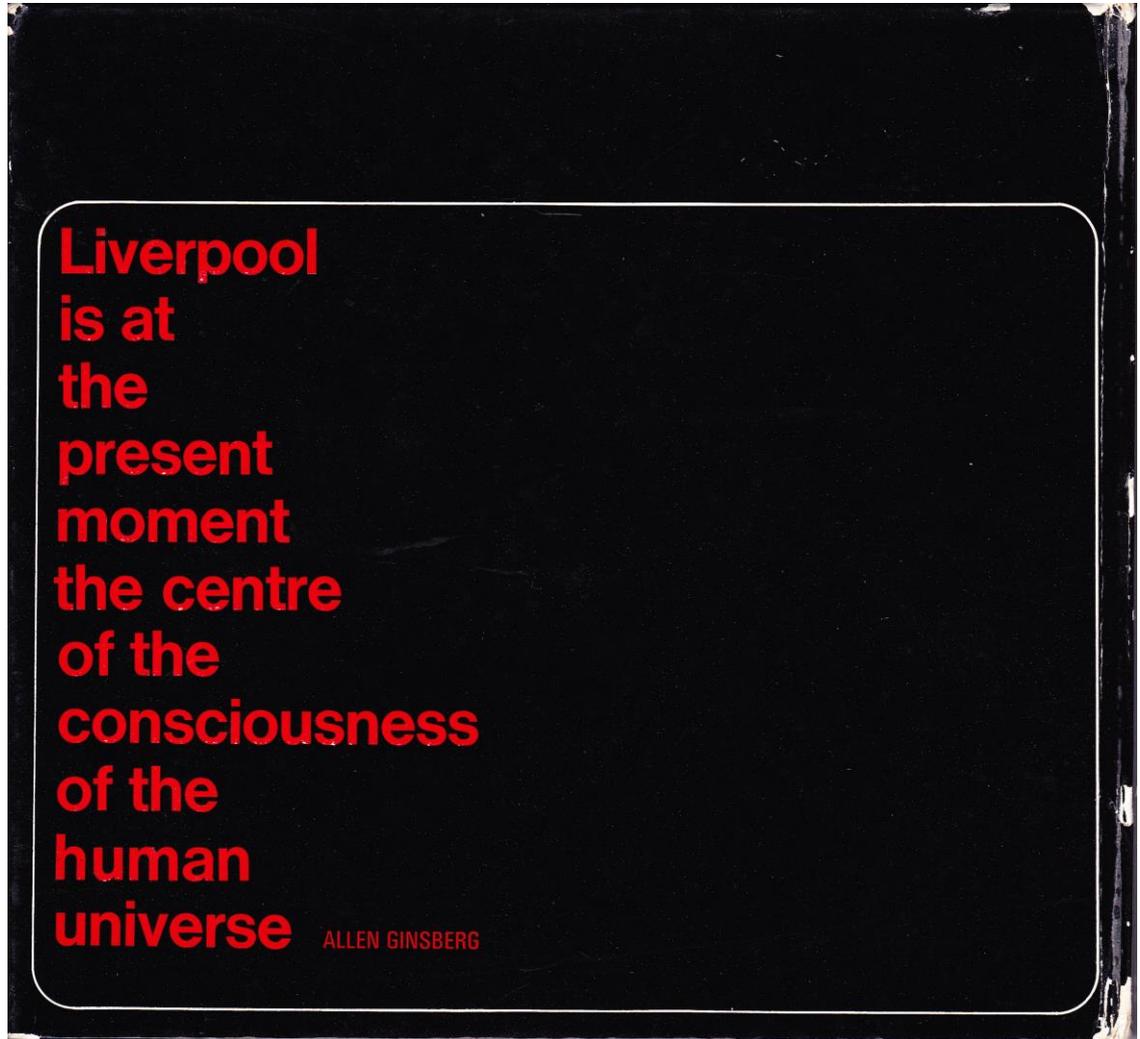


From *Adrian Henri Selected and Unpublished Poems 1965-2000*, ed. by Catherine Marcangeli (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 89 [detail].

CHAPTER TWO FIGURES

Figure 2.1

Back cover of *The Liverpool Scene*, with Allen Ginsberg's famous Liverpool quotation :



From *The Liverpool Scene*, ed. by Edward Lucie-Smith (London: Rapp & Carroll, 1969).

Figure 2.2
 Left-hand page of notebook, headed 'Ginsberg Interview'; Adrian Henri's list of questions for a potential interview with Ginsberg:

Ginsberg Interview

1. Symbols to 2 generations. Also want (dis)structuralist approach post-sec. Lit. Significance realized by governments. e.g. Czechoslovakia etc. How does this affect him?
2. 'Liverpool' quote. Ask to explain abt. beat - has he changed his ideas?
3. Poetics - beat as measure etc.
4. Line forms devices to certain extent.
5. Influence (French).
6. England - Chamberlain - social protest - means as well Pop art.
7. Travel - how necessary?

7. In England

initially - but for the culture
 a little more honest & frank. It
 was all marked "yusef lateef."

Beats's signs
 Eric Dolphy's address
~~the~~ 'Early Beat'
 happy or 'clandestine' like
 King."

my next 50 poems
 a copy of the book
 experiment in structure etc.
 should have you could be
 how to play them
 what you
 what

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C 1/7 [double page spread].

Figure 2.3
 Right-hand page of notebook, headed 'Alan: Quotes'; quotations from Ginsberg collected by Henri and other notes on Ginsberg relating to a potential interview

(Sp Plans)

1. Tyger Tyger ^{premier} Sully Forge

2. The Love Song

3. Sonnet
 mind
 taking no comic
 element

to Downman
 in his love a Pythian
 great Christ steps
 when ~~glorious~~ ^{amr}

prophecy
 walls slumped as you enter
 her

sturdy & to capture

When the more of music changes to,
 Alan: Quotes ^{walls of poetry} shake it

"... entered a state of altered
 perception, which ~~was~~ ^{was}
 deepened fully."

"re-enters ^{the} consciousness of the
 human universe."

"Let the mind supply the
 language"

