Rewriting the Atlantic Archipelago: Modern British Poetry at the Coast

Philip Jones

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2017

Abstract

Despite a so-called 'oceanic turn', there has been relatively little attention paid to literary representations of the shoreline as a specific material and cultural site. This thesis examines how modern British poets respond to and represent the coastline in their work, with particular emphasis on notions of place and geographic scale. Whilst looking at the use of the archipelago in recent cultural and literary studies of British and Irish writing, this thesis argues for a more refined and complex sense of the archipelagic, one which responds to the needs and demands of an increasingly global and interconnected world. To better understand this relationship between text and coastal landscape, the project draws on the work of Henri Lefebvre and Doreen Massey, as well as Edward Casey's investigations into the future of place and Philip E. Steinberg's reconceptualisation of ocean spaces.

In engaging with ideas of place in a newly intense period of globalisation, this thesis contends that a critical desire to focus on disruptions of linear spatial and temporal scales must still negotiate residual notions of bounded communities and national identities. The archipelago emerges both as a site of rupture and interconnection. In attending to these different levels of geographic experience, the thesis also demonstrates how notions of scale must respond to more than spatial distance, becoming attentive to how a variety of emotional and psychological experiences become frayed and disrupted within the shifts between the local, national and planetary. In the poetry of Peter Riley, Wendy Mulford, Robert Hampson, Matt Simpson and Robert Minhinnick, the shore emerges as an ambivalent and fluid terrain but one, nonetheless, in possession of its own social and cultural histories.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my two primary supervisors, Dr Adam Rounce and Dr Bridget Vincent, for providing me with invaluable advice and support. Without them I would not have made it this far. Matthew Welton has always been genuinely supportive when required and I would like to acknowledge Dr Neal Alexander for sparking my interest in the relationship between poetry and geography, which now seems a long time ago.

The friends I have made inside and outside the University have been crucial to this process, both for their encouragement and providing welcome distractions. Of particular importance has been Claudia, who always seemed to be there whether I knew I needed her to be or not, and Sarah, for putting up with my incessant moaning and making me laugh when it was required the most.

Finally, I would like to thank my brother, a valuable source of interesting conversation, and my dad, without whom there is no way (materially or emotionally) this process would have been possible. In a sense it is only because of the genuinely supportive and intellectually curious household you and mum created when I was growing up that I am here today, I hope she would be proud.

Contents

Introduction

In 'Here', Philip Larkin writes that 'the land [ends] suddenly beyond a beach / Of shapes and shingle'. Larkin locates something different and compelling 'here', where 'leaves unnoticed thicken' and 'neglected waters quicken'. Beyond the confines of a certain restrictive and depressing social milieu, '[a] cut-price crowd, urban yet simple', the speaker finds 'unfenced existence' at the point where land and sea meet. '[H]ere' is the littoral landscape of Britain, one that encompasses not just the beachfront itself but also 'raw estates' and the '[p]astoral of ships up streets', those sites of human habitation which shape and are shaped by the coastline.[1]

Though seemingly a literary terrain better suited to the maritime imperialism of nineteenth century Britain, whether Rudyard Kipling's 'Coastwise Lights of England' or the naval jingoism of Henry Newbolt's 'Drake's Drum',[2] Larkin's insistence that something unusual or different is happening 'here' gestures towards the interest this thesis takes in the relationship of modern British poetry and the shore. Though vague and unnamed, it is clear that 'Here' is intimately interested in the specificity of place, the poem full of particular details and description such as 'red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes […] grim head-scarfed wives' and '[l]uminously-peopled air' which runs counter to a lack of cartographic specificity.[3]

This tension, between poetry grounded in the exacting description of location and a landscape which is felt to be somehow 'out of reach', a space which is 'untalkative' but applies pressure on writing's capacity to

---

[1] Philip Larkin, 'Here', *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), pp. 79-80.
[2] Rudyard Kipling, 'A Song of the English', *Collected Poems*, ed. by Thomas Pinney, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), I, pp. 315-330 (p. 321).
[3] Larkin, 'Here', p. 79.

make the particulars of place knowable, lies at the core of this thesis.[4] Across the following chapters various poetic texts are explored in relation to how they use littoral spaces to enact, refashion and challenge notions of habitation, agency (both human and nonhuman), sustainability and, lying behind this, conceptions of bounded and unbounded experience of space and time.

This approach in part arises from Eric Falci's essay 'Place, Space and Landscape', in which Falci writes that modern British and Irish poetry has been filled with 'dissolving landscapes, places that open underfoot into murky indeterminacies, and spaces made and unmade by modernity's alterations, accidents, and disasters.'[5] This thesis will explore how far Falci's claims apply to poetry grounded in the ambivalent geography of the shore. Do such texts exhibit Falci's 'dissolving landscapes' in the erosive tidal rhythms of the British coast? Or, by approaching literary representations of the coast through the thinking of Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre among others, is it possible to trace a reworking of place that resists and reformulates the spatial pressures of contemporary life? This interest in a resistant quality to poetic place making comes not just from the potentially fruitful encounter between a sense of place that is 'absolutely not static' and a fluid coastal geography.[6] It also emerges from the shore's position as a prominent geography of modernity and therefore its suitability as a site of contemporary critical interest.

Such a claim may initially seem counterintuitive given the modern dominance of aeroplanes over ships as the main method for traversing the globe. In fact, since the 1960s, urban docks such as London have closed

---

[4] Larkin, 'Here', p. 80.
[5] Eric Falci, 'Place, Space and Landscape', in *Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by C.D. Blanton and Nigel Alderman (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 200-220 (p. 201).
[6] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 155.

down at a rapid rate, their functions shifted upstream to sites better able to accommodate the new demands of super tankers and containerisation. Other ports, such as Liverpool and Baltimore, have suffered sustained decline, becoming sites of focused urban regeneration. The material and imaginative impact of maritime life has, therefore, become increasingly removed from people's daily experiences. As Stephen Ward outlines 'contemporary port functions were shifted to more peripheral and spacious settings within the metropolitan regions of the historic port cities' while post-industrial transitions of docklands to centres of retail and finance were 'rarely smooth, often socially painful and frequently contested.'[7]

Despite the generally decreased visibility of the sea in contemporary western society, the condition of the oceans as a highway of international trade, and the coast as a location for the dispersal and management of global capital, is still as prevalent as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In reality almost '[n]inety percent of everything', ranging from coffee to electronic devices to cars, arrive in Britain on board shipping containers.[8]

The form of global capitalism now occurring at these sites also embodies many of the developments and concerns that surround more general discussion of economic organisation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For example, it makes more financial sense for cod to be sent to China to be filleted and then sent back to Scottish shops and restaurants than to pay Scottish filleters.[9] Modern harbours are also massively automated, reflecting a more general, and increasing,

---

[7] Stephen V. Ward, 'Port Cities and the Global Exchange of Planning Ideas', in *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks*, ed. by Carola Hein (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 70-85 (p. 71).
[8] Maya Jasanoff, 'A Passage from Hong Kong', *New York Review of* Books (3 April 2014) <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/apr/03/passage-hong-kong/?insrc=hpss> [Accessed 18 June 2017]
[9] Rose George quoted in Jasanoff, 'A Passage from Hong Kong'.

automation of modern life, the processes of loading and unloading tankers 'superintended by logistics experts in distant offices.'[10] These two strands of experience of life under modern capitalism, a spatial distortion where it is cheaper to use labour halfway around the world than what can be found locally, and a drive for greater efficiency through automation, position the coastline as an integral landscape for global capitalist modernity and the cultural imaginaries which emerge from it.

Despite the continued relevance of the coast as a geography of global capitalism many coastal towns are suffering economically and socially. Part of this decline is a change in the material structure of the British economy. As Owen Hatherley says

> Statistically, it transpires there is in fact something particularly bleak about the UK's coastal towns. A report just issued by the Office for National Statistics makes clear that their residents are particularly aged, particularly homogenous, but more to the point, particularly poor, with higher average rates of unemployment and insecure work than any other kind of settlement.[11]

Coastal towns have been hit by both the emergence of cheap package holidays abroad (weakening the British seaside resort) and the struggles of traditional maritime industries. Such decline results in the feeling that, in a place like Grimsby whose economic health has historically relied on the

---

[10] Jasanoff, 'A Passage from Hong Kong'
[11] Owen Hatherley, 'Coastal towns are easily mocked, but we should not brush over their struggle', *Guardian*, 30 October 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/30/coastal-towns-mocked-not-brush-over-struggle> [Accessed 18 June 2017]

fishing industry, '[s]omeone, or something, abdicated power […] leaving swathes of it to rot.'[12]

This sense of hopelessness is informed by a context of privatization, laissez faire economics, and the weakening of the state. In Grimsby the dock is owned by Singapore and Canadian companies, suggesting Britain's coastal terrains have become staging posts for other countries' financial pursuits.[13] This in turn removes democratic accountability for the running of the local economy away from the residents of the city and their elected representatives. The coast becomes a landscape which registers both the superabundance of capitalist accumulation in its current phase and the struggles of the nation state to ameliorate the worst effects of these processes on its citizens.

The importance, if obscured, of the coast to the reproduction and maintenance of daily life in the twenty-first century is matched by the widespread and varied presence of the coast in modern and contemporary poetry.[14] Despite this, critical accounts of the relationship between shore and poem are lacking. As Tricia Cusack states, '[t]here is copious literature on the river and on the sea, but comparatively little academic attention has been paid to either especially in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences.'[15] This is something that is beginning to change.[16] However, work

---

[12] James Meek, 'Why are you still here?', *London Review of Books*, 37.8 (23 April 2015), 3-14 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n08/james-meek/why-are-you-still-here> [Accessed 18 June 2017]
[13] Meek, 'Why are you still here?'.
[14] Poetry in which the coastal or littoral is a prominent feature include the ending of Alice Oswlad's *Dart*, E. A. Markham's 'Hinterland', Norman Nicholson's *Sea to the West*, early Dylan Thomas, W. S. Graham's *The White Threshold*, Carol Watt's *Wrack*, Frances Presley's *Somerset Letters*, Caroline Bergvall's *Drift* and Kathleen Jamie's *The Overhaul*. This is by no means an exhaustive list.
[15] 'Introduction: Exploring the Water's Edge', in *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge*, ed. by Tricia Cusack (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 1-17 (p. 7).
[16] For example the 2017 ASLE-UKI conference included several panels which touched on the littoral such as 'Aquapelagic poetics', 'Chartered waters' and 'Water'.

which engages with literature's relationship to the non-terrestrial continues to overlook both poetry and the coastline itself. There is Margaret Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea*, various studies of canonical maritime authors such as Conrad or Melville, and multiple accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime literary culture more generally.[17] Where explorations of poetry's relationship to the littoral does occur, this work is often limited to earlier historical periods, such as Bridget Keegan's writing about labouring-class poets at sea or Elizabeth Jane Bellamy's work on Milton.[18] Or it is often located in Anglophone zones away from the British Isles such as Australia, North America and the Caribbean.[19]

Virginia Richter and Ursula Kluwick observe that 'the littoral remains a largely neglected site in publications on the sea' and the small amount of published work on contemporary British poetry and the coast is predominantly confined to single chapters in edited collections.[20] There is a need for critical writing that addresses the manifold relationships of

---

[17] See *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture*, ed. by Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas (London: Routledge, 2017) and Chet Van Duzer, 'From Odysseus to Robinson Crusoe: A Survey of Early Western Island Literature', *Islands Studies Journal*, 1.1 (2006), 143-162 for example.

[18] See Bridget Keegan, *British Labouring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730-1837* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, *Dire Straits: The Perils of Writing the English Coastline from Leland to Milton* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

[19] See, for example, *The Littoral Zone: Australian Contexts and their Writers*, ed. by C. A. Cranston and Robert Zeller (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), René Dietrich, 'Towards a Poetics of Liminality in "This Space Between Spaces": The Shore Lines of Contemporary American Poetry', *Anglia* 125.3 (2007), 448-464, and *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity*, ed. by Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).

[20] 'Introduction "Twixt Land and Sea: Approaches to Littoral Studies', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 1-20, (p. 4). For examples of such work see Neal Alexander, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, pp. 71-85, and Amy Cutler, '"Whitby is a statement": Littoral Geographies in British Poetry', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 120-133.

contemporary poetry to the coast and fills this gap in critical attention. Amy Cutler's work, for instance, is deeply interested in how the language and form of experimental poetry responds to a terrain she views as under constant pressure of overinscription.[21] While a shared reflection on the way the coastline informs and shapes poetic language and structure is unavoidable, this thesis is more interested in how responses to the particularities of the British coastline can be read back into wider critical debates about the relationship of literary texts to geographic notions of place and belonging.