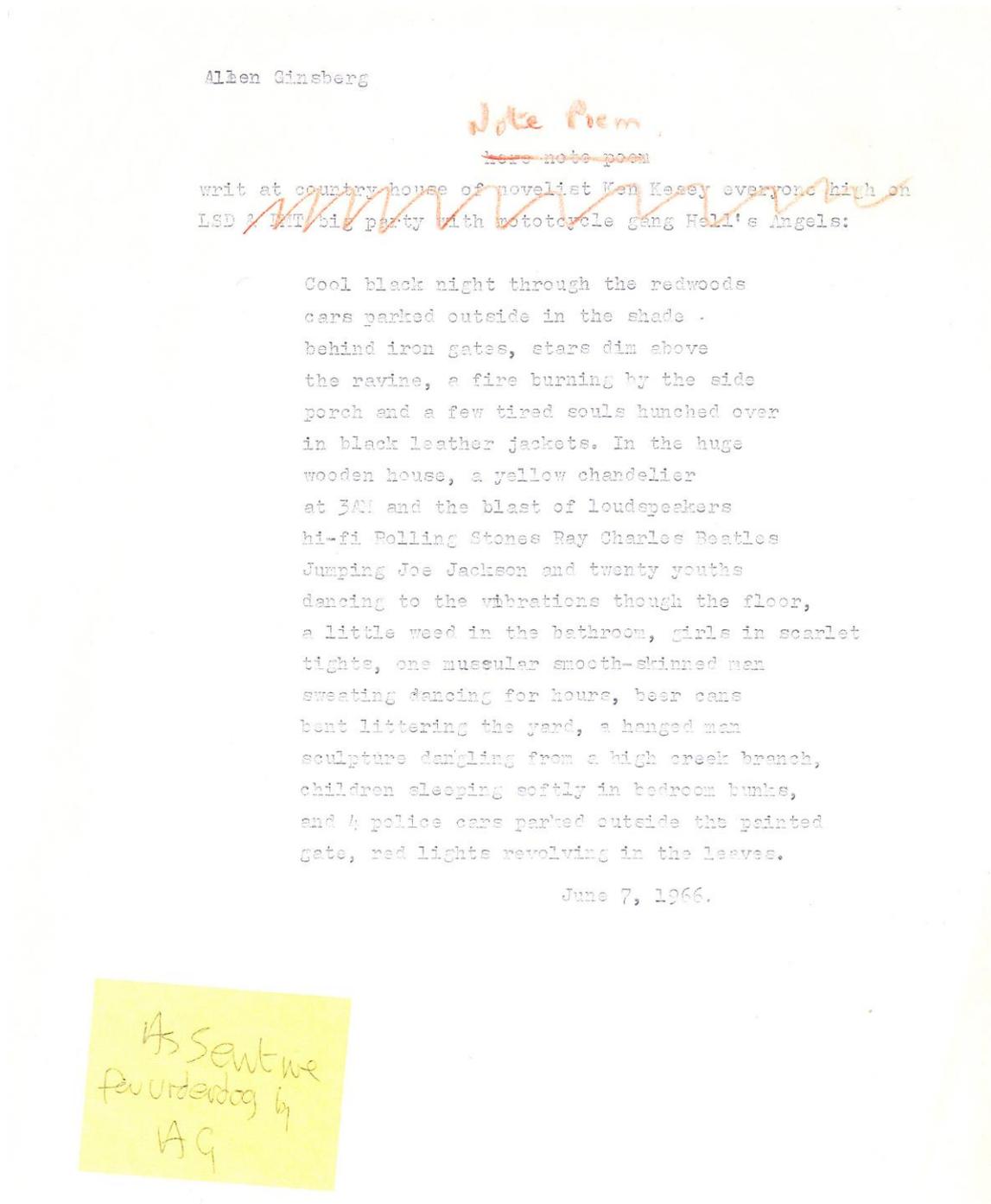
Wycliffe v.s. - language the subject?

Surrealism? (Abs. Expression)

(like happy poems
 (Sunflowers.) Trans of origin?

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
 Henri C 1/7 [double page spread].

Figure 2.4
Manuscript copy of Ginsberg's 'Note Poem', with handwritten amendments and additions, given to Patten for possible inclusion in *Underdog*:



From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
Patten I/1/1/3/28.

Figure 2.5

Biographical note (typewritten and handwritten additions) written by Ginsberg about Brian Patten:

POB 582 Stuyvesant Station
NYC 9, NY USA

Brian Patten lives in an attic in Liverpool
& dont wash his black sox enough, hanging at 19
around Clayton Squares both human musical & urban,
finely devising his own education at the Sink
the Cavern the Philharmonic & nearby beds and bookstores,
preoccupied from youth with music & language,
a small miracle in itself his generosity to poor speech
as editor of tiny demonic Underdog or faithful composer
of short poems with Scouse vowels made aware
of themselves & reflecting daily sincerity to girls.
Maud, 1966 & other lines are full of sympathetic facts
that many folk younger than the bomb can recognise
as ~~some~~ magnanimity worded by an atomic Adam.
R E A

Allen Ginsberg April 8, 1966 NYC

Allen Ginsberg

*Brian - Change 19 above to any age you want,
I just wrote equivalent of my own reflections.*

I sent Maud to Evergreen. Is that OK?

From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
Patten 1/3/1/5/1.

CHAPTER THREE FIGURES

Figure 3.1

Script for the 30th anniversary tour, using critic's comments for comic effect:

ADRIAN: The Mersey Sound sold 40,000 in 3 months which brought the expected critical reaction.

ROGER: "There is a general air of being pleased with silly puns and in subdued moments the diction of Tin Pan Alley is as suddenly obvious as a smell"- TLS

BRIAN: "Their illiteracy and their triviality is an unacceptable insult to ones conception of poetry " The Irish Times

ADRIAN "The fact that Liverpool people believe that their bad poetry is different from other bad poetry does not make it so. 745, 230 scoucers can after all be wrong" The Observer

ROGER: The three headed pantomime horse

ADRIAN: The great unwashed from Liverpool

BRIAN: "A mere flash in the pan"- The Times, 1967. Amongst all this we did have a few supporters in the establishment. People who felt they didn't have anything to prove or lose. Sir John Betjeman was one, and Philip Larkin put it in to perspective when he sent a postcard saying simply, "Ignore the Siccors Men, they're everywhere"

ADRIAN: After this we began going our own ways.

BRIAN: By this time I'd reached the ripe old age of twenty and decided I didn't want to be pigeon-holed as a Liverpool Poet .. I'd grown to hate the media attention Id helped create and so buggered off to Winchester in search of obscurity.

ADRIAN: And I became a 34 year old, 19 stone frontman for a rock n' roll band called The Liverpool Scene.

From Roger McGough Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, McGough/7/18 [detail].

Figure 3.2
 Manuscript copy of 'The New "Our Times"' (across two pages), amended by Henri for a performance in Edinburgh:

THE NEW 'OUR TIMES' (for Félix Fénéon)

(a free 1860's version of Fénéon's 'Our Times')

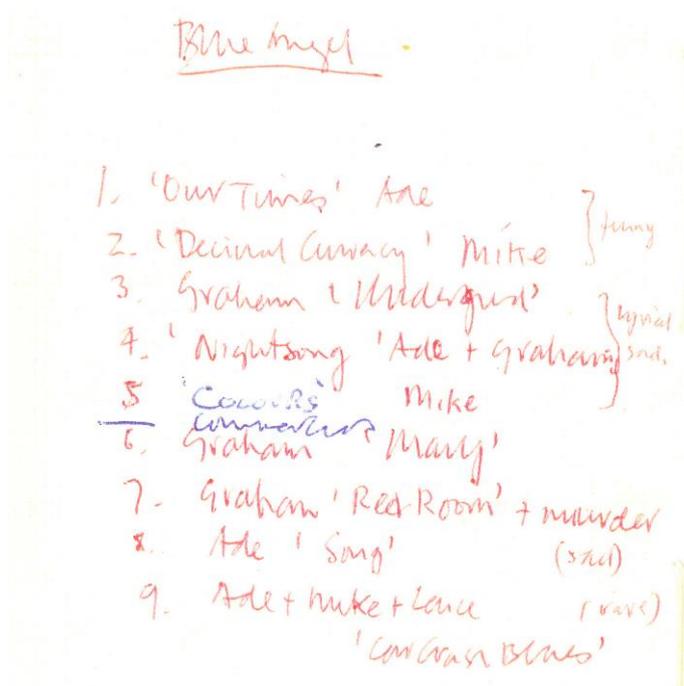
1.
 At 3pm yesterday, a Mr. Adolphus Edwards, a ^{French} ~~French~~ immigrant, was perked to death by a large Bronze Eagle in Upper Parliament St. A US State Dept. spokesman said later, "We have no statement to make as of this time"
2. ^[Angus Mackay]
 Police-Constable George Williams, who was partially blinded by a 15-lb. jellybaby thrown at a passing pipsinger, is to be retired on half-pension.
3. ^[E'bovo]
 Bearded Liverpool Couple Put out of Misery in Night By Trip out Healer, Court Told.
4.
 A certain Mrs Elspeth Clark, of Hutton, was killed by an unidentified falling object. It was thought to be a particularly hard stoneware - washed from the tail of a passing aeroplane.
- * 5.
 2 Chip-shop proprietors were today accused of selling human ears fried in butter. One of them said "We believe there is room for innovation in the trade"
6. ^[Crawford's]
 FATALITY IN KILBURNHALL BOMBS OUTRAGE: WAITRESS BURIED ALIVE UNDER TWO THOUSAND DANISH PASTRIES.
- * ^{the murder of Dr. Arden}
 [Said A.A.A. speaks, today strongly denied rumours that Harry Peters had been detected posing as a female acrobat] ~~himself medical examination of some of the~~
7. ^[25]
 At the inquest on Paul McCartney, aged 21, described as a popular singer and guitarist, P.C. Smith said, in evidence, that he saw one of the accused, Miss Fines, standing waving bloodstained kerchiefs shouting "I got a bit of his liver"

Adrian Henri Jan. 1964

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri AI.i (17).

Figure 3.3

Notebook page with a set list for the 'Blue Angel', with emotions indicated next to pieces:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C 1/7 [detail].

Figure 3.4
 'Proclamation from the New Ministry of Culture', marked up for performance:

new thinking abt the future
 in the light of ~~spycatch~~ ^{consciousness}
 what kind of festival ~~they'd~~ ^{they'd} would like to see

Somewhere in a city, in a city
 Cordoned by fear
 A fistful of feathers believes
 Its song has summoned up demons.
 It listens to the wail of sirens.

Headlights roaming through the trees
 Support its delusions.

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE THERE NOW FOLLOWS
 A PROCLAMATION FROM THE NEW
 MINISTRY OF CULTURE -

R: we are the two government officials
 B: who are organising the next gov. arts fes.

During ^{this} festival is to be held during which
 A competition is to be held during which
 Work that exalts the free spirit of this land
 May be submitted.
 The judges can be chosen from among yourselves
 The honours to be awarded are numerous,
 The prizes to be awarded are numerous.

R: You may write or paint exactly what you wish,
 B: You may say exactly what you wish
 About the free spirit of this land.

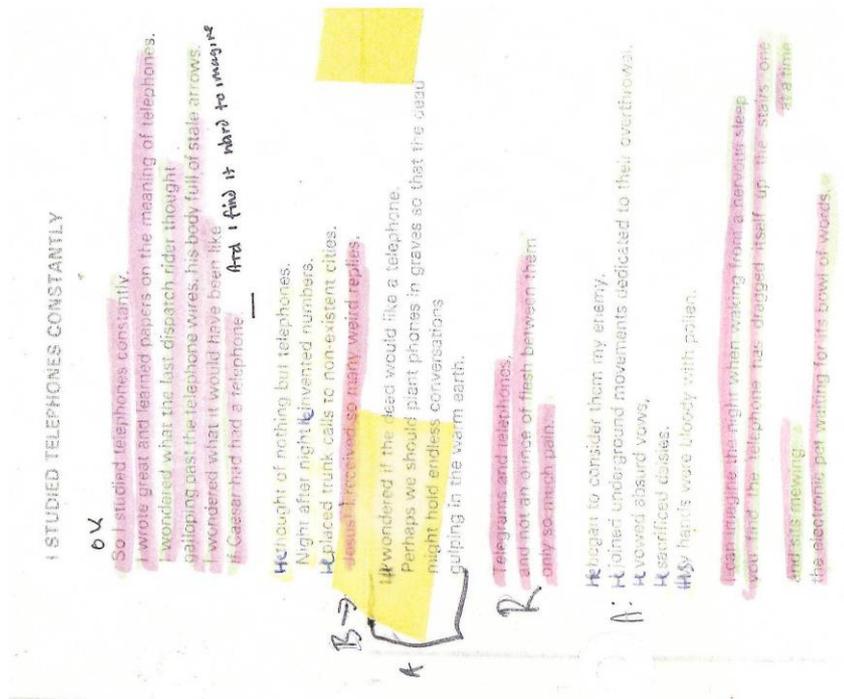
R: Work in bad taste will be disqualified
 Anonymous entries will be ferreted out
 Those who do not enter will be considered
 Enemies of the free spirit of this land.

From now on the festival is to be an annual event.

25
 look at each other, conspiratorial smile

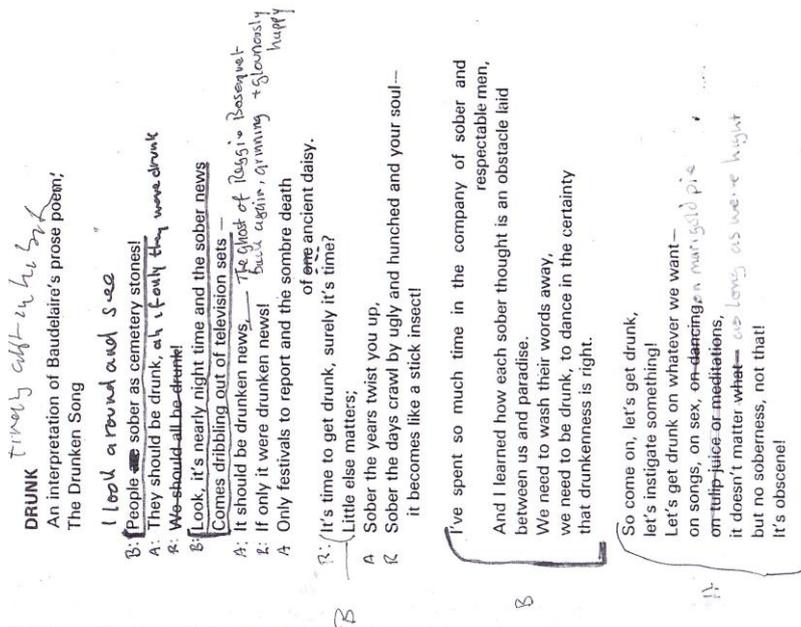
From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
 Patten/1/1/21/68.

Figure 3.5
 'I Studied Telephones Constantly', first page example of marked-up version for performance:



From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Patten 5/4.

Figure 3.6
 'Drunk', first page example of marked-up version for performance:



From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Patten 5/4.

Figure 3.7

Transcript of 'Cosy Biscuit' performance (from the 'Gifted Wreckage / Proposed Format' Audio Cassette), marked to show line distribution:

McGough **Patten Henri**

What I wouldn't give for a nine to five
Biscuits in the right hand drawer,
teabreaks, and typists to mentally undress.
The same faces. Somewhere to hang
your hat and shake your umbrella.
Cosy. Everything in its place.
Upgraded every few years. Hobbies
Glass of beer at lunchtime
Pension to look forward to.
Two kids. Homeloving wife.
Bit on the side when the occasion arises
H.P. Nothing fancy. Neat semi.

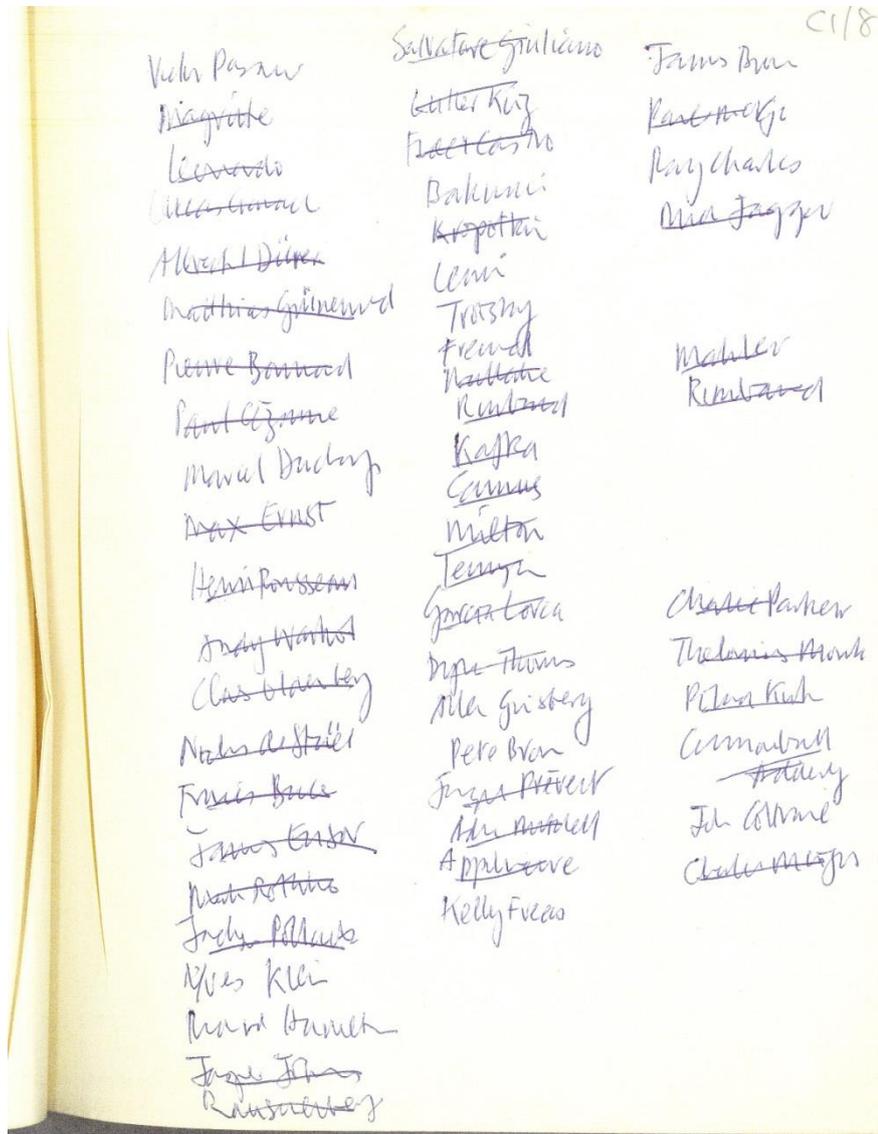
[pause, audience laughter]