Given the role of the coast in the transnational circulation of capital, people and goods, exploring the relationship of coast and place in contemporary poetry demands an awareness of varying scales and intensities of geographic experience. Edward Soja writes '[i]t is precisely this br*eaking down and reconstitution of spatial scales*, from the most intimate spaces of the body, household, and home to the metropolitan region and the territorial nation-state' which helps constitute the contemporary intensification of globalisation.[22]

Yet, literary criticism has been seen to be slow to react to these demands of geographic experience, Timothy Clark arguing that the 'dominant modes of literary and cultural criticism are blind to scale effects in ways that now need to be addressed.'[23] Clark is particularly critical of ecocriticism and what he views as its inability to effectively respond to the demands of climate change, writing that because there is 'no simple or unitary object [called climate change] *directly* to confront' the issue soon

---

[21] Amy Cutler, 'Language Disembarked: The Coast and The Forest in Modern British Poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway, 2014), pp. 111-115.
[22] Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 200.
[23] Timothy Clark, 'Scale', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, ed. by Tom Cohen (London: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 148-166. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.10539563.0001.001> [Accessed 8 June 2017]

disperses 'into multiple questions, disciplines and topics'.[24] This failure to confront climate change as a critical object reflects a more general crisis of scale for Clark. In this crisis major issues, from global warming, to economic and political injustice, are no longer easily graspable — instead operating at levels of complexity which exceed the mid-level scales of conventional human perception and cognition.[25]

Similarly, both Ursula Heise and Elizabeth DeLoughrey have pointed out the importance of paying attention to the connections between the local and the planetary in cultural work. Heise writes for the need to put 'environmentalist reflection on the importance of a "sense of place" in communication with recent theories of globalisation and cosmopolitanism' while DeLoughrey and George Handley argue for the role of place in attending to the 'transformative impact' of global empires in postcolonial writing.[26]

Awareness of how a more planetary perspective might enable a reading of literature alongside the demands of shifting and intersecting geographic scales is something that has already begun to be observed in critical work on oceanic literature. Cohen points out that 'literary studies across the twentieth century preferred scales that came from territory and terrestrial existence' and that the maritime world with its islands, coasts, archipelagos, ships and oceans introduces 'new geographic and spatial scales' to the discipline.[27] This echoes more general work on

---

[24] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 10.
[25] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 7.
[26] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.13, and 'Introduction: Towards an Aesthetics of the Earth', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3-39 (p. 4).
[27] Margaret Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 657-662 (p. 658).

reconceptualising the coast, Christopher Bear writing that rethinking the coast as an assemblage of rhythms and processes encourages a 'disregard for classical notions of scale and neatly bounded spaces'.[28] Such disdain for stable experiences of scale provoked by the material geography of the coast reflects Clark's call for 'creatively deranging' literary texts by embedding them in 'multiple and even contradictory [scale] frames at the same time'.[29] While Clark is quick to state that literary studies has failed to carry out such procedures, Cohen's awareness of the changing spatialities introduced by attention to the oceanic and littoral suggests that Clark has not been looking in the right places for critical work and literary texts engaging with the kind of derangement he calls for.'

Archipelagic literary criticism has also evidenced similar thinking, John Brannigan arguing that one implication of such writing is an emphasis on how 'the social and cultural connections of the people who live in the archipelago always exceed the limits of state or national formations'.[30] Both Brannigan and Kerrigan point out that this wider spatial perspective seems inherent in the notion of the archipelago, the *OED* defining archipelago as '[a]ny sea, or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands', emphasising scope and interconnection over the bounded unity of the island. In relation to the New Nature Writing of Deakin and Macfarlane, Jos Smith argues that thinking in terms of the archipelagic provides 'a framework on the scale of the local, but with potential to connect up into

---

[28] Christopher Bear, 'Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery', *Cultural Geographies*, 20.1 (2012), 21-41 (p. 36).
[29] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 108.
[30] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 10.

the global in such a way that remains grounded and protective of its complexity.'[31]

This thesis will add to a developing understanding of the relationship of place to questions of scale and planetary processes (whether climate change or economic production and consumption), seeing the poetry of the coast as important forms of such thinking, the coast itself a ground particularly amenable to interactions of location, scale and globalisation. In part, this means taking thinking developed in other areas (DeLoughrey's work in postcolonial literature and Heise's more American and explicitly ecological focus) and applying it to the often ignored relationship of the coast and contemporary British poetry. At the same time, this thesis will contribute to a more complex notion of archipelagic thinking, adding to a sense in which the archipelagic helps mediate the relationship of place to world.

While Smith argues for a more globally inclined sense of the archipelagic, archipelagic literary studies in Britain is still broadly understood at the level of national polities: the relation of English, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish identities and, to use Kerrigan's phrase, their 'influence around the archipelago'.[32] Archipelagic literary criticism is seen as a 'devolutionary approach' which, as John Brannigan puts it, 'implies a plural and connective vision quite at odds with the cultural and political homogenisation which lay at the heart of the Unionist project.'[33] That is, while such writing is critical about constructions of British identity it is

---

[31] Jos Smith, 'An archipelagic literature: re-framing "The New Nature Writing"', *Green Letters*, 17.1 (2013) 5-15 (p. 15).
[32] John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 12.
[33] Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, p. 12, and Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, p. 6.

around questions of unionism and devolution that such work often revolves.[34]

Elizabeth DeLoughrey observes that 'maritime theories often valorise transoceanic diaspora without adequately questioning the historical and economic *roots* for migrant *routes*' and a similar criticism must be made of archipelagic thinking.[35] The archipelago is often held up as an emancipatory spatial formation in literary and cultural studies, one that replaces the dominance of imperial or national centres with an interconnected sense of localities and peoples.[36]

While this is certainly the case, there is, alongside the interlocutions of Caribbean nations and the devolved United Kingdom, an alternative sense of the archipelago: islands of the super-rich and tax havens for billionaires with their relationships to urban enclaves of world financial wealth such as Canary Wharf (itself built on the Isle of Dogs) and La Défense in Paris. This practice of offshoring is, John Urry notes, not just essential to a wide variety of processes, from manufacturing to energy waste to pleasure, but, importantly, 'linked together in various chains of concealment'.[37] These are not isolated islands of obscene wealth but (both materially and symbolically) archipelagos of global enrichment, what Pankaj Mishra has recently called 'a transatlantic ecosystem of corporate philanthropy, think-tanks and high-altitude conclaves'.[38]

---

[34] For example see Christopher Harvie's 'seaborne chord' arrayed against a 'land-based core' in *A Floating Commonwealth: Politics, Culture and Technology on Britain's Atlantic Coast, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.
[35] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 26.
[36] For example see *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
[37] John Urry, *Offshoring* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p.3.
[38] Pankaj Mishra, 'What Is Great about Ourselves', *London Review of Books*, 39.18 (21 September 2017), 3-7 (p. 3).

This is not to say archipelagic thinking is not useful when considering the relationship of place and coast in contemporary British poetry, in fact the presence of offshoring emphasises the importance of the archipelagic as a spatial formation across modern life. What is needed is a more refined sense of the archipelagic. One in which the archipelagic, in a specifically British context, is not reducible to questions of devolution but becomes a spatial sensibility infused with considerations of the global, orientated as a spatiality which mediates and connects place and world but also recognises the ways in which archipelagic and littoral thinking can be used to encode different or new experiences of blockage, isolation and separation.

One way this thesis will contribute to developing a more complex sense of the archipelagic is by addressing the often easy slippage, both rhetorically and conceptually, between local and planetary (something Heise is perhaps guilty of doing with the title of her book: *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*), acknowledging that questions of place and world still remain mediated and complicated by the spatial experiences of region and nation. This will emerge as an awareness of how the texts in this thesis respond to the littoral not just as an abstract, cultural image but as specific material landscapes, with their own idiosyncratic social and political lineages.

The archipelagic is, here, a spatial and cultural frame through which the interrelations of various coastal regions around Britain are read as interacting with each other. It is also understood in this thesis as a spatial figure in which the relation between local coastal territory and global spatial forces can be mediated and made visible. Similarly, coast, shoreline and littoral all have their own distinct meanings in this research — although the nature of these geographies, and the writing about them, means these distinctions never remain stable and definite.

The immediate site of interest for this thesis is in how certain poets respond to the material terrain of the coast and the attendant cultural and social associations of these particular geographies. In this capacity, coast refers to a larger geographic or spatial trope which includes not just coastal settlements, ports, waves and beaches but also hinterland (those inland areas connected to and shaped by the processes and activity focused on the coast) and the horizon (in both its material and cultural significances). If the coast here conjures an overview of a variety of terrain, something of a scopic, bird's-eye view, then the terms coastline and shore(line) refer more specifically to the material edges of the terrestrial, from coastal cliffs to beachfronts and the ports and settlements which are (often precariously) perched at the places where land and water meet.

This thesis also makes use of the term littoral. The littoral zone also refers to the same intertidal zone as shore or coastline, although the term is employed with a degree of flexibility across various disciplines. This thesis often employs the littoral especially when cultural ideas around the liminality and transgressiveness of the shore are activated. This is because the littoral encompasses (geographically but also often culturally) a greater sense of the aquatic than shore and coastline. These are terms which still evoke a sense of the lone wanderer looking out to sea, rooted on the side of land, while the littoral seems to more actively trouble associations of terrestrial and aquatic.

At the same time, the poets in this thesis are often looking to problematise clear distinctions of sea and land, and through this ideas of place and belonging. At certain points this means a term like coastline, which still evokes the solid outline of an island country, feels inadequate to reflect the fragmented and contingent topographies being explored. In such instances coast or shore may be used to refer to a sense of these landscapes which is still focused more on the material experience of the

intertidal zone but whose representation demonstrates an awareness of how these spaces both shape, and are shaped by, the wider social and geographic processes covered under the scope of the coast.

The poems featured in this thesis, therefore, register not so much the disjuncture between local and global but the sometimes smooth, sometimes elided and sometimes antagonistic meeting of place, nation and planet. The texts selected as demonstrating, in a variety of ways, how literature can both reflect and contribute to these fluctuating scales of contemporary geographic experience all exhibit an interest in what Peter Barry describes as 'the loco-specific poem'. This is a poem that, whether through the use of specific place names or local history, foregrounds a particular geographic location. Such 'cartographic precision' also 'presupposes to some extent a degree of literary realism', where the poem relates to the 'outer life' of the society it is produced within.[39]

The focus of the following chapters are, therefore, on poets and poems which demonstrate a deep, and often temporally sustained, relation with specific coastal locales. This temporal dimension allows for a tracing of shifting scales of geographic experience as the felt experience of contemporary globalisation changes, and becomes more intense, over a poet's career. At the same time it is important to note that these texts exploit the fluid quality of the littoral to pull at the very cartographic specificity which in part defines them.

The first chapter will explore the poetry of Peter Riley at the Llŷn Peninsula in North Wales. His sequence, *Sea Watches*, will be read in relation to the work of R. S. Thomas, who also wrote of the peninsula, and Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach', exploring how Riley reworks Arnold's 'sea

---

[39] Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 48-49, 52.

of faith' in a more sceptical and fractured age.[40] This chapter traces how Riley explores the contemporary sustainability of a poetics of philosophical reflection and metaphysical questioning at the scale of the individual, asking if the nation can supply a secure ground on which to explore notions of soul, love and the meaning of life. Of particular interest is the relationship of material features of the landscape such as the horizon, sea and sky to scales of embodied human perception which touch on both the material and transcendent.

Chapter Two shifts the scale to the regional in Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence*. This chapter explores how the sequence uses a variety of textual voices and discourses to investigate contemporary and historic disputes concerning land ownership and coastal management. In doing this, the chapter works through Mulford's complex notions of place and belonging which emerge through a paradoxical celebration of loss (one which is conceptual as well as physical, given the fragility of the English east coast against storms and flooding), and how this relates to specifically female experiences of patriarchal forms of community and nation.

The third chapter changes tack slightly by focusing on the work of two poets, Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson, deeply invested in the estuarine geography of Liverpool. This chapter explore how both poets construct and interrogate memories and histories of the city at different scales, Hampson making use of the long durée to trace Liverpool's development from the seventeenth to twentieth century while Simpson's poetry is rooted in intimate, familial recollections of his childhood neighbourhood. In different ways, both poets deploy notions of transnational space, drawing on Liverpool's history as a port, to interrogate

---

[40] Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach', *Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Valentine Cunningham and Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 117-118 (p. 118).

the ways memories of the city are spatialized, exploring the role of such spatialities in disturbing normative associations of place and home.

Finally, Chapter Four will focus on the work of Anglo-Welsh poet Robert Minhinnick. Minhinnick's work is deeply connected to the environs of the coastal town of Porthcawl and the coastline of South Wales more generally. This chapter will look at how attention to Minhinnick's use of the waste and rubbish which wash up on the Porthcawl beach provides a way of reading Minhinnick's earlier and later writing together. By doing this it is possible to trace how its territorial anxieties about occupation and sustainability develop from the level of national experience to one which is radically global in outlook, in the process provoking an awareness of scale and agency which is both microscopic and expansive.

Taken together, this thesis will demonstrate that any exploration of the shifting scales of geographic experience at the coast in contemporary poetry should not be confined by ideas of cartography and physical distance. Rather, any work which wishes to record the complexity of archipelago thinking in contemporary literature must approach ideas of scale, place and interconnection not just as the 'infinite possibilities of zooming into and out of local, regional, and global views' Heise defines, but in terms of scales of time, emotion, morality, politics and economic processes, among many other dynamics, as they interact with, shape, and are shaped by, geographic experiences.[41]

[41] Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, p. 11.