What I wouldn't give for a nine to five.
Glass of beer in the right hand drawer
H.P. on everything at lunchtime
The same 2 kids. Somewhere to hang
your wife and shake your bit on the side.
Teabreaks and a pension to mentally undress
The same semifaces upgraded.
Hobbies every few years, neat typists
in wet macs when the umbrella arises.
Ah, what I wouldn't give for a cosy biscuit.

From Roger McGough Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections,
McGough/13/1/1/149 [recording, my transcript].

CHAPTER FOUR FIGURES

Figure 4.1a
 Notebook page with lists of names for inclusion in 'Me':



From the Adrian Henri Archive, Liverpool University Special Collections, C1/8 [detail].

Figure 4.3

Photograph of Adrian Henri by Mike McCartney, partly captioned ‘this is Ade, plus Marvel comic’:



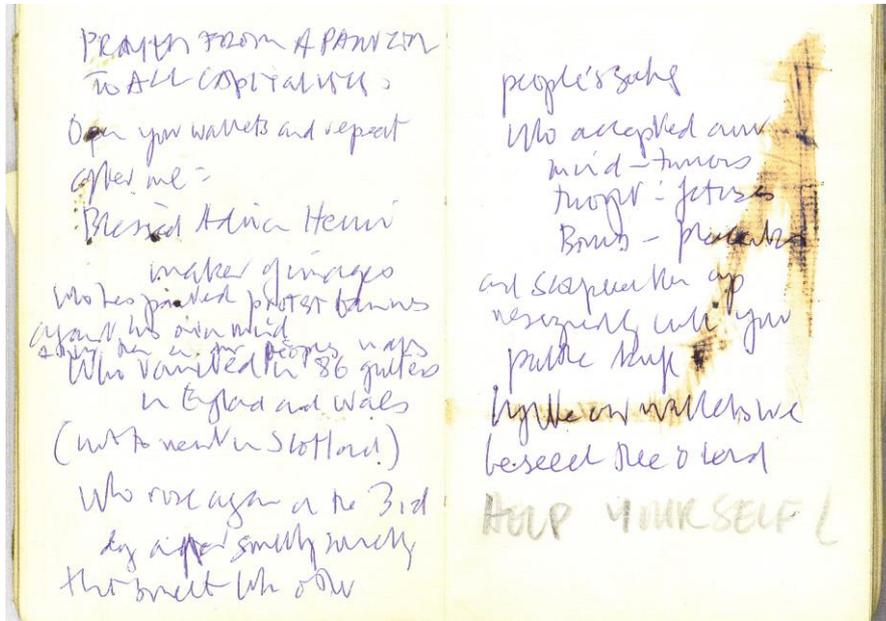
The comic is *Mystery in Space*, actually published by DC. The title ran in the US from 1951 to 1966, whereas the UK reprint license only ran to the early issues – L Miller and Son ran nine issues between 1952-54. The UK company Thorpe & Porter reprinted thirteen double-size issues of a comic with the same title between 1954-56, combining the original American comic strips with other stories. The photograph itself can only have been taken after McCartney met Henri, which was not until 1962, performing at the Merseyside Arts Festival, but it serves to show the importance of comic books in Henri’s personal life, no matter at which point or which publication is being used.

From Mike McCartney, *Mike McCartney’s Liverpool Life: Sixties Black and Whites* (Birkenhead: Garlic Press, 2003), p. 70-1.

CHAPTER FIVE FIGURES

Figure 5.1

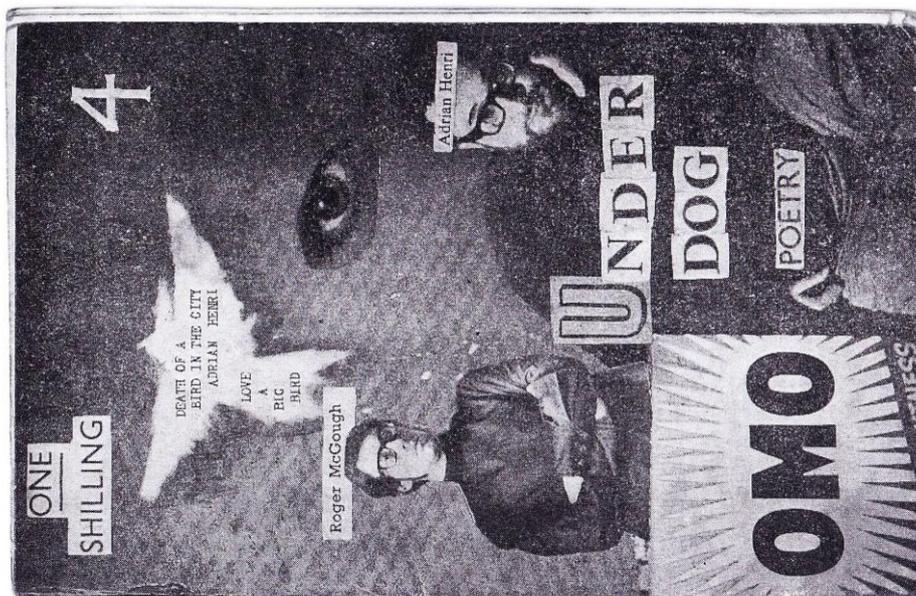
Example of a notebook draft, showing what would become number four of ‘Liverpool Poems’:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C 1/4 [double page spread].

Figure 5.2

Front cover of *Underdog 4*, with ‘Death of a Bird in the City’:



From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Patten/6/1/1/3.

Figure 5.3

Adrian Henri, *Death of a Bird in the City* (1961), oil on board (122 x 92.5 cm):



From *Adrian Henri: Paintings 1953-1998*, ed. by Frank Milner (Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 2000), p. 43.

Figure 5.4

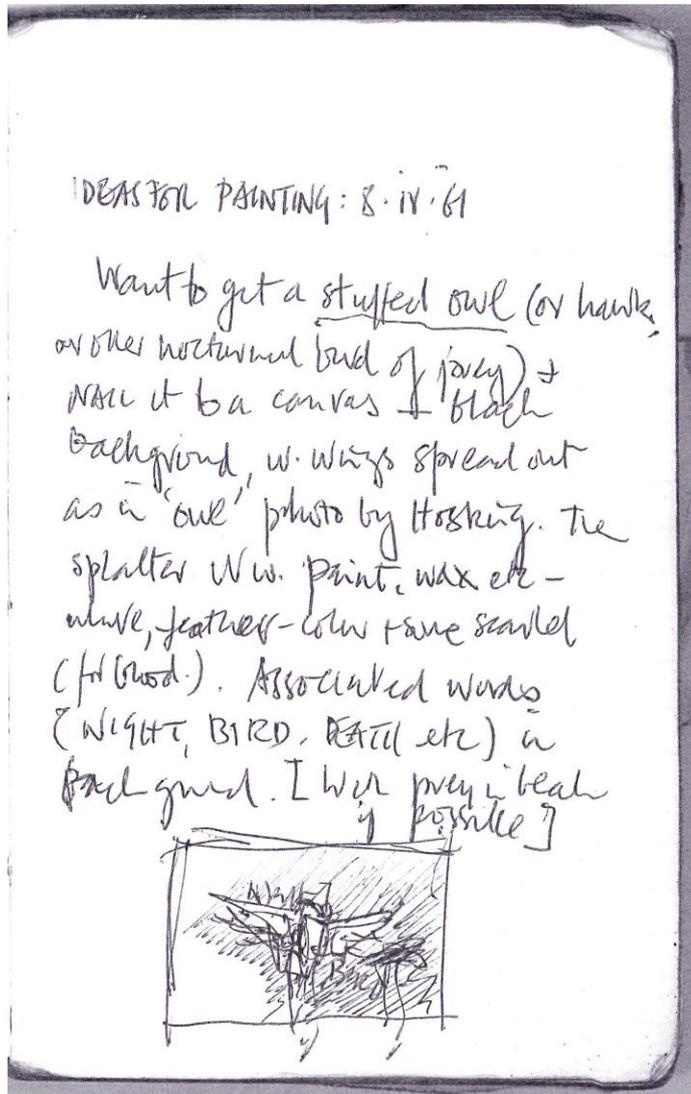
Adrian Henri, *Night Door (Homage to Djuna Barnes)* (1964-5), mixed media on door (190.5 x 91.5 cm):



From *Adrian Henri: Paintings 1953-1998*, ed. by Frank Milner (Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 2000), p. 45.

Figure 5.5

Notebook page, 'Ideas for painting: 8.iv.61', relating to 'Death of a Bird in the City' series:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C 1/4 [detail].

Figure 5.6
Adrian Henri, *The Entry of Christ Into Liverpool in 1964* (1962-62), oil on hessian (183 x 243.8 cm):



From *Adrian Henri: Paintings 1953-1998*, ed. by Frank Milner (Liverpool: Bluecoat Press, 2000), p. 59.

Figure 5.7
James Ensor, *The Entry of Christ into Brussels in 1889* (1888), oil on canvas (252.5 cm x 430.5 cm):



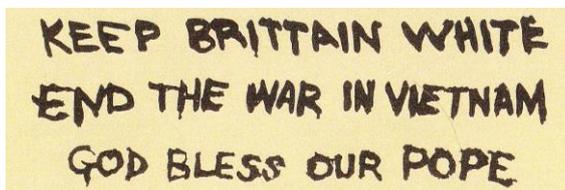
From Patricia G. Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), p. vi.

Figure 5.8a
Detail from 'The Entry of Christ into Liverpool' poster-poem:



From the exhibition catalogue *Adrian Henri: painter/poet* (London: Fanfare Press, 1968) [detail].

Figure 5.8b
Detail from 'The Entry of Christ into Liverpool' poster-poem:



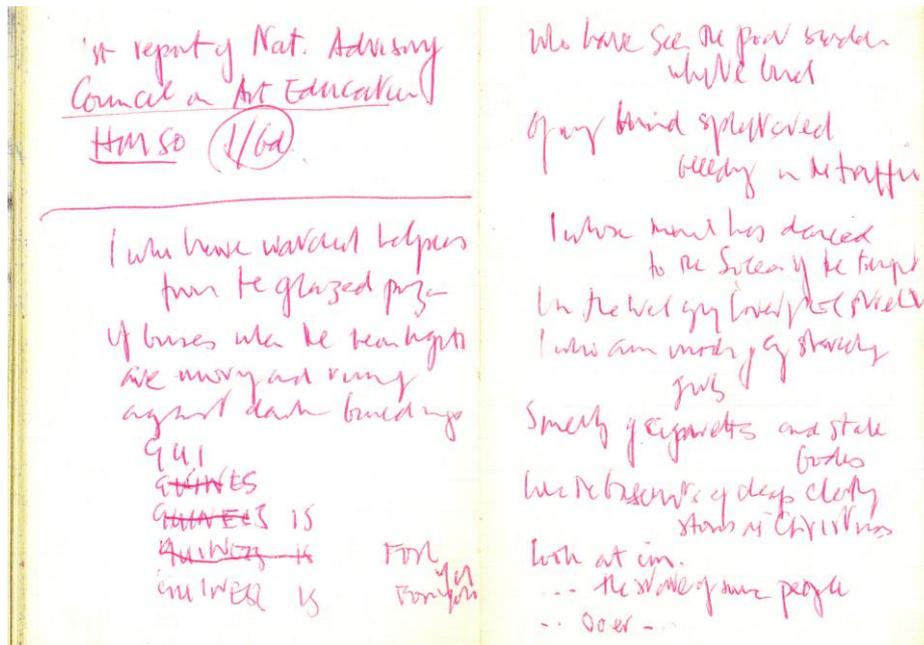
From the exhibition catalogue *Adrian Henri: painter/poet* (London: Fanfare Press, 1968) [detail].

Figure 5.8c
Detail from 'The Entry of Christ into Liverpool' poster-poem:



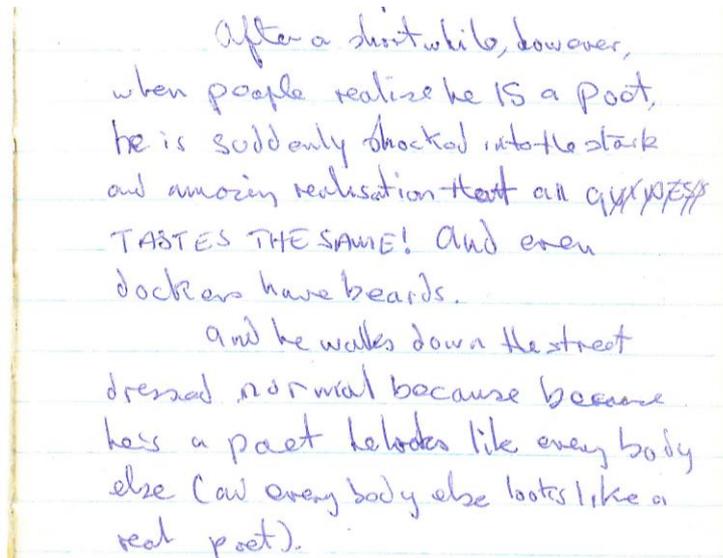
From the exhibition catalogue *Adrian Henri: painter/poet* (London: Fanfare Press, 1968) [detail].

Figure 5.9
Adrian Henri's notebook record of the 'Guinness is good for you' sign:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C 1/3 [double page spread].

Figure 5.10
Brian Patten's notebook record of the 'Guinness is good for you' sign:



From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Patten/2/1 [detail].

Figure 5.11
 Second page of manuscript 'Notes on cities', showing various lists for 'Entry':

Bull boards
 white and blue
 masonry on walls
 Drums a Parliament
 put on parlements
 Old streets made of
 cup-up boxes, old enamel
 adverbs handys etc.
 Words pointed a the road
 GO STOP HAT
 Arrows - white on road
 feet white a red
 signs -
 Traffickers
 Traffickers
 Zebra crossings.

white oval screens
 killed by red squares
 dyes its blood angles
 with neurons in the
 gutter
 GUIN
 GUINNESS
 GUINNESS IS
 Blood features
 GUINNESS IS 9000
 GUINNESS IS 9000 FOR
~~sign~~ sign splattered against
 wall
 sign - turns out Charles Parker
 dyes in New York
 You.