The Oceanic Turn and the Developing Line: Critical and Theoretical Responses to the Coast

The coast has constantly been a site of intense human interest, crucial to the reproduction of both communal and national life. Despite this, study of the coast has often been subsumed within attention to the maritime. Yet the absence of the oceans themselves from critical accounts of human life has historically been so severe that Cohen has suggested the term 'hydrophasia' be used.[42] Over the last decade or so this hydrophasia has begun to dissipate as a whole range of academic disciplines experience a so-called oceanic turn. What follows is a brief account of this oceanic turn as a theoretical groundwork from which sophisticated readings of the littoral in relation to place and scale can emerge, while also noting the continued omission of the shore as a distinct topography in its own right.

In deepening how the archipelagic is deployed in literary studies, this thesis argues that what must be resolved is not just a tension between the oceanic and the terrestrial (one which echoes the slippages of local and global) but a more subtle spatial mesh of oceanic, littoral and terrestrial, in which the coastal emerges as a space of becoming and entanglement, reflecting at material and symbolic levels the circulation of local, regional and planetary spatial experiences.[43] Subsequently, there is an overview of the diverse critical responses to the coastline itself, taking in theoretical as well as non-fiction and literary accounts. Demonstrated here is a broad sense in which thinking about the coast has developed from a defining edge (albeit one that is crossed and porous) to a sense of the shoreline as fractured, fragmented and in a process of continual assembly, becoming

[42] Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', p. 658.
[43] The sense of mesh here is drawn from Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p.28.

amenable to writing which examines the interrelationships of place, region and world. As such the focus is on the cultural readings of the coastline which emerge alongside shifting understandings of the physical geography of coast and shore.

The Oceanic Turn

The oceanic turn is a critical development traceable in a wide variety of academic disciplines. For critics like Antonis Balasopoulos and John R. Gillis it is an understanding of 'the centrality of the maritime realm in the gestation of global modernity', a 'belated recognition of the close relationship between modern western culture and the sea.'[44] The primary benefits of taking the oceanic into account is its ability to disrupt and challenge received notions about the terrestrial developments of western society. Glen O'Hara notes that attention to the sea results in 'a radical "de-centring"',[45] while William Boelhower emphasises the multiplicity of the '[o]ceanic order', that the sea resists being analysed as a single unit.[46]

Of particular importance in triggering this reassessment of the sea is the work of Philip Steinberg. In articles such as 'The Maritime Mystique' and his book *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, Steinberg traces three spatial models of the ocean which he links to structural conditions within the spatiality of late capitalism. For Steinberg these are the ocean as an

---

[44] Antonis Balasopoulos, '"Suffer a Sea Change": Spatial Crisis, Maritime Modernity, and the Politics of Utopia', *Cultural Critique*, 63 (Spring, 2006), 122-156 (p. 130) and John R. Gillis, 'The Blue Humanities', *Humanities*, 34.3 (May-June, 2013) <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/mayjune/feature/the-blue-humanities> [Accessed 14 June 2017]

[45] Glen O'Hara, '"The Sea Is Swinging into View": Modern British Maritime History in a Globalised World', *The English Historical Review*, 124.510 (October, 2009), 1109-1134 (p. 1117).

[46] William Boelhower, 'The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix', *American Literary History*, 20.1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008), 83-101 (p. 91).

empty void, 'annihilated' by the flows and patterns of hypermobile capital, the ocean as a resource-rich but fragile system requiring sustainable management, and the ocean as a source of consumable spectacle.[47]

Steinberg's theorisation of the changing spatialities of the ocean informs much of the analysis in this thesis, linking as it does with a more general refashioning of understandings of space and place by radical geographers and spatial theorists. The coast is, therefore, understood in this thesis as being produced by, and in turn affecting, changing spatialities of both the oceanic and the terrestrial.

The oceanic turn is particularly prevalent in recent attempts to work through and rethink experiences of imperialism and colonialism. David Armitage and Michael Braddick write in their introduction to *The British Atlantic World* that, beginning around 1500, 'kaleidoscopic movement[s] of people, goods, and ideas through the Atlantic basin created networks of kinship and exchange, which bound together expanding communities of settlement and trade', demonstrating the centrality of the seas to projects of nineteenth century imperialism.[48] In this sense, the oceanic turn is also about re-historicizing the development of contemporary, western life and, by extension, the underlying social and economic forces which helped produce the modern world

While the oceanic turn resonates with the lived experience of an increasingly interconnected world, it is also informed by longer intellectual projects of deconstruction and hybridity. These critical approaches seek to question and break down often European centred understandings of world history and depictions of social life. The oceanic turn fits with this critical

---

[47] Philip E. Steinberg, 'The Maritime Mystique: Sustainable Development, Capital mobility, and Nostalgia in the World Ocean', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 17.4 (1999), 403-426.
[48] 'Introduction', in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-12 (p. 7).

language of flows and assemblages which emerges from the work of theorists like Deleuze and Guattari. As Boelhower says, one can see the aims of this 'new Atlantic studies matrix', as 'turning the geographies of Africa, Europe, South America, and North America inside out'.[49] Despite this renewed interest in the vast watery expanses of the planet, attention to the coast as a site of specific interest continues to be underserved. One outcome of this thesis is to show ways in which the coastal can emerge as a space of concerted study in its own right, connected to these oceanic concerns but also distinct from them as well.

The Developing Line

The general absence of the coast from oceanic accounts of the western world is even more notable when one considers the vast amount of literary and cultural work that depicts tides, beaches, shores, coastal cliffs and storms. In 'Dover Beach', perhaps the paradigmatic littoral text in English language poetry, Matthew Arnold describes the 'long line of spray / Where the ebb meets the moon-blanched land.'[50] The notion of the coast as a 'long line' will be the starting point for this section's movement between different conceptions of the shore. This is not simply because line here allows for a useful thinking together of the geographic and the poetic, a sense in which the modern, fragmented, shoreline, criss-crossed by capital, migration and biological activity, can be traced in the 'tides / Expanse and covering […] Movement / Filtering' of a text like Mark Dickinson's *Littoral*.[51]

---

[49] Boelhower, 'The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix', p. 86.
[50] Arnold, 'Dover Beach', p. 117.
[51] Mark Dickinson, *Littoral* (Kenilworth: Prest Roots Press, 2007), p. 7.

According to the *OED*, 'environment' can be defined as '[t]he action of circumnavigating, encompassing, or surrounding something; the state of being encompassed or surrounded'. In a very real sense the line of the coast reinforces and troubles this definition. For an island nation it is both the enveloping limit of the state and the point where it is exposed and porous. For a coastal community it is the site which provides meaning and purpose to human activity but also where the environment of the community becomes frayed, exposed to the world outside. As an environment in its own right the littoral is difficult to demarcate as an area of scientific and ecological study. Cambers points out that '[o]ne of the main problems with coastal systems is the definition of the boundaries of the particular system'.[52] Poetry can be responsive to these shifts, tracing fractures in scale, self-identity and notions of belonging, as well as providing language which thrives in the ambivalent boundaries of littoral landscapes, able to claim such spaces as sites not only of dissolution but of potential intellectual and emotional flourishing.[53]

Arnold's line in part recalls an implicitly unbroken line of western, imperial civilization, from the Hellenic period to the British Empire, and it is with the Greeks that considerations of the coast in western thought can often begin. For James Romm, the Greeks saw the coastline as a welcome limit, making the boundless earth intelligible. This 'separation of earth from the infinite space' worked its way into their cosmologies through the concept of '*peirar*'. Here the shoreline which delimits the island becomes the Ocean, 'the vast "river" thought to surround the landmass formed by

---

[52] G. Cambers, 'Temporal Scales in Coastal Erosion Systems', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 1.2 (1976), 246-256 (p. 247).
[53] William Empson's observation that 'the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry' seem particularly applicable to poetic writing at the coast. See *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 21.

Europe, Africa, and Asia.'[54] One reason for the articulation of the shore as a reassuring barrier has been the conceptualisation of the sea as void. In *The Enchafèd Flood*, Auden describes how, for classical civilizations, the sea was 'that state of barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilisation has emerged'.[55]

The sea as chaotic space is picked up in Genesis where God creates the firmament 'in the midst of the waters'.[56] This becomes 'the hoary deep, a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound' which Satan traverses in book two of *Paradise Lost*.[57] Similarly, in the twentieth century, Gaston Bachelard has described the sea as 'inhuman water' which fails 'to serve man directly.'[58] From this perspective, the coast, as Alain Corbin suggests, is 'nothing but ruins', accounting for the irregularity and the incomprehensibility of its shape.[59]

This conceptualisation of the empty sea has, as Steinberg points out, persisted into modernity and often underwritten a capitalist rationale of exploitation and circulation.[60] Hence Washington Irving's nineteenth century description of the sea as that 'vast space of waters that separates the hemispheres', only there to be traversed by imperial power.[61] As such the notion of peirar is still present in Ralph Waldo Emerson's 'The Method

---

[54] James Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.
[55] W. H. Auden, *The Enchafèd Flood: or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 6.
[56] Genesis 1. 2-6.
[57] John Milton, 'Paradise Lost', *John Milton*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 355-618 (p. 397).
[58] Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. by Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983), p. 22.
[59] Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The discovery of the seaside 1750-1840*, trans. by Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 4.
[60] Steinberg, 'The Maritime Mystique', p. 409.
[61] Washington Irving, 'The Voyage', *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 14-19 (p. 14).

of Nature'. Here '[t]he ocean is everywhere the same', 'has no character until seen with the shore or the ship', and is 'filled with expression' only when it is confined 'by [the] granite rocks' of the coast and presence of human activity.[62]

The sense of the coast as limit also informs the position of the shore as a defining national border; 'it is where England stops' after all.[63] The most notable evocation of this littoral border may also be one of its earliest in John of Gaunt's speech from *Richard II*. Here England is figured as a 'fortress built by Nature for herself […] This precious stone set in the silver sea, / Which serves it in the office of a wall'.[64] Part of the historic construction of English national identity therefore stems from this literary delineating of its coastline, the 'water-wallèd bulwark' of Shakespeare's *King John*, which provides a realm in which social and political power can be securely exercised.[65]

The destabilisation of this sense of the coast is in part a product of the permeability of the material shoreline, its constant crossing by bodies and ships. Peter Murphy points out that as long as Britain has been an island there has been evidence of immigration by sea. Despite this historical continuity of movement and exchange, the coast remains a space of anxiety and threat, as can be seen in the responses to the

---

[62] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Nature; Addresses, and Lecture', *Essays and Lectures*, ed. by Joel Porte (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), pp. 1-230 (p. 122). One might wish to examine what is classed as human activity here, did not the indigenous population of the Americas or Australia help define their shores before the arrival of Europeans?

[63] Anne-Julia Zwierlein, '"Gripping to a wet rock": Coastal Erosion and the Land-Sea Divide as Existential/Ecocritical Tropes in Contemporary British and Irish Fiction', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 53-69 (p. 54).

[64] William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002), II.1.43-48.

[65] William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. by L. A. Beaurline (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), II.1.21-30.

Mediterranean refugee crisis, replacing earlier fears of maritime invasion by state powers.[66] Here the European stretch of the Mediterranean coastline is pulled into what Angela Mitropoulos describes as the 'global border-industrial complex', where the border is always 'a matter of the periphery, boundaries that are seen as both natural and necessary'.[67]

In this manner, notions of the archipelagic and littoral as connective and hybrid spaces are shown to be circumvented and opposed, that, at material, social and political levels, the coast can still produce a sense of containment, limit and separation. Thinking in terms of archipelagos of wealthy (predominantly white) countries underpins what Amitav Ghosh calls 'the politics of the armed lifeboat'.[68] A response to climate change where powerful western nations seek, both materially and ideologically, to isolate themselves from the global south and the devastations of ecological destruction, while still exploiting these countries for economic gain.