THE ENTRY OF COMEST INTO
 LONDON
 Triumphal return of Christ
 a report of James Enser
 entire population nearly
 masks through church
 street. Church will
 include with my
 friends and also the
 studies of some friends
 Graham Appleton etc.
 Bannan and plants
 All political parties etc
 will try to be in and
 his own.

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A VIII.2 (4).

Figure 5.12
 Manuscript notes or *aides memoires* for *Autobiography*, headed '1962-64':

1962 - 1964

Pat Moorey { Ferrybank
 v. Colson
 P. Moorey
 Reg. no.

24 Facke St
 64 Connors St

Pere Brue
 Haworth / Byrne
 de Clifton Square

pygmy
 King a. m. d. v. ch.

Heaney.

The Spuff 1962 less part / ca. Byrne.

... with

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri VI.I (23) [detail].

Figure 5.13a

Early draft of Part Four of *City*, showing 'on the mantelpiece' section:

one - an uncut, uncut uncut any, love me but very warm
on the mantelpiece ^{to the}

- 1 travel kit ^{duh} at ten to twelve
- 1 ^{1/2} even - ^{1/2} ready eye lotion
- 1/2 a packet of elastic bands
- 1 pot of NIVEA
- 1 jar of Pond's Cold Cream ('the 7-day beauty plan' 42 gms ha)
- Max Factor Eye Makeup Removal Pads
- 1 packet of Singulid Colaire
- 2 packets of Dmannin Eye (one turquoise one navy)
- Pads 'Fresh Start' new medicated cleansing gel
^{antibiotic paper spray}
- Body Mist / spray
^{Body mist} ^{Genie} Benger spray
- Two ^{very} sharp pairs of scissors
- 1 packet of a flower pie by Bernard
- City 'L'Amant' Hand Lotion
- City 'L'Amant' ^{green} ^{8 ten} perfume
- 1 packet of 'In the forest' by Dominique Roussel
- 2 very old uncut lip sticks: 'ya - ya yellow' and
'yellow Rich'
- ^{duh} ^{plated}
- 1 ^{1/2} ^{1/2} ^{1/2}

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A.III.30 [detail].

Figure 5.13b
 Later draft of Part Four of *City*, showing 'on the mantelpiece' section:

on the mantelpiece

①

1 travelling cloth at ten to twelve
 1 Ever-Ready 2114 gas lighter
 Half a packet of elastic bands
 Pot of Nivea
 Jar of Ponds Cold Cream ('The 7-day beauty
 plan' 42 gms. net)
 Max Factor Eye Makeup Removal Pads
 1 packet Sun-gold 'Cotai've'
 2 packets Drummer Dye (1 ~~blue~~ ^{turquoise} 1 navy) ③
 Ponds 'Fresh Start' New Medicated
 Cleansing gel. →
 Body Mist aerosol perfume spray Mist
 Body Mist Lemon Bonquet spray 2.
 two not very sharp pairs of scissors
 1 postcard of a flowerpiece by Bonnard
 Coty 'L'Amant' Hand lotion
 Coty 'L'Amant' Creamy skin perfume
 1 postcard 'In the forest' by Donatier Rousseau

 2 old unused lipsticks: 'ya-ya yellow' and
 'yellow kick' ④

 1 chrome-plated picture hook
 1 small red plastic frontier wagon and horse
 from a lucky bag (with moveable wooden wheels)
 an old mascara brush
 leather case with aerial and earphone attachment
 (for radio on table by the bed)
 2 ring-boxes with rings in

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A.III.17 [detail].

Figure 5.14

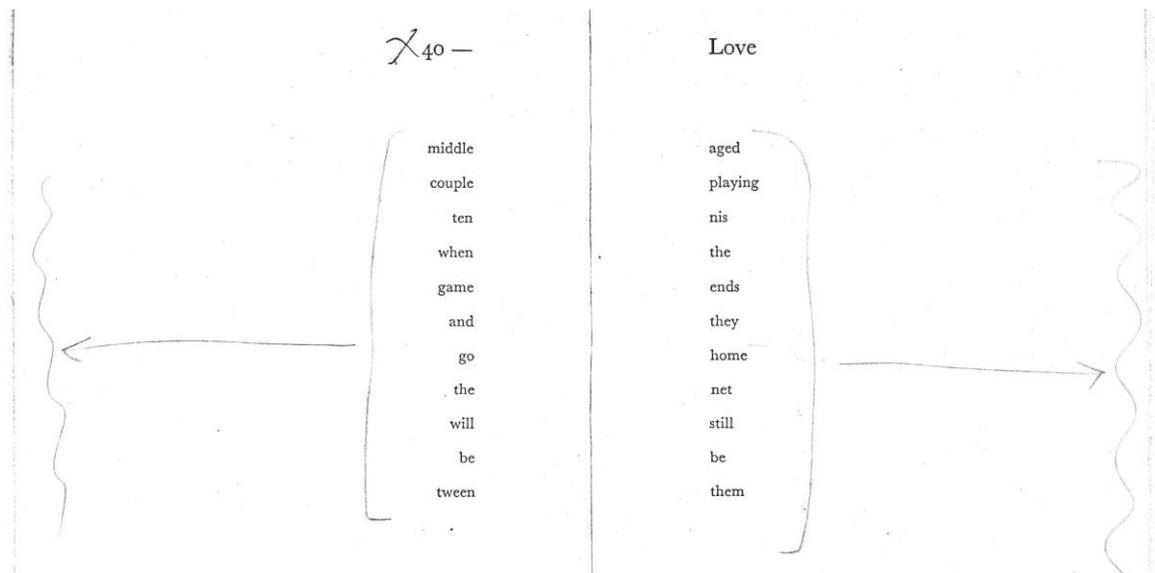
James Ensor, *Alive and Radiant: The Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* (1885-6), crayon on paper (206 x 150.3 cm):



From Patricia G. Berman, *James Ensor: Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), p. 76.

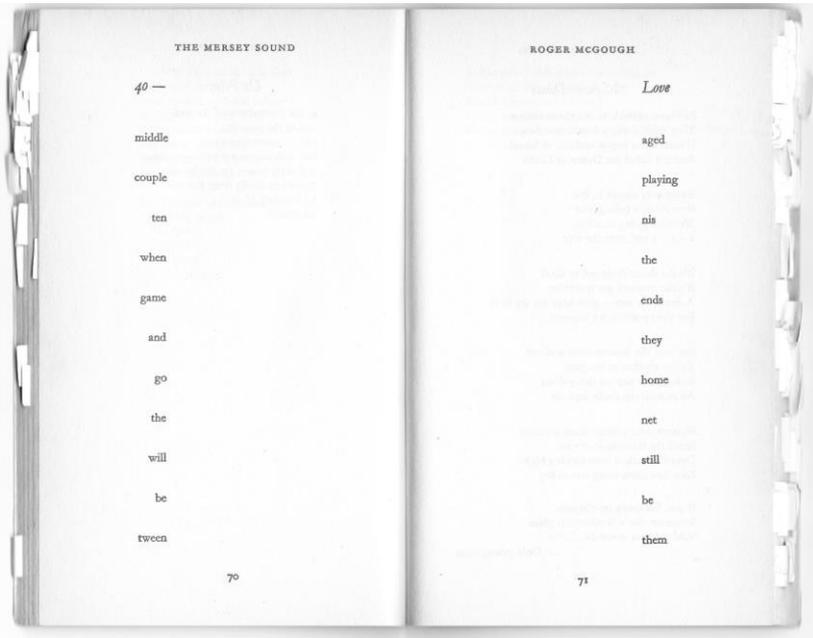
Figure 5.15a

Roger McGough's handwritten amendment to the text of '40-Love' (on a photocopy of the poem in *After the Merrymaking*), for inclusion in the second edition of *The Mersey Sound*:



From Penguin Archive at Bristol University, DM 1107 / D 103.

Figure 5.15b
 Roger McGough's '40-Love' as published in *The Mersey Sound*, showing the above desire has been taken into account:



From Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *Penguin Modern Poets 10: The Mersey Sound Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 70-1 [double page spread].

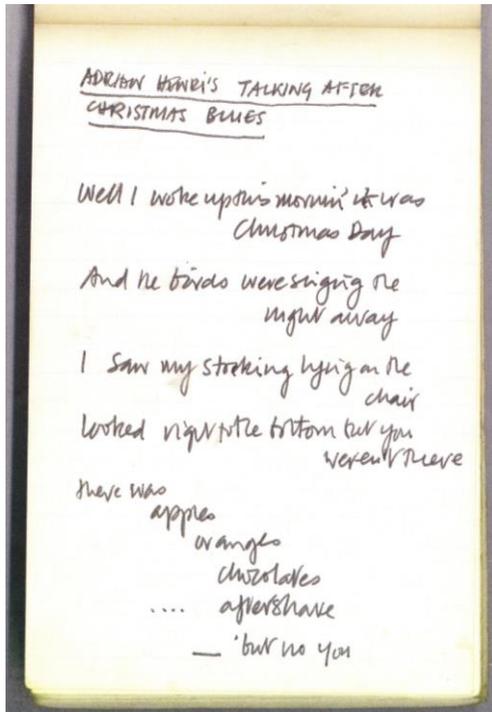
Figure 5.15c
 Photograph of Roger McGough's '40-Love' at the *Liverpool Doors* exhibition:



Photograph by author. *Liverpool Doors* ran 24 February – 21 June 2013 at the Museum of Liverpool. See <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/exhibitions/liverpool-doors/> [accessed 1 March 2013].

Figure 5.16a

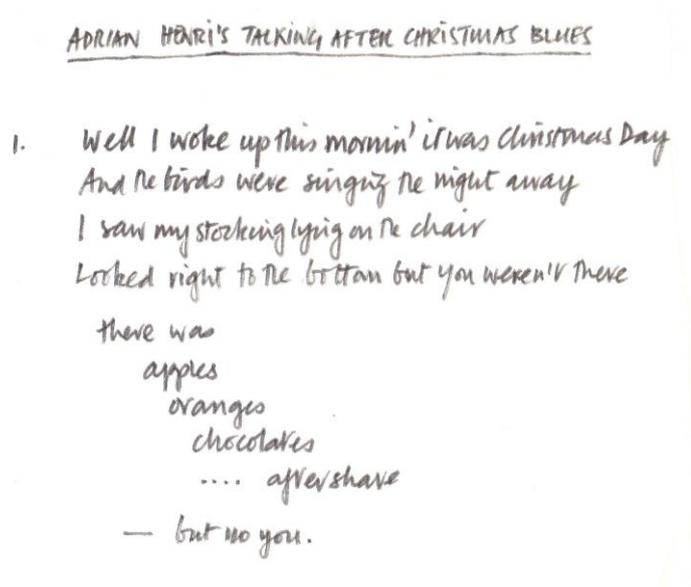
Earliest known draft of 'Adrian Henri's Talking After Christmas Blues', showing the look on the page as integral to the composition:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri C1/5.

Figure 5.16b

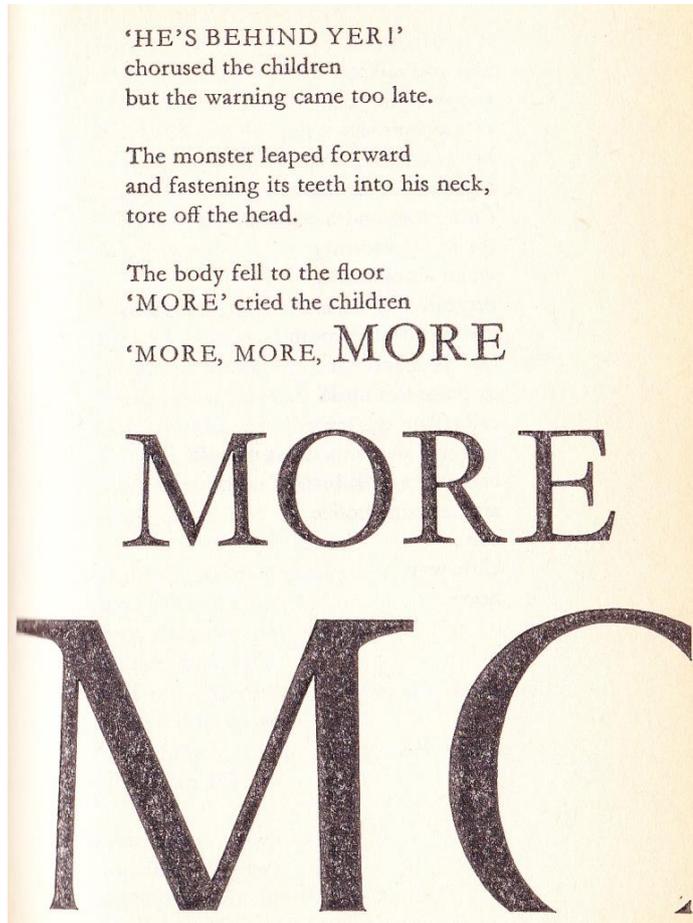
Draft of 'Adrian Henri's Talking After Christmas Blues', showing the look on the page as integral to the composition:



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A.I.1 (57) [detail].

Figure 5.17

Printed version of Roger McGough's 'Pantomime Poem', with expressive typography:



From Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, and Brian Patten, *Penguin Modern Poets 10: The Mersey Sound Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 63 [detail].

Figure 5.20
 Typewritten copy of 'Pictures From An Exhibition', with Adrian Henri's handwritten amendments:

PICTURES FROM AN EXHIBITION

(Painting and Sculpture of a decade 54-64' Tate Gallery London
 April-June 1964)

No 54. Jean Dubuffet 'Declinaison de la Barbe' 1 1959
 'as-tu cueilli les fleurs de la barba.' ← *italics*
 Jean Dubuffet I wander the dark pebbles of your mind
 picking beardflowers.

No 73. Joseph Corneli 'Hotel de l'Etoile.'
 cool pillars of the hotel/in the
 night outside the stars are always
 so white/the sky is always so
 blue/silver moon waiting patiently.

No 84. Mark Rothko 'Reds - No 22' 1957.
 SCARLET
 ORANGE
 ORANGE ← *bold*
 ORANGE
 SCARLET
 → CRIMSON ← *bold*
 SCARLET

No 291. Robert Rauschenberg 'Windward' 1963
italics ← (printed oranges are painted
 painted oranges are painted)

Angry skyline over the gasworks
 A Hawk sits brooding inside a painted rainbow.

No 10-13. Josef Albers, Studies for 'Homage to the Square' 1961-2
 look.
 see. ← *large space between each y possible*
 long ago.
 now.

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A I.1 (76).

Figure 5.21
 Mark Rothko, *Reds – No 22* (1957), oil on canvas (203 x 176 cm):



From Alice and Peter Smithson, eds., *Painting & Sculpture of a Decade 54-64*, Tate Gallery (London: The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1964), p. 17, 100.

Figure 5.22a
A list of 'poems without words':

- Poems without words 1st June '68.
1. Summer poem (p. 103)
 2. Last rose of summer (old p. 103)
 3. Small patriotic p. (small flag)
 4. Large patriotic p. (large flag)
 5. Unknown Soldier p. (" ")
 6. Liverpool Drinking Song
 7. Summer Poem II (rich of notes)
 8. Lost night No 1. (bra)
 9. Lost night No 2. (stooling)
 10. ~~Love~~ Comic poem (comic)
 11. Love poem I (lily)
 12. Love Poem II (slip)
 13. Living Doll (card)
 14. Liverpool 8 poem (")

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A.I.3(6).