The necessity of having to map and navigate the coastline, both in order to assert national boundaries and to aid economic expansion, has seen it marked by the history of western rationalism. Paul Carter demonstrates the importance of the coast to expressions of enlightenment thought, arguing that the shore not only signalled colonial horizon and the safety of harbours but was also 'a meta-geographical proposition', giving definition to everything that lay within its boundary. Carter argues that 'only as sources of legitimate speculation, as sites of unbounded advance, could they [coasts] be recorded'. Smoothing the curve of the coast, reconceptualising it 'as a *coastline*', was tied to a conceptualisation of

---

[66] Peter, Murphy, *The English Coast: A History and a Prospect* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 146.
[67] Angela Mitropoulos and Matthew Keim, 'Cross-Border Operations', *The New Inquiry* (18 November 2015) <http://thenewinquiry.com/features/cross-border-operations/> [Accessed 14 June 2017]
[68] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 148.

cartography as an expression of the ever-expanding domain of Enlightenment knowledge. Carter suggests that to acknowledge the inlets, gaps and fjords of coastal topography was 'horrible to contemplate' and 'an offence against logic'. [69]

Yet, while this scientific interest in the coast binds the terrain into the temporal and spatial dynamics of modernity, the coast itself is a dynamic and shifting geography which causes problems for a technical, scientific rationality. As Mark Monmonier says, the coast line on nautical charts is 'more than just a line', its changing geography 'shorten[s] the shelf life of nautical charts, on which its representation demands careful measurement and prudent compromise.'[70] Similarly, Carter suggests that the Enlightenment project to linearize the coast exposed the paradoxes of Enlightenment scientific thought, contrasting an ambition to categorise the world with 'an awareness of the approximate and constructed nature of its designs.'[71] Mandelbrot's reconceptualisation of the British coast as fractal, undefinable, and self-similarly repeating signals a shift during the twentieth century in this project, an engagement with the shore in all its fractured complexity.[72]

The coast's resistance to cartographic impulses reflects one of the more persistent representations of the shore in western culture: that of the littoral as a space of transgression and liminality. Christopher Singer argues that '[t]he shore is transformation spatialized', and, despite being a place which seems to offer up binary distinctions of inside and outside,

---

[69] Paul Carter, 'Dark with Excess of Bright: Mapping the Coastlines of Knowledge', in *Mappings*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 125-147 (pp. 125-127).
[70] Mark S. Monmonier, *Coast Lines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 2-3, 1.
[71] Carter, 'Dark with Excess of Bright', p. 130.
[72] B. B. Mandelbrot, 'How long is the coast of Britain?: Statistical self-similarity and fractional dimension', *Science*, 156 (1967), 636-638 (p. 636).

water and land, culture and nature, 'the shore itself is not afflicted with such rigid distinctions'.[73] For Shakespeare the littoral is, famously, the domain of Ariel's sea change and Gloucester and Edgar's confrontation with the mad Lear on the cliff-tops of Dover. Here the lines between sanity and insanity are transgressed, Edgar noting that there is '[r]eason in [Lear's] madness.'[74]

That the coast disturbs the lines between life and death, the material and abstract, helps in the production of another understanding of the liminal shore which, though potentially transgressive, is of a different temperament. Jason Orton and Ken Worpole figure the exposed coastline of Essex as 'a place of redemption and revelation'.[75] An oblique sense of revelation underpins Seamus Heaney's 'Peninsula' where the speaker, having driven '[f]or a day all round the peninsula', returns able to 'uncode all landscapes', having been exposed to '[t]he glazed foreshore and silhouetted log, / That rock where breakers [are] shredded into rags'.[76] This epiphanic quality to the landscape also underpins perceptions of the British coast as numinous. Jonathan Raban writes of this shimmering, immaterial space that 'no matter how exhaustively charted it is, or how old and familiar its history and internal topography, [the coast] looks so imaginary from this sea distance' as to be 'not *real*.'[77]

An important feature of the coast as liminal space is the role of the horizon. Anna Ryan emphasises that 'the visual experience of horizon' provides a sense of scale and perspective for the human figure embedded

---

[73] Christopher Singer, *Sea Change: The Shore from Shakespeare to Banville* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 11.
[74] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. by Jay L. Halio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), IV.5.167.
[75] Jason Orton and Ken Worpole, *The New English Landscape* (London: Field Station, 2013), p. 49.
[76] Seamus Heaney, 'Peninsula', *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 11.
[77] Jonathan Raban, *Coasting* (London: Collins Harvill, 1986), p. 15.

in the coastal landscape.[78] This echoes Edward Casey's emphasis on the horizon as 'world-creating'. For Casey the horizon has the 'unique capacity to bring earth and sky into active contiguity with one another while respecting their differences as distinct cosmic regions.'[79] In other words it provides definition to an individual sense of location, bringing the vastness of open sea and sky (another space marked by false notions of emptiness and limitlessness) into a positively bounded sense of place. Didier Maleuvre recognises the role of human perception in forming the horizon but sees this less as a positive confirmation of place and more as 'the trace of human vision seeing itself out'. For Maleuvre it is this quality of dissolution, a sense of the horizon as symbolising 'the shifting frontline between knowledge and reality', which provides for the shore as a liminal and even potentially transcendent space.[80]

Gillis writes that '[t]hese horizon are temporal as well as geographical, allowing us access to other times as well as other places.'[81] This is picked up by Paul Virilio in his study of the remains of Nazi bunkers and fortifications along the French Atlantic coast. For Virilio, the horizon seems to open into a space of unfolding potential where '[e]verything was suddenly vast'. Virilio notes that the fortifications themselves seem strangely atemporal, 'an empty ark or a little temple minus the cult', and seem arranged not for 'the defense [*sic*] of a passageway […] or ports', rather arrayed against 'the void of the oceanic horizon.' [82] These Nazi

---

[78] Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 25.
[79] Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 11.
[80] Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (London: University of California Press, 2011), p. 2.
[81] John R. Gillis, 'Island Sojourns', *Geographical Review*, 97.2 (April, 2007), 274-287 (p. 274).
[82] Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology*, trans. by George Collins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), pp. 11-12.

remnants seem, for Virilio, less a relic of the recent war and more like wardens against the encroachment of a possible future.

The temporal transgressions of the horizon are reflected in a more general disorientation of chronological scales and rhythms at the coast. Time 'is no longer functional [at the shore]. The cyclical rhythm of time is blurred by the singularity and on-going nature of their surroundings.'[83] In a more binary conception, Rachel Carson notes the 'dual nature' of the sea, 'changing with the swing of the tides' but also an ever present 'ancient world'.[84] Such temporal slippage is exploited by Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*. Here, the littoral helps link the present-day poet with earlier images of a masculine northern identity (the merging of Bloodaxe's ship and the poet's sailing boat in part two for example) and the attempted reconciliation of past and present in part five is explicitly coastal in its setting: '[s]ilver blades of surf / fall crisp on rustling grit'.[85]

While the shore has often been identified as a site of seaside hedonism, a place of play, cross-class mixing, and sexual exploration, the transhistorical quality of the coast has also seen the shore positioned as a place of utopian expression.[86] Phillip Vannini and Jonathan Taggart incorporate parts of Canada's Pacific coastline, and the mobility of ferry travel, into a conception of the 'off-grid', a 'space to survive outside modern networks of power and consumption.[87] Charles Olson sees the discovery of the Pacific as opening 'the NEW HISTORY', while Kenneth

---

[83] Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea*, p. 2.
[84] Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea* (London: Panther Books, 1965), p.11.
[85] Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts* (Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2009), p. 31.
[86] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 80-81.
[87] Phillip Vannini and Jonathan Taggart, *Off the Grid: Re-Assembling Domestic Life* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 3-4, ix.

White sees the Atlantic arc that stretches from Ullapool in the Scottish Highlands to the southern tip of Portugal as '[a] space for projects'.[88]

Yet this emancipatory quality can often be tenuous, Christopher Connery writing that, despite Olson's claims for the Pacific, any liberatory ideals were 'naturalized' through 'U.S. capital's mobilization of the Pacific Rim myth in the late cold war years'.[89] Barry Cunliffe problematizes White's Atlantic arc by pointing out that, in 1989, a general assembly of the Conférence des Régions Périphériques Maritimes created a commission called 'Arc Atlantique' to help the economic regeneration of this littoral region, placing it firmly within modern relations of capitalist development.[90] Furthermore Michael Taussig traces the role of contemporary capitalism in transforming the beaches and working-class character of Sydney, writing that this 'reconfiguration of money and the sea began and has been completed in my lifetime' resulting in the displacement of organic play by 'the market of fantasy.'[91]

Both the transgressive nature of the shore and its reworking by forces of global capital have seen conceptions of the coast shift from boundary line to something more fractured and contingent. This is particularly prominent in postcolonial studies, where the peoples of the Caribbean have long been exposed to the effects of transnational, maritime economic and political power. Mandy Bloomfield draws on the language of the Martiniquan writer Édouard Glissant in exploring the poetry of Kamau

---

[88] Charles Olson, *Call me Ishmael: A Study of Melville* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 109, and Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2006), p. 24.
[89] Christopher L. Connery, 'The Oceanic Feeling and The Regional Imaginary', in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 284-311 (p. 306).
[90] Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC-AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 19, 18.
[91] Michael Taussig, 'The Beach (A Fantasy)', *Critical Enquiry*, 26.2 (2000), 248-278 (p. 257).

Brathwaite, writing that '[t]he fragmented arc of Brathwaite's archipelago brings into focus […] the interplay of land and sea which is so central to the material and imaginative geographies of the Caribbean'.[92]

Similarly, taking up Mary Louise Pratt's language of the 'contact zone' opens up the coast to the study of power dynamics as they cross and re-shape the shore. For Pratt, a contact zone allows a way of viewing the relations between colonizer and colonized 'not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power'.[93] The coast can therefore be seen not as a space of division but as a connective tissue exposed to the fragmentation of power relations.

Following in the wake of these efforts to see not just a single coastline but multiple co-dependent coasts, has been recent work to rethink waves and beach in terms of a language of assemblage. By looking at embodied material experiences of the coastline Christopher Bear and Jon Anderson emphasise the multiple, co-constitutive quality of coastal spaces, 'the interdependent and provisional coming together of a range of components: sea, swell, wind, continental shelf, reef, tide, etc.' as Anderson puts it.[94] Viewing the coast as an assemblage allows for a revaluation of traditional notions of agency, Bear suggesting that it 'leads to the inclusion of actants such as fish and other marine wildlife, and encourages critical focus on the relationships between the stability and/or mobility of these'.[95]

---

[92] Mandy Bloomfield, 'A sea that diffracts', *Foma* 1.1 (2011), 1–10 (p. 5).
[93] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.
[94] Jon Anderson, 'Relational places: the surfed wave as assemblage and convergence', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30.4 (2012), 570-587 (p. 575).
[95] Bear, 'Assembling the sea', p. 23.

The notion of coast as assemblage can be traced particularly in the chapters that work through the intertextual poems of Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence* and Robert Hampson's *Seaport*. Here littoral space is not just an assemblage of waves, winds and marine animals but also, as this thesis argues, the literary and cultural representations which inform human understanding of the shore. Through attention to the way both physical processes and language are constantly on the move, susceptible to a critical discourse of territorialisation and deterritorialization, this thesis contributes to a growing understanding of the coast as a place which, in Sheller and Urry's sense of the term, is 'economically, politically, and culturally produced through the multiple networked mobilities of capital, persons, objects, signs, and information'.[96]

While the oceanic turn has reoriented spatial understandings of a multiplicity of disciplines away from the terrestrial, it often overlooks the shore as a particular place of interest in its own right. This section has brought attention to a definite sense of the coastline as a distinct topography with specific theoretical, social, and literary lineages. Yet, it is important to note that, in charting a general shift in conceptions of the coast from the thick line of the map to a more mobile and contingent geography, the divisions implied here are themselves permeable. The coast is never exclusively experienced as one or other of these formulations, in fact a prominent aspect of the coast is a radical ambivalence and synchronicity in which the same subject can experience antagonistic conceptualisations of the shore simultaneously. The coast has never simply meant one thing. It allows access to a range of competing and antagonistic

[96] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Places to play, places in play', in *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*, ed. by Mimi Sheller and John Urry (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-10 (p. 6).

experiences that have shaped implicit and unacknowledged poetic traditions in the English language.

Place, Scale, and Spatiality

Emerson writes that 'the point of greatest interest is where the land and water meet.'[97] So far attention has been placed on the maritime spatialities which have affected representations of the shore. Yet, as Emerson suggests, experiences of the littoral are shaped as much by the terrestrial as they are by the oceanic. The next section will, therefore, focus on changes in the way land-based notions of space and place have been theorised and how this has contributed to the breaking up of the coastline. This section will also outline the ways in which changing theories of space and place have become amenable to the thinking of literary critics, allowing for a sophisticated exploration of the relationship between topography and its literary representations. This thesis will demonstrate how poetic writing on the coast reflects the demands of radical geographers to think of space as multiple and dynamic and can provide a source of geographic knowledge about the shore, and experiences of the shifting scales of place, region and planet, that are often difficult to quantify in more explicitly geographic discourses.

Tim Cresswell writes that place 'seems to speak for itself'.[98] Yet this apparent self-explanatory quality can prevent a thorough understanding of the term, obscuring the ideological biases implicit in seemingly obvious deployments of 'place'. This lack of self-reflexivity is problematic as notions of space and place permeate everyday life. From the business growth

---

[97] Emerson, 'Nature; Addresses, and Lecture', p. 122.
[98] Tim Cresswell, *Place: a short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 1.

strategies of transnational corporations to the road safety plans of local councils, from the masses of people moved across borders by humanitarian crises to the way a body navigates through the city, space and place are fundamental dimensions of our being in the world. Without place 'there would be neither language, nor action nor being […] There would be no "where" within which history could take place.'[99] Human existence is, therefore, dependent on ideological relationships with, and experiences of, space and place.

Historically space was conceived of as an infinite, empty container. This is the space of Euclid, Newton and Descartes, space amenable to standardised measurement. The space of scientific rationalism. David Harvey links this empty space to 'the space of private property and other bounded territorial designations', space from which 'all uncertainties and ambiguities could in principle be banished'.[100] This is the notion of space which can be found in renderings of the sea as an empty arena, primed to be annihilated by the flows of capital accumulation. Not only does this produce an understanding of place as discrete, bounded locations, separated by featureless expanses of space, it also affects the conceptual relationship between space and time.

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant views time and space as two distinct, but fundamental, *a priori* dimensions of experience.[101] While Kant does not necessarily privilege one domain over the other he is working within a western European philosophical tradition which Doreen Massey has argued positions time above space as the primary area of human

---

[99] Joseph Grange, 'Place, body and situation', in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 71-84 (p. 71).
[100] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 121.
[101] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, rev. 2nd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 80.

activity.[102] Henri Bergson, for example, argues 'that we cannot make movement out of immobilities, nor time out of space.'[103] In Bergson, space is viewed as divisible, in contrast to the (privileged) indivisibility of duration. Space exists then without time, as something segmented and static.[104] Edward Casey has gone further, suggesting that as space has been relegated by time, place has been subordinate to both.[105] This can be seen in John Locke's statement of place as simply a 'modification of distance'.[106]

Yet, since roughly Einstein and the elaboration of space-time, 'bounded territories in absolute space' have given way 'to a multiplicity of locations', raising the prestige of both space and place, as well as questions about where one ends and the other begins.[107] Space and place become fluid, dynamic and contingent, echoing and informing the reconceptualisation of coastal spaces as a mobile assemblage, opening the topographic to movement between local, regional and global as well as the reciprocal slippages of cultural representation between and across these levels. Michel de Certeau writes that '*space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements'. While place for de Certeau implies 'an indication of stability', it too takes on some of this new dynamism, becoming 'an instantaneous configuration of positions.'[108]

---

[102] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2010), pp. 22-24.
[103] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950), p.115.
[104] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 190-191.
[105] Casey, *The Fate of Place*, p. x.
[106] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.164.
[107] Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, p. 122.
[108] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. by Steven Rendall (London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 117.

Deleuze and Guattari argue for the rhizome in contrast to the tree or root as a key conceptual spatial figure, writing that '[t]here are no points or positions in a rhizome […] There are only lines.'[109] This rethinking of space in terms of vectors and lines of flight reflects a need for theoretical conceptions of space and place that respond to the changing spatialities of the world itself. A world shaped by international flows of global capital and the proliferations of new types of communication which have collapsed the 'usual space and time boundaries'.[110]

Soja suggests the notion of 'thirdspace' to describe the contemporary condition of spatiality. For Soja, '[t]hirdspace is a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings.'[111] This notion of 'thirdspace' informs Singer's notion of 'thirding', marking the shore as a mutable and transgressive landscape, and providing another way in which conceptions of the coast feed back into wider critical developments around understandings of space and place.

In a similar manner, Edward Relph, looking back over past work, traces these theoretical changes:

> What I wrote in the 1970s suggests a Manichean struggle between place, which is represented as good, and placelessness, which is bad […] My inclination now is to see landscapes not simply as revealing *either* place *or* placelessness, but everywhere as manifestations of *both* distinctiveness *and* standardisation.[112]

---

[109] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 9.
[110] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 75.
[111] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 2.
[112] Edward Relph, 'Preface', *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 2008).

Here space (abstract) and place (intimate and familiar) are seen no longer as distinct binaries but as points on a scale of habitation. This is something present in the work of the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan who argues that '[t]he ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa.'[113] A relational sense of space and place is informative for exploring notions of habitation in relation to the material activity of storms and tides. Here, such processes do not mark the singular destruction of place, the erosion of marks of human activity, but can be seen as part of a reciprocal movement between ideas of place as inhabitation and spaces as something more abstract.

Two particular thinkers stand out when it comes to the opening up of space and place, and the role of culture and ideology in their production. These are the spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre and the radical geographer Doreen Massey, whose work is fundamental to the understanding of the links between literature and geography in this thesis. For Massey '[s]pace *is* a social construct – yes. But social relations are also constructed over space, and that makes a difference'. The distinctiveness of place is seen to emerge, for Massey, not from separation but rather from the particular relationship of a set of processes happening at a specific time and location, one which draws on all the previous layers and linkages of that place to both the local and wider world.[114]

This helps to mitigate potentially unfounded anxieties about immigration and counter destructive narratives of nationalism: if place is no longer presented as possessing clear boundaries which can be

---

[113] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), p. 6.
[114] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, pp. 155-156.

trespassed then rhetoric around immigration can be hollowed out. This rethinking of space and place can be traced to the coastline in the 'fluid ontology' of Anderson and Peters wherein the ocean 'is intrinsically *connected to* and *absorbed within* a broader network of spaces (earth and air) which are also, likewise, porous, open and convergent with each other.'[115]

If Massey asserts how space and place are part of wider processes of social relations, then Lefebvre outlines the role of cultural representation in the production of this space. Lefebvre's notions about the social production of space are organised around his model of the spatial triad. The triad is composed of spatial practice, representations of space and representational space. Spatial practice is the means through which a given society does not just produce meaningful space at a specific moment in time but allows for the continual production of that space across a duration of time. Representations of space 'are tied to the relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose'. It is 'the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers'. Such space is therefore 'the dominant space in any society' as it is through plans and maps that political authority gain prominent forms of material expression.[116]

With representational space, Lefebvre draws on earlier work by Bachelard, who asserts that space 'cannot remain indifferent' once touched by the imagination,[117] writing that representational space is that 'which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate'. As much as spatial

---

[115] Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, '"A perfect and absolute blank": Human Geographies of Water Worlds', in *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 3-19 (p. 12).
[116] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 33, 39.
[117] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1958), p. xxxvi.

symbolism can be used to reinforce notions of continuity and hegemony, something Lefebvre recognises when he says '[p]re-existing space underpins not only durable spatial arrangements but also *representational spaces* and their attendant imagery and mythic narratives', it can also be used to challenge totalising spatial narratives. Lefebvre states that, unlike the world of the city plan, representational spaces are 'alive' and their symbolic meanings 'may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic'. This opens up representational space as a space of potential in which symbolic meaning can be challenged, contested and altered.[118] It is at this level that the individual can be seen to both reproduce and challenge the existing spatio-symbolic order, opening up a way to link literary representations of the landscape with theoretical work on the social formation of space and place.

However, the freeing-up of concepts of space and place have not been met with unequivocal celebration. Some have felt that the destabilising of the boundaries of space and place evidence malignant aspects of this current phase of capitalist modernity. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer, for instance, characterise spatial experience in the late twentieth century as 'an unsettling nexus of domination and homelessness'.[119] Frederic Jameson displays an anxiety that modernist models of inside and outside, essence and appearance, authenticity and the inauthentic are 'replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces'. In this scheme corporate spaces such as the Bonaventura Hotel aspire 'to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city', signalling a new

---

[118] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 39, 230, 42.
[119] 'Dwelling, Place and Environment: An Introduction', in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

stage in the spatial configuration of modernity, where a positive sense of difference is replaced by an oppressive similarity.[120]

Looking at the work of Mark Augé and Edward Casey gives a good sense of the spatial anxieties the openness of Massey and Lefebvre can generate. Both Augé and Casey feel that the lived experience of the contemporary world, and by extension conceptions of space and place, are defined by fragmentation and a lack of rootedness. This is a sense of space and place which underpins Falci's earlier sense that modern British poetry is full dissolving and shallow landscapes. Augé's conception of this threat is defined through the notion of non-places, which are 'spaces of circulation, consumption and communication'. By this, Augé means the degree to which a place or space is meaningful and allows for the production (and reproduction) of social relationships. The non-places of Augé are considered to be locations like supermarkets, car parks and airports and are felt to be the defining spatial experience of contemporary society.[121]

For Casey, being in place is the fundamental defining attribute of human existence: '[t]o exist at all as a (material or mental) object or as (an experienced or observed) event is to have a place – *to be implaced*, however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily'. Hence for Casey not being implaced is a threat to subjective existence. As such the experience of a society which privileges 'incessant motion' risks 'having no proper or lasting place, no place to be or remain'.[122] This seems to be the underlying concern for those who view place as being under threat by the current conditions of modernity. Augé sees non-places as those which 'do not

---

[120] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *The Jameson Reader*, ed. by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 188-232 (pp. 198, 220).
[121] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008), pp. viii, 64.
[122] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 13, xii.

integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of "places of memory"'. A life dominated by these types of places leads to 'a world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral'. Because of the pivotal role of place in the formation of social and personal identities both Augé and Casey fear such fleetingness, engendered by the proliferation of non-places, will lead to an 'emptying of consciousness' wherein the individual is subjected to 'entirely new experiences and ordeals of solitude'.[123]

While Augé and Casey may typify anxieties about a new kind of depthless experience of place, this thesis broadly adopts the positions of Massey and Lefebvre. Much as the changing spatialities of the ocean have been affected by different modes of economic organisation, so too have terrestrial theorisations of space and place responded to new scales and intensities of global interaction. The coast, with its capacity to both reinforce distinction and separation, and simultaneously open itself up as a site of flux and hybridity, emerges as a terrain from which contemporary poetry can respond to, refashion and re-present changing experiences of space and place.

Not Just a One-Way Street: the Relationship of Literature and Geography

Since the spatial turn that was inaugurated by the likes of Lefebvre, Massey, and Soja, literary critics have increasingly developed their own understandings of the relationship of writing to space and place. Three prominent strands used in literary studies are ecocriticism, literary geography and geocriticism. This section will provide an overview of these

[123] Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 63, 75.

approaches, highlighting both useful features and potential flaws, as well as touching on geography's own sense of the meeting of the literary and geographic in the notion of geopoetics. All of these approaches centre the literary or textual as essential components of geographic knowledge, not just in terms of representation but in relation to material practices and experiences. The coast, as a multiple and fluid space exceeds the demands of any one of these critical avenues, instead requiring the assembly of a diverse set of critical tools from across these strands.

Ecocriticism is, broadly, an attempt to read literature in relation to the environmental. Lawrence Buell declares that '[t]he success of all environmentalist efforts' relies on 'attitudes, feelings, images, narratives.'[124] Therefore, as Jonathan Bate argues, ecocriticism's importance is more 'phenomenological than political.'[125] Literature is, in this account, an arena in which attitudes towards nature are formed and contested. This is an understanding that the shift needed to implement an environmentally beneficial politics can 'only come [...] from a popular shift in ways of thinking about our relationship with our home planet.'[126] At the same time ecocriticism displays a concern, emphasising as it does phenomenological experience, with the ethics of literary writing, of being able to speak for that which cannot speak.[127] Because of this ecocriticism can be seen as privileging certain textual forms, particularly individualistic, narratively direct, non-fictional accounts of the world, as the sites for this

---

[124] Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U. S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 1.
[125] Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 75.
[126] 'Introduction', in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, ed. by Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 7-15 (p. 7).
[127] Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, pp. 72-73.

environmental criticism, overlooking the ways less conventional texts account for the ecological.

The privileging of certain forms of writing has been challenged from within ecocriticism. Richard Kerridge, for example, suggests that '[a]n ecological perspective strives to see how all things are interdependent, even those apparently most separate.'[128] This is broadly a continuation of the ethical stance of Buell and Bate, where literature can reveal humanity's deep interrelation with the world around it. However the emphasis on interdependence allows an ecocritical scope to include more formally experimental writing, where the link between text and meaning is less direct.

Because of this emphasis on the relation of human to nonhuman, an ecocritical approach can also work to bring empty and silent spaces, which are perhaps overlooked in the relentlessly social inflection of Massey and Lefebvre, into the orbit of critical discussion. As Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster make a point of saying, '[u]nderstanding how nature and culture constantly influence and construct each other is essential to an informed ecocriticism'.[129] At the same time, as DeLoughrey and Handley point out, it would be a mistake to see Bate and Buell as the only inheritance of the ecocritic, erasing the presence of ecofeminists, ecosocialists and ecologically inclined anti-racists who see projects of white supremacy as inextricable from environmental domination.[130]

---

[128] 'Introduction', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 1-9 (p. 7).
[129] 'Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing, and Where To?', in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), pp. 1-25 (p. 4).
[130] 'Introduction', *Postcolonial Ecologies*, ed. by DeLoughrey and Handley, p. 9.

Where ecocriticism is responding to the social and political conditions of environmental degradation, and examining literature's culpability and ethical responsibility in this regard, literary geography can be seen as responding to a broader sense of the connections between literary texts and the spaces and places associated with them. In the post-war period, British poetry has produced a variety of texts which take for their theme some aspect of human relationship with the landscape. This ranges from the late modernist poems of David Jones and Lynette Roberts to the more empirical practices of Seamus Heaney in 'Digging' or Larkin's 'Friday Night in the Royal Station Hotel'.