Figure 5.22b
A running order of 'Poems without words for Edinburgh':

- POEMS WITHOUT WORDS FOR EDINBURGH * Perhaps also (Liverpool drinking song) as well.
1. Poem for Alan Jackson
Peel a large onion slowly. Pause to mop eyes occasionally
involuntarily paper handkerchief. Hand peeled
onion to him.
 2. Love Poem I Hold up bunch of artificial lilies - of the valley
 3. Love Poem II Hold up pair of Navy blue school trousers
 - * 4. Poem for Heather Holden
step off stage. Run on spot turned toward stage, holding
large (possibly imaginary) parcel as if to catch a bus (stage)
finally get on, abandoning parcel.

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri A.I.3(16).

Figure 5.23

Cut-up poem, 'On the Late Late Massachers Stillbirths and Deformed Children a Smoother Lovelier Skin Job', as published in *Sphinx* magazine:

VIII. ON THE LATE MASSACRE *stillbirths and deformed children; a smoother, lovelier skin"*

TITLE →

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones *will cause* up to 1 million deaths from leukaemia

Forget not: in thy book record their groans *Now for the vitally important step. Cream your face and neck a second time.*

"No American President. world-famous for beauty creams
the freedom and safety of so many responsible for *Young offenders*

TODAY'S MEN OF ACTION The triple tyrant: *Macmillan*
Kennedy,
Watkinson

"The West Governments are satisfied as to the moral necessity to resume **Racing from Redcar**

atmospheric testing. A test card is shown continuously from 19 a.m. until 15 minutes before *Slain by the bloody Piemontese*

Why pay higher fares? *US President Kennedy*
The jolly little sailorman with the gravel-pit voice sets sail for more merry adventures "In seven days I promise
you the bombing of Guernica by Franco's German bombers—

Their moans The vales redoubled to the hills, *Another five blazes in the City of London* **All that Jazz**

The most famous names in our Governments proudly announce

The mutation was caused by the heavy dose of radio *ion* received by its mother at Hiroshima. *This baby's eyes and nose had merged into one misshapen feature in the middle of its forehead.* **LOST 6" FROM HIPS**

Suppers can now wear Fashion Stockings.

Early may fly the Babylonian wo **FOLLOWED BY Tomorrow's Weather AND The Epilogue Goodnight** Close-down

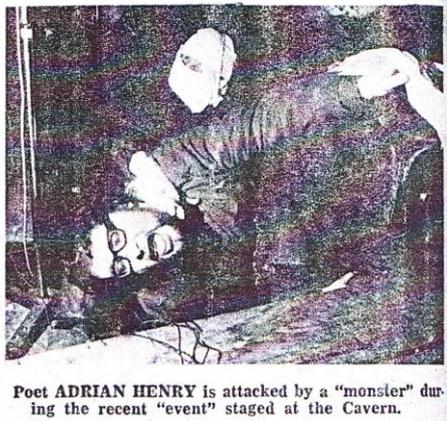
Adrian HENRI 2 V. 62
Cut-up of John Milton Sonnet 21 on the Late Massachers in Piemont / TV Times / CND leaflet.

N.B. The written bits are not invented: the original cuttings had been lost + it was not possible to find duplicates. Also may CND leaflet was available + hence back + front had to be used.

From Brian Patten Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Patten/6/1/6.

Figure 5.24

Photograph accompanying the *Mersey Beat* article on 'Bomb Event', with original caption:



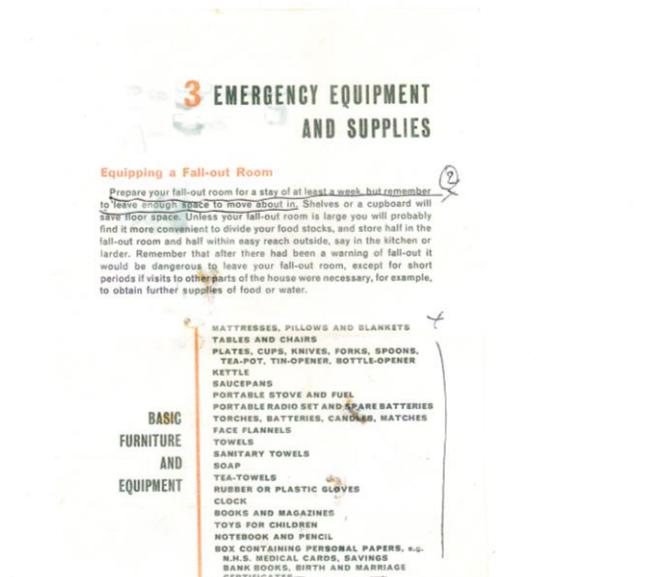
From 'The Night The Bomb Dropped', *Mersey Beat*, 19 December 1964, p. 10.

Figure 5.25

Page from Adrian Henri's 'CD Lecture', part of 'Bomb Event', with actual pamphlet and his handwritten additions:

CD LECTURE

② Cotton Wool
Salt, household, one ½ lb.
Soda, Bicarbonate (Baking Powder) 4-oz packet
Bowls, various sizes, Juice
Hot-water bottles and covers
Teaspoons
Vaseline



From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri 8/2/80.

Figure 5.26

Adrian Henri's handwritten amendment to the text of 'Commercials for "Bomb Event"' (on a photocopy of the poem in *Tonight at Noon*), changing the title for inclusion in the second edition of *The Mersey Sound*:

- ~~COMMERCIALS FOR 'BOMB' EVENT~~
BOMB COMMERCIALS
(for two voices)
- 1 A. Get PAD nuclear meat for humans
B. Don't give your family ordinary meat, give them PAD
A. P.A.D.—Prolongs Active Death
B. Enriched with nourishing marrowbone strontium.
 - 2 A. All over the world, more and more people are changing to
BOMB
B. BOMB—The international passport to smoking ruins
 - 3 B. so then I said "well lets all go for a picnic and we went and it was all right except for a bit of sand in the butties and then of course the wasps and Michael fell in the river but what I say is you can't have everything perfect can you so just then there was a big bang and the whole place caught fire and something happened to Michael's arms and I don't know what happened to my Hubby and its perhaps as well as there were only four pieces of Kit-Kat so we had one each and then we had to walk home 'cos there weren't any buses. . . .
A. HAVE A BREAK—HAVE A KIT-KAT
 - 4 A. Everyday in cities all over England people are breathing in Fall-out
B. Get the taste of the Bomb out of your mouth with OVAL FRUITS
 - 5 A. General Howard J. Sherman has just pressed the button that killed 200 million people. A BIG job with BIG responsibilities. The General has to decide between peace and the extinction of the human race
B. But he can't tell Stork from Butter.

From Penguin Archive at Bristol University, DM 1107 / D 103.

Figure 5.27
 Manuscript copy of 'Commercials for "Bomb" Event"', marked-up for performance by four voices:

ITEM THREE

"Commercials for "Bomb" Event"
 (for two voices)

1. *Mike* A. Get PAD nuclear meat for humans
Brian B. Don't give your family ordinary meat, give them PAD
M. A. P.A.D. - Prolongs Active Death
B. B. Enriched with nourishing marrowbone strontium.

2. A. All over the world, more and more people are changing to BOMB
Andy B. BOMB - The international passport to smoking ruins

3. B.so then I said "well lets all go for a picnic and we went and it was all right except for a bit of sand in the butties and then of course the wasps and Michael fell in the river but what I say is you can't have everything perfect can you so just then there was a big bang and the whole place caught fire and something happened to Michael's arms and I don't know what happened to my Hubby and its perhaps as well as there were only four pieces of Kit-Kat so we had one each and then we had to walk home 'cos there weren't any buses.....
Adie

HAVE A BECK HAVE A KIT KIT.

4. A. Everyday in cities all over England people are breathing in Fall-out
Andy B. Get the taste of the Bomb out of your mouth with OVAL FRUITS

5. A. General Howard J. Sherman has just pressed the button that killed 200 million people. A BIG job with BIG responsibilities. The General has to decide between peace and the extinction of the human race....
Mike

Adie B. But he can't tell Stork from Butter.

From Adrian Henri Archive, University of Liverpool Special Archives and Collections, Henri K/1.

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