At the same time, it has proved a fertile ground for the radical reworking of the relationship between space and poetic form. This includes poets likes Frances Presley and her attentiveness to the Neolithic landscapes of Somerset in *Myne* or Zoë Skoulding's challenging navigation of place in poems such as 'Forest With A to Z of Cardiff' and 'Preselis with Brussels Street Map'. In turn, all these poets both write within and against longer traditions of pastoral and landscape poetry such as Milton's 'Lycidas' or 'the green thought in a green shade' of Marvell's 'The Garden'.[131] At the same time they also contend with the dominant legacy of Romantic poetry and its particular sense of site specific writing such as Wordsworth's 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey'.

As a critical response to the proliferation of this kind of writing, literary geography is informed by the rethinking of space and place championed by Lefebvre and Massey. For Neal Alexander and David Cooper literary geography emerges 'through deepening exchanges between literary studies and cultural geography' which assert not just how spaces shape literary form but also how literature shapes the production of

---

[131] Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden', *Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. by Colin Burrow (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 207-209 (p. 208).

space.[132] Robert Tally understands literary geography (which he also terms literary cartography) as operating 'precisely by virtue of the specifically *literary* nature of the project' where 'writing itself is a form of spatialisation [*sic*]' meaning critical focus is applied as much to the spatial arrangement of texts as it is to a text's thematic response to a certain landscape. Tally also emphasises how the spaces of literature do not appear *sui generis* but themselves are produced by a broader historical sense of varied and competing aesthetic representations of landscapes.[133]

Literary geographic practice can encompass a wide of variety of critical methods such as Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, in which Moretti creates alternative maps of nineteenth century Europe based on the locations depicted in the work of writers like Dickens and Austen, as well as charting the circulation of these texts among the public of that period. For Moretti this literal mapping makes 'the connection between geography and literature explicit', highlighting the 'place-bound nature of literary forms' and 'the *internal* logic of narrative: the semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organizes.'[134]

Literary geography also includes more idiosyncratic explorations such as Alice Entwistle's notion of the 'geopolitical' poem, a poem which has the 'capacity at once *to be* a location […] and, simultaneously, *to represent* the cultural contexts and locations'.[135] Or Harriet Tarlo's concept of radical landscape poetry in which 'the subtleties of experimental poetics provide an ideal linguistic arena in which to engage in this shifting and

---

[132] 'Introduction', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 1-18 (p. 1).
[133] Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.
[134] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 3, 5.
[135] Alice Entwistle, *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women Rewriting Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 3.

sifting of assessing and reassessing our relationship with the places and spaces we inhabit.'[136]

While this variety of approaches, an interest in both 'space and spatiality in the texts' and 'the changing spatial or geographical formations that affect literary and cultural production', allows for a diverse range of literature and spaces to be explored it is also a potential weakness. [137] Miles Ogborn notes, for instance, that there is an increasing gap between sophisticated readings of the formal and aesthetic spaces of the literary text and research into the spaces of literary production, consumption and dissemination.[138] Angharad Saunders finds it more helpful to talk of 'textual geography' when referring to work which attends to the spatial practices of the material production of texts, calling on 'literature to validate itself more explicitly as a meaningful source of geographical knowledge.'[139]

Saunders begins to articulate solutions to this division, arguing for 'attention to scale as an analytical framework' which allows for a tracing of meaning across both production and consumption, the foregrounding and backgrounding of structural elements and an understanding of the contingent relations developed between material and symbolic spaces.[140] Where Saunders's concern lies mainly with twentieth century literature, this approach is picked up in this thesis and applied to contemporary poetry at the coast. Here scale is not simply an external factor of production and reception, or related to content in terms of setting, but a way of understanding the relationships between levels of form and the

---

[136] Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *Jacket*, 32 (April, 2007) <http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml> [Accessed 18 June 2017]
[137] Tally, *Spatiality*, p. 80.
[138] Miles Ogborn, 'Mapping Words', *New Formations*, 57 (Winter, 2005), 145-149.
[139] Angharad Saunders, 'Literary Geography: Reforging the Connections', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34.4 (2010), 436-452 (p. 437).
[140] *Ibid*, p. 450.

geographic spaces, overt and subterranean, the poetic text is both constructed out of and imaginatively creates.

It is useful to turn to the work of Bertrand Westphal and his notion of geocriticism to further elucidate how a literary geographic approach functions as a form of geographic knowledge. For Westphal, geocritical analysis 'attempts to probe the strata that both undergrid and record history, that give it its story' and is therefore involved in the kinds of rethinking of space familiar from Soja or Massey. Westphal writes that geocriticism must, in its critical strategies, operate so that space 'cease[s] to appear obvious', echoing Cresswell's warning about the apparent mundanity of place.

One of the key ways Westphal argues for this is through the idea of multi-focalization. This replaces an egocentric critical approach with a geocentred one, situating '*place* at the center [*sic*] of debate'. Critical writing which centres the exegesis of literary space on a particular work, argues Westphal, runs the risk of focusing on the mentality of the author or characters rather than the space itself. In contrast, literary critical work should be constructed around multiple textual representations of a specific geography. For Westphal, if '[d]erived from only a single source, the knowledge of a given space will be restricted, as the view of a single person, and thus less valuable', in contrast 'the geocritical representation emerges from a spectrum of individual representations as rich and varied as possible'.[141]

This emphasis on multi-focalization counters a potential weakness of ecocriticism in privileging not just certain types of literature, but also the role of the (often white, male, Anglo-American) individual. For example

---

[141] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by Robert T. Tally Jr., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 139, 112, 126, 113.

Jonathan Bate rhetorically questions if 'the poet [could] be a keystone sub-species of Homo sapiens? The poet: an apparently useless creature, but potentially the saviour of ecosystems.'[142] As a result, an anthropocentric view of the world is reinforced, where the individual is invested with the potential the wider global community, with all its material power and resources, is deemed to lack. At a less exalted level, such writing can become the providence of the 'Lone Enraptured Male' in Kathleen Jamie's words.[143] Writers who view their privileged and empowered relationship to the landscape as 'a neutral one' rather than a product of the historic entrenchment of social and economic power.[144]

Geographers have also grown increasingly interested in the relationship of literature and geography.[145] This 'creative (re)turn' has occurred under the term 'geopoetics'.[146] Such a label is itself multifaceted and gestures towards several distinct approaches. If poetics here is taken to be referring to the literal practice of writing poetry then the geographer Tim Cresswell's decision to become a poet is a keen example of this version of geopoetics. For Cresswell, mobilizing poetry and geography together is a way of 'connect[ing] self and world', poetic writing allowing an expansion of both what is included as geography and how this knowledge is conveyed.[147]

---

[142] Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, p. 231.
[143] Kathleen Jamie, 'A Lone Enraptured Male', *London Review of Books*, 30.5 (6 March 2008), 25-27 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n05/kathleen-jamie/a-lone-enraptured-male> [Accessed 8 September 2017]
[144] Smith, 'An archipelagic literature', p. 7.
[145] The relationship between literature and geography has a longer history than can be elucidated here. See O. J. Ford, 'Charles Olson and Carl Sauer: Towards a Methodology of Knowing', *boundary 2*, 2. 1-2 (Autumn, 1973-Winter, 1974), 145-150 for an early account of the links between poetry and geography. See Anne Buttimer, 'Humboldt, Granö and Geo-poetics of the Altai', *Fennia*, 188.1 (2010) 11–36 for a deeper sense of the historical relationship between the geographic and the literary.
[146] Gabriel Eshun and Clare Madge, 'Poetic World-Writing in a Pluriversal World: a provocation to the creative (re)turn in geography', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 17.6 (2016), 778-785 (p. 778).
[147] Tim Cresswell, 'Geographies of poetry/poetries of geography', *Cultural Geographies*, 21.1 (2014), 141–146 (pp. 144).

This sense of geopoetics also underlies Simon Springer's desire 'to write about the earth more metaphorically, more poetically, but always to the point'. For Springer it is important to tease out the etymological route of geography as 'earth writing' to justify his criticism of the language of contemporary academic geography as 'stymied by a quagmire of authority that claims a "truth" about what constitutes social science and presents arguments about how that geography is to be constructed.'[148] Springer is arguing less for the importation of literary objects into the field of geographic knowledge (in contrast to Cresswell) and more that features of literary writing (such as polysemy, self-reflexivity, and metaphor) should be employed by geographers to better represent the diverse and multi-sensory geographic experiences which constitute human experience.

'Geopoetics' can also be understood more abstractly. As the *OED* puts it, poetics is '[t]he creative principles informing any literary, social or cultural construction […] a theory of form.' Here geopoetics becomes geophilosophy, 'a geo-cosmological sensibility', which is less interested in the object of the poem and more in conceptually rendering processes like climate change as large-scale geopoetics.[149] As Kenneth White puts it, the 'geopoetic project is not […] a literary school […] It is a major movement involving the very foundations of human life on earth.'[150]

In a sense geopoetics is the mirror of literary geography as both domains explore and adapt ideas from the other to challenge the parameters of their home disciplines. Yet, if questions have been raised about literature needing to justify itself as an object of geographic knowledge, Sarah Marston and Sarah De Leeuw have also raised concerns

---

[148] Simon Springer, 'Earth Writing', *GeoHumanities*, 3.1, (2017) 1-19 (pp. 15, 1, 14).
[149] Eric Magrane, 'Situating Geopoetics', *GeoHumanities*, 1.1 (2015), 86-102 (p. 94).
[150] Kenneth White, 'What is Geopoetics?', (28 April 1989) <http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/welcome/what-is-geopoetics/>

about geopoetics as the meeting of geography and material creative practices. For Marston and De Leeuw the risk is 'one of oversimplification', a minimisation of differences between various arts practices and modes of work.[151]

In an essay for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, David Biello is sceptical about the grander claims of geopoetics which he frames as an exploration of the art of the Anthropocene (Biello characterises the Anthropocene as the idea 'that we, humanity, are now in charge of the planet that gave us birth', able 'to make or break planetary systems we used to think of as natural'). Biello questions both the scope of geopoetics (if the world is a product of human effort then is weather art?) and the definition of the Anthropocene. Most pointedly he is sceptical of who the 'we' being empowered by geopoetics might be and why this specific response to the Anthropocene is any more significant than other historical formations.[152]

Despite these potential criticisms, an understanding of the ideas grouped under the 'geopoetical' is useful in building on the accounts of poetry's relationship to space and place, pushing the importance beyond the Lefebvrian notion of writing affecting the production of space at a symbolic level. Angela Last sees geopoetics as a way of mediating and addressing '[t]he problem of not knowing how to think about "the measure of the world"'.[153] For Eshun and Madge poetry in particular 'can help convey the complexities and emotions of various lived experiences across

---

[151] Sallie A. Marston and Sarah De Leeuw, 'Creativity and geography: Toward a politicized intervention', *Geographical Review*, 103.2 (2013), iii–xxvi (p. vi).
[152] David Biello, 'The Art of Life in the Anthropocene', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (13 April 2013) < https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-art-of-life-in-the-anthropocene/> [Accessed 21 July 2017]
[153] Angela Last, 'We Are the World? Anthropocene Cultural Production between Geopoetics and Geopolitics', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 34.2-3, (2017) 147–168 (p. 159).

diverse worlds', this becomes crucial in conveying a multiple and polycentric understanding of geographic knowledge.[154] Magrane (a geographer-poet himself) is the most explicit when he say that '[i]n other words, poetry—although done in a different key—can do some of the work of geographical theory.' That is poetry as an enactment of geographical, political, ethical, and theoretical concerns.[155]

There are then, several critical avenues through which to approach the relationship between poem and place. Given that this thesis is concerned with how poets respond to particular coastal geographies, a broadly literary geographic approach will be used in the analyses that follow. This means the focus of the subsequent chapters will be on the literary and cultural readings that emerge from specific coastal terrains, and how these readings can be challenged by attention to the physical qualities of the coastal landscape itself. For example, Chapter Two shows how Wendy Mulford's engagement with the storms and erosions which mark Britain's east coast provide the impetus for a cultural reading of the shore that begins to work against historic currents of expropriation and exclusion which have shaped certain experiences of the East Anglian littoral. Similarly, Chapter One explores how both the physical shape of the Llŷn peninsula and Riley's direct experience of the cliff-tops of North Wales shape the complex responses of *Sea Watches* to the region's spiritual heritage. Chapter Three, meanwhile, is attentive to how the particular estuarine geography of the Mersey has had a profound impact on the ways Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson engage with cultural imaginings of transnational spaces.

Furthermore, an explicitly ecocritical approach is felt to be too narrow for the purposes of this thesis, over emphasising a 'green' reading

---

[154] Eshun and Madge, 'Poetic World-Writing in a Pluriversal World', p. 783.
[155] Magrane, 'Situating Geopoetics', pp. 90-91.

of texts that has the potential to obscure other ways writing can respond to space and place. Yet, a sense in which literary writing is attentive to environmental concerns is unavoidable, especially given the centrality of the coast to the spatial imaginary of climate change (rising sea levels and the many dystopian literary deluges they spur being a prominent example). As such, Chapter Four in particular draws on ecocritical ideas to explore how Robert Minhinnick questions ideas of sustainability and dwelling through attention to the agency of non-human matter along the coastline. Therefore, while the majority of this thesis works in a more anthropocentric vein, each chapter is always trying to be attentive to the ways these processes are shaped by exposure to the material geography of the shore

Chapter One: Scales of Post-Secular Space in Peter Riley's *Sea Watches*

Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' is a central coastal text. Katharina Rennhak views it as 'the paradigmatic beach poem', both the summation of a particular tradition of writing at the shore and also a poem which seems to prefigure the texts that came before it.[1] The poem has variously been read as 'a record of crisis' and as a writing which draws on the instability and transitory nature of the beach.[2] Though registering an anxiety over imperial order and the loss of religious faith after Darwin, Arnold still ensures 'the cliffs of England stand / Glimmering and vast'.[3] In this spatial gesture the poem makes an inward turn, intimacy becoming coterminous with the security of the Dover landscape. As David Herd says, 'the poem comes to recognize itself in the contours of its country'. [4]

Observing this is not to ignore how Arnold ends the poem by sustaining a sense of unease and despair. The final stanza sees the 'land of dreams' without 'certitude, nor peace, nor help' while the 'darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight' is situated 'here' on Dover beach itself, as opposed to somewhere out in the Channel. In this respect Arnold seems to acknowledge the pact he makes in exchanging

---

[1] Katharina Rennhak, 'Dover Beach and the Politics and Poetics of Perspective', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 37-52 (pp. 37-38).
[2] David Herd, 'Dislocating Country: Post-War English Poetry and the Politics of Movement', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 497-516 (p. 498).
[3] Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach', *Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Valentine Cunningham and Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 117-118.
[4] Herd, 'Dislocating Country', p. 499.

religious faith for national community is itself contingent, unstable, and potentially susceptible to the same fate as the 'sea of faith'.[5]

Where Arnold's poem demonstrates, despite its inward turn, a sense that England, if now severed, was associated by faith and culture to both a Christian religious community and an earlier Hellenic world, this chapter argues that such scales of faith, connection and historical resonance have been fractured and reworked in Peter Riley's *Sea Watches* (1991). Where archipelago cultural and literary thinking often emphasises a 'talking "across" borders', it is important, when arguing for a more complex sense of the archipelagic, to recognise that those relationships are also accompanied by the breaking of earlier forms of contact.[6] If the archipelago provides connections it is also a spatial form which, just like the physical geography of the shore, is marked by erosion, wreck and 'the blandishments / of tiding'.[7] Though focused on intimate questions of faith and redemption, this chapter argues that *Sea Watches* registers the difficulty in sustaining experiences of the transcendent beyond exposure to (and often even within) the liminal terrain of the Llŷn peninsula in North Wales.

Riley's response to the peninsula is conditioned by the region's association with medieval pilgrimage, 'the drowsy shore where centuries before / Hundreds landed daily, peasant merchant kings / Barefooted and lost, ghosting the outer rose.'[8] Where Arnold is contemplating the dissolution of a certain form of pan-European Christian culture, Riley is

---

[5] Arnold, 'Dover Beach', p. 118.
[6] 'Introduction: crossing the margins', in *Across the Margins: Cultural identity and change in the Atlantic archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).
[7] Carol Watts, *Wrack* (Hastings: Reality Street, 2007), p. 45.
[8] Peter Riley, 'Sea Watches', *The Llŷn Writings* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2005), pp. 7-24 (p. 20). Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.

trying to locate, in the ruins of a specific religious community, a potentially contemporary sense of the transcendent, exploring profound questions about the purpose of 'the whole of a life' (p. 10).

David Wheatley points out that Riley's poetry is 'entirely free of the jaded inflections of our post-Movement condition'.[9] While this chapter will argue the poetry is more circumspect than Wheatley suggests, it is the case that Riley is not afraid to use the language of love, soul, of redemption, even if the way it is deployed is careful, diligent and exacting. Here the connectivity of the archipelagic and a sense of place in the poems emerge from the temporal disjuncture and synchronicity of the shore, Riley linking not with other scales of geographic experience as much as with people's historical occupation of the peninsula: the medieval monks of ruined seaside chapels, other holiday makers and previous trips by the Riley family to the region.

Sea Watches finds Riley engaging in what John Hall notes as 'an earlier (Christian) tradition of spiritual exercises and battles with meaning',[10] a battle which Peter Larkin observes is initiated by the poem's own post-Christian conditions.[11] In contrast, 'Dover Beach' is part of a lineage of poetic writing concerning the relationship of faith and modernity which includes Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Eliot's *Four Quartets* and the poetry of David Jones. Where these poets write from within a religious culture coming under immense pressure of critique, Riley is writing from

---

[9] David Wheatley, 'Am I Rambling? I Hope So', *PN Review*, 35.1 (September-October, 2008), 39-42. <http://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=3939> [Accessed 23 June 2017]
[10] John Hall, 'On *Lines on the Liver* and *Tracks and Mineshafts*', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 35-42 (p. 40).
[11] Peter Larkin, '*Sea Watches*: Little More Than Arrival', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 115-123 (p. 115).

the moment after which faith is no longer an essential part of social and cultural life.[12]

As a result, *Sea Watches* is understood in this chapter as a post-secular poem, or at least a sequence interested in the tenability of a post-secular landscape. Post-secular is understood here not simply as a historical marker, that which comes after the secular, or even an uncomplicated sense of the return of the sacred in some form. Rather, this chapter develops an understanding of the post-secular as the ground on which space is opened up for negotiation between, in western Europe, a still persistent Christian heritage and a secular modernity that seems enshrined in social and civic discourses, contributing to a sense in which the relationship between the sacred and secular needs to be grounded in the material qualities of embodied daily experience.

While this striving towards the transcendent is something that has been picked up by several critics of Riley's work, this chapter will argue for the centrality of pilgrimage to the sequence, the attendant contingency of any movements towards the numinous within this, and how such writing is deeply embedded in the particular coastal terrain of the Llŷn peninsula. This will be achieved by exploring the way *Sea Watches* takes on images of journeying, how it reconfigures the potentially sacred and transcendence in a language of light and love (which itself has a literary historical lineage), and how Riley builds ideas of scepticism and doubt into both the content and form of the sequence.

---

[12] Alan Sinfield says '[s]cience and politics were the dominant discourses' of the immediate post-war period, see 'Varieties of Religion', in *Society and Literature 1945-1970*, ed. by Alan Sinfield (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 87-117 (p.95). At the same time Steven Smith argues the mechanised terror of the Holocaust has undermined the initial promises of rational secularism, creating space for the kind of investigation into the possibility of spiritual re-enchantment Riley is engaged with. See Steven D. Smith, *The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 187-188.

Riley will also be placed within a longer history of intellectual debates in British poetry that occur specifically at the coastline. This will focus mainly on Riley's precursor at Llŷn, R. S. Thomas, and how both poets are writing in the wake of Matthew Arnold and 'Dover Beach'. In marking out this longer literary context, this chapter will show how Riley's present post-Christian moment has been formed by changing attitudes towards the sacred and secular in social, literary and civic life. This chapter will illustrate how *Sea Watches* is an example of a post-Arnoldian strand of writing which, despite the contingencies, doubts and instabilities of contemporary life, still finds the coastline as a resonant terrain in which questions of belief, faith and mortality can be broached, if not answered.

The Measure of a Life's Coming and Going

No geography is inherently sacred, as Kim Knott notes, with the particularities of religious space and place emerging from human interaction with the land.[13] As such, careful attention should be shown not just to notions of religious belief but also to the human activity that gives these sites particular meaning. Following Lefebvre's observation that spatial practice 'ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion', this section will explore Riley's use of ideas of pilgrimage to examine experiences of human mortality, the importance of endings more generally to *Sea Watches*, and how earlier traces of religious activity allows the sequence to engage with a wider Christian context.[14]

This focus on pilgrimage also makes clear Riley's relationship with the geography of the peninsula. As Neal Alexander says '[s]pecific places

---

[13] Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005), p. 39.
[14] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), p. 33.

provide both creative impetus and a thematic focal point in [Riley's] texts'.[15] This means that the concerns of the poetry cannot be separated from the terrain in which they occur. The consideration of pilgrimage in *Sea Watches* emerges through encounters with the coast as a liminal landscape. For the geographer Rob Shields, liminality can be understood in two compatible but distinct ways. There is the classic notion of liminality, drawn from Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*, described as the 'transition from one station of life to another, or from one culturally-defined stage in the life cycle to another'. This notion of the liminal event has become more generalised, to the point where Shields can refer to the liminal as recording 'a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life because of its interstitial nature.'[16] It is this more generic notion of liminal space which underpins the exploration of the coast in this chapter.

While the social and cultural significance of the shoreline has fluctuated since the end of the Second World War, the idea of the coast as a liminal zone has been one of the more robust associations in the general imagination. By building upon a longer history of the shore as a site of healing and restoration (which finds its apotheosis in the spa towns and brisk coastal air of nineteenth century Britain),[17] in some respects the post-war British coastline has developed into a landscape of pleasure and sensuality, offering itself as an escape from the overly regimented mundanity of modern urban living. This is something Orvar Löfgren

---

[15] Neal Alexander, '"Where lives converge": Peter Riley and the Poetics of Place', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 134-147 (p. 134).
[16] Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 83-84.
[17] John Beckerson and John K. Walton, 'Selling Air: Marketing the Intangible at British Resorts', in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. by John K. Walton (Clevedon: Channel View, 2005), pp. 55-68 (pp. 55-57).

recognises when, although not using the term liminal, he depicts the beach as a site distinct from the everyday: '[t]here was some kind of magic and liberating transformation occurring the moment your feet hit the sand.'[18] Even prior to the religious impressions that emerge from the particulars of Llŷn, there is a contemporary, secular, grounding of the coast as a liberatory elsewhere present in the Riley family's annual visits to the peninsula.

Pilgrimage is used in *Sea Watches* as both an embodied experience and a poetic image through which to work towards an understanding of the 'final extent' and meaning of a human life, as an activity which is itself associated with ideas of the liminal. Of particular relevance is Victor and Edith Turner's notion of the pilgrimage's liminality as 'not only *transition* but also *potentiality* [their italics]'.[19] The interest in pilgrimage is, for Riley, as a way of opening up the potential for considerations of transcendence, the meaning of life, and the role of place and landscape in these ideas while still leaving room for doubt and divergence.

These associations are present from the opening stanza of 'Cliff-Top Annuals', the first poem in the sequence:

> Almost there we hesitate, and turn, high on the soft
> Edge of Britain, to view the whole story: the sea barking
> Up both sides of the peninsula to the point, top
> Crest of land, pilgrims' goal or final extent
> Of a life's coming and going called together when
> There is after all a focus, an intellectual love. (p. 9)

---

[18] Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 226.
[19] Victor Turner and Elizabeth L. B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p.3.

Riley describes this stanza as approaching 'Llŷn on the northern routes from Caernarfon, pausing on the top of the mountain pass at Llithafen where on a clear day the entire peninsula can be seen laid out in front of you'.[20] Viewing the peninsula from this vantage points allows the poem to bring together different conceptions of 'the whole story', as the personal story of the speaker's life is overlaid on a landscape formed by historic narratives of religious activity.

As such, the sequence sees a single life brought into contact with time as marked by the much larger historical sweep of human presence at the peninsula. Bardsey Island itself was an important site of medieval pilgrimage; it was said that three pilgrimages to the island was equivalent to one pilgrimage to Rome.[21] From this point the speaker sees the historic 'pilgrim's goal' of Bardsey as a way of contemplating and conceptualising 'a life's coming and going' in the present.

For Mark R. Wynn, pilgrimage can be seen as 'a recapitulation of the Christian conception of life'.[22] At one level, it becomes an embodied journey towards God, towards an encounter with the divine that is enmeshed with the physical hardships of approaching a pilgrimage site, often on foot.[23] At another, the figure of pilgrimage relates more metaphorically to the idea of a whole Christian life, from birth to death.[24] This in turn chimes with the historic relationship of the coastline to religious use, the coastline of early modern Britain often being difficult to reach and out of the way. Philip Sheldrake notes how '[t]he British Isles are full of

---

[20] Riley, 'Topographical Notes', *The Llŷn Writings*, p. 115.
[21] Brenda Chamberlain, *Tide-race* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1987), p. 16.
[22] Mark R. Wynn, *Faith and Place: An Essay in Embodied Religious Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 165.
[23] John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 92.
[24] 'Introduction', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-11 (p. 2).

caves, Roman ruins, islands and coastal headlands with Celtic Christian associations and remains.' For Sheldrake these littoral edges are more than just secluded, they allow a connection between 'the solid and material with the intangible [...] this world with another world'.[25]

That pilgrimage means more than just inwards spiritual searching, and has this physical, embodied character, is significant because in *Sea Watches* movement towards any kind of transcendence is not simply the product of arrival but must be gained by engagement with the landscape. That can be a 'solitary walk between crowds / On the clifftop pastures' (p. 12), the physical effort of strides 'across acres of jagged wet rocks' (p. 13), or the entirety of the sequence's penultimate poem, 'Eight Seaside Chapels', which details an approach to Bardsey Island through the ruins of coastal churches. As Alexander says of Riley's sustained engagement with the environment of rural Derbyshire in the long poem *Alstonefield*, '[w]alking frequently serves his narrators as a means of phenomenological immersion'.[26] Such immersion, heightened by the peninsula's associations with pilgrimage, suggests that traversing a landscape can reveal ontological knowledge of self and place, charging such awareness with this wider religious context.

Pilgrimage has been a constant presence in Riley's writing about the peninsula. In a piece titled 'St Merin's church, 7:30 p.m. 2nd October 1977', part of a series of short texts dating from between 1977 and 1980 (the earliest years noted in the collection *The Llŷn Writings*), Riley describes how the peninsula 'funnelled human souls to a final stadium, of which there is nothing left' (p. 27). The short prose piece marks the peninsula as a site for the terminus of a pilgrimage, yet the word choices of

---

[25] Philip Sheldrake, *Living Between Worlds: Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995), pp. 23, 81.
[26] Alexander, '"Where lives converge"', p. 134.

'funnelled' and 'stadium' do not fit within a traditional sacred register, leaving the possibility that such activity could be applied to more secular visits to the peninsula. At the same time there is also a hint of a movement away from the transcendental, the 'nothing left' which accompanies Riley's tentative writing about the metaphysical will be approached later in this chapter through a sense of the diversions (physical and intellectual) that are part of the sequence.

Almost all of Riley's major poetry focuses on some sort of travel within a specific geography, whether Derbyshire, the south of France or Transylvania. This movement is recognised by Riley as a need 'to feel my feet moving on the ground, and/or attach a sense of unfamiliar space opening before me.'[27] The poem 'Material Soul', from *Tracks and Mineshafts* discusses 'this rearing / and arrival, which leaves a mark' and, perhaps in a more apocalyptic tone, that 'all / round us the world arrives at its end.'[28]

At the same time, these ideas of coming and going, arrival and ends, are tied to more metaphorical travels. A prose piece from *Lines on the Liver* talks of that faculty which 'wrenches the mind into another journey towards itself.' Here, as in *Sea Watches*, there is a building up of different scales and intensities of journeys. It is not just the journey across the landscape, or the inward journey of discovery, but also the notion of life as a journey, the 'diurnal bodily pacts' that are at operation within the poetic text, both as a source of meaning and as contribution to its material production. Returning to Riley's self-proclaimed need for unfamiliar space, such movement is also a way of gaining distance or perspective, either travelling towards a goal (as in *Sea Watches*) or away from strife and

---

[27] Peter Riley, 'The Books: Retrospective and texts', *April Eye* <http://www.aprileye.co.uk/books.html> [Accessed 19 May 2017]
[28] Peter Riley, 'Material Soul', *The Derbyshire Poems* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2010), pp. 15-16, p. 15.

confusion. It is an opening up of space in which a sense of hope for meaning and understanding might emerge, '[t]he truthful distance' as he has called it.[29]

While Llŷn provides a ground in which Riley can work through and sustain long term concerns of his poetry, it is also an important geography in other poems too, suggesting the significance of the peninsula itself to Riley's thinking. For example, it intrudes in *Ospita*, a poem that ostensibly has little to do with Llŷn:

> The man dies and the bell sounds across
> Grass and sea and mixes with the gulls.
> The dream sleeps into the morning, turns
> On its side and drifts down the coast
> Under the grey cliffs and buildings
> Dedicated to healing but now
> Empty and dark at dawn, the sharp keens
> Of the white hens warning us to be slow.[30]

Here there is a reworking of several images and ideas that emerge in *Sea Watches*. The bell sounds that seem to signal death also enact the shift of terrain, recalling the imagined sound of the seaside chapels that once dotted Llŷn. There is the element of dreaming which marks the sequence and allows the speaker to imaginatively travel to Bardsey Island. The mention of hens in the last line of the extract recalls the farmer's wife from 'Cliff-Top Annuals' who 'comes out with a little torch to feed / The geese' (p. 10).

---

[29] Riley, '(a)', *The Derbyshire Poems*, pp. 97-98, p. 97.
[30] Peter Riley, 'Ospita', *Passing Measures* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), pp. 57-66, p. 62.

What sustains Riley's attention to the peninsula is its capacity to permit reflection on, and address notions of, a life's worth and meaning. As Riley himself notes the intrusion of Llŷn in *Ospita* occurs when '[c]learly it is time for a statement, about death, which no hospital is going to abolish or contain ever'.[31] This sense of finality, of a coming to terms with life, is both a product of the specific and generic geography of the peninsula. Such associations are particular in the sense that, recalling Riley's own formulation, Llŷn is geographically funnel-like, extending out of the Gwynedd countryside, dipping below and beyond Ynys Môn (Anglesey). It bounds the northern edge of Cardigan Bay before tapering to a narrow point and beyond this headland, and short break of sea, Bardsey Island itself. The physicality of the peninsula's terrain, that the land itself could be said to converge at (or just shortly before) Bardsey Island, presents Llŷn as a geography in which things cannot help but come together.

Questions of a life's meaning also arise from generic qualities associated to the coast as a space of transition. The shore has often been depicted in western culture as not just a metaphor for but also an embodiment of liminality, the 'welcome-roaring threshold' as W. S. Graham called it (the bells of *Ospita* also having something of the 'quay night bell' which marks the start of 'The Nightfishing'). [32] However, such coastal geography includes not just the shoreline itself but also hinterland and horizon.

The *OED* gives a specifically coastal definition for hinterland: '[t]he district behind that lying along the coast'. In contrast to hinterland, which connects the shore to the mainland and potentially a sense of the past

---

[31] Peter Riley, 'Commentary on *Ospita*', *April Eye* <http://www.aprileye.co.uk/ospitanotes.html> [Accessed 19 May 2017]
[32] W. S. Graham, 'The White Threshold', *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 92-98 (p. 92) and 'The Nightfishing', *New Collected Poems*, pp. 105-120 (p. 105).

(that which lies behind the individual as they exist at the water's edge in the immediate moment), the horizon remains beyond the reach of the coastal dweller, a projection and orientation towards the future. As John Wiley says of his walk around the south west coast path: '[a] walker is poised between the country ahead and the country behind, between one step and the next […] perpetually caught in an apparitional process of arriving/departing'.[33] It is this sense of the terrain which informs the opening lines of *Sea Watches*, the movement to 'turn, high on the soft / Edge of Britain, to view the whole story' (p.9). Coastal geography manifests those notions of travel towards differentiated space that so concerns Riley, not just in the flux and change of the tide and the long cultural association of shore with thresholds, but in the connected, embodied process of passing through hinterland to arrive at the coast and view the horizon beyond.

If concerns with journeys are central to Riley's poetics, then *Sea Watches* has a distinct place among his work in that it is, as *Ospita* suggests in its use of the peninsula, explicitly concerned with completion and finality. This is something Riley acknowledges: '[i]f the poem isn't completable it's wasting everybody's time. My most important work in that regard is *Sea Watches* […] That work does set out with a statement of what I hope to do'.[34] This concern with completeness, what Riley observes in 'Eight Seaside Chapels' as 'people prepared to stick / To their truth' (p. 22), is something that is echoed, emphasised and given new dimensions by the peninsula's association with pilgrimage. All pilgrimages are undertaken with a goal in mind, and it is that site or shrine which helps imbue the

---

[33] John Wylie, 'A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30. 2 (June, 2005), 234-247 (p. 237).
[34] Peter Riley, interviewed by Todd Nathan Thorpe, *Jacket*, 35 (2008)<http://jacketmagazine.com/35/iv-peter-riley-ivb-thorpe.shtml> [Accessed 19 May 2017]

journey with significance. If pilgrimage is both a movement towards God and a re-enactment of the Christian conception of life, the conclusion of a pilgrimage possesses a kind of double movement. It brings the individual into contact with the divine but at the same time this contact is emblematic of the final meeting with the deity in the afterlife.

This sense that finality in the sequence is simultaneously the end of a pilgrimage, the end of a life, and the completion of the text, links this concern with endings to a broader, less dogmatic, sense of transcendence. Paul Tillich identifies how 'the anxiety of death overshadows all concrete anxieties and gives them their ultimate seriousness.'[35] Such seriousness is met by Frank Kermode's assertion that there is a need 'to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end.' However, for Kermode, this desire for a sense of purpose requires a movement outside daily life, a projection 'past the End, so as to see the structure whole', something that 'we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle.'[36] This suggests that the kind of awareness of a life's coming and going that Riley depicts in the opening to *Sea Watches* is a way to counter the anxiety of death. That, like finishing a poem makes it some regards 'completable', the ending of a life grants that existence a degree of intelligibility that it lacked before.

Riley and Arnold, therefore, share an interest in endings, especially endings shaded by questions of faith. Arnold's is an epochal ending while Riley's is much more grounded in the focus on an individual life and the significance and relationships this life has accrued. Despite this, both poets find in their littoral landscapes what Riley has called in *Lines on the Liver* 'a different geography, wherever there is space liberated for application and thought.'[37] While Arnold's differentiated geography is the product of a

---

[35] Paul Tillich, *Courage to Be* (Yale: Nota Bene, 2000), p. 43.
[36] Frank Kermode, *Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 4, 8.
[37] Riley, '(b)', *The Derbyshire Poems*, pp. 99-112, p. 103.

moment of reflection and Riley's is found in an extended embodied engagement with the peninsula, both locate a terrain which seemingly offers some semblance of security in a moment of crisis. Arnold identifies a national geography to tentatively protect himself from the encroaching darkness of modernity. In Riley, as he puts it in a fragment poem produced during the time of the composition of *Sea Watches*, questions of mortality are faced in a landscape shaped by 'a processional sequence, / that breaks the disorderly obstruction to desire' (p. 35). Pilgrimage emerges in *Sea Watches* as both an image for earlier human struggles with questions of meaning and as a formal figure through which Riley can approach the vexed and difficult question of transcendence at a level fitting for a contemporary context.

'Religion is something infinitely simple [...] a direction of the heart'[38]

In the opening stanza of the sequence it is the idea of 'an intellectual love' (p. 9) which brings together notions of finality and the peninsula's role as a site of pilgrimage. Love, like journeying, has been a persistent element in Riley's work. In *Alstonefield*, Riley asserts that the 'only true thing we are' is 'a record / of love'.[39] Meanwhile, alluding to the peninsula's shape, another Riley prose piece states that 'you should avoid getting stuck in all funnels except the one that leads to the realisation of hope, the sundering shift to love and its reward' (p. 27). Riley has even formulated the process of writing as an 'event of the heart'.[40] This section will show how notions of

---

[38] Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Letter to Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss, Chateau De Muzot Sur Sierre, 28 December 1921', *Selected Letters 1902-1926,* trans. by R.C.F. Hull (London: Quartet, 1987), pp. 334-337 (p. 336).
[39] Peter Riley, *Alstonefield* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003), p. 8.
[40] Peter Riley, 'The Creative Moment of the Poem', in *Poets on Writing: Britain, 1970-1991*, ed. by Denise Riley (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 92-113 (p. 101).

love, or the capacity of the human heart as a source of the transcendent, is the mode in which Riley approaches the potential for the sacred without using traditional and formulaic religious language, as well as providing a complimentary sense to inhabiting the peninsula alongside the embodied experience of pilgrimage.

Given the religious connotations of Riley's exploration of Llŷn, the notion of intellectual love in *Sea Watches* makes sense less as erotic or sensual love and more as a post-secular reformulation of agape. For Francis Watson agape is an 'ethos of love' where 'it can be said that woman is not apart from man nor man from woman'.[41] The *OED* defines agape as 'Christian love, as distinct from erotic love or simple affection'. Kierkegaard asserts that the romantic love of the poet 'is still not the eternal', and that it is the nature of agape to 'love the whole human race, all people, even the enemy, and not to make exceptions, neither of preference nor aversion.'[42] For Hegel '[l]ove becomes the unique, transfiguring presence of fulfilment and perfection in human experience. As such it takes on a sacramental dimension.'[43]

As Simon May puts it, western Christianity 'turns love into life's supreme virtue and moral principle [...] With the aid of this power […] we can rise above the terrors and traps of earthly life and redeem suffering, pain, loss, anxiety, evil and death.'[44] Agape can therefore be understood as a form of transcendence, an overcoming of a person's isolation through a selfless connection and devotion to the divine. While intellectual love in the poem is distinct from these formal notions of agape it nonetheless echoes

---

[41] Francis Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Port Chester, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.
[42] Søren Kierkegaard, '*Works of Love* (1847)', *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 277-311 (p. 280).
[43] Ian Cooper, *The Near and Distant God* (London: Legenda, 2008), p. 22.
[44] Simon May, *Love: A Secret History* (Yale University Press, 2011), p. 81.

this understanding of love, charged by a context in which experiences of an intellectual love are rooted in the way the peninsula has been shaped by medieval pilgrimage.

Riley's insistence on poetry as a way of grappling with love as a form of transcendence and hope is part of a longer tradition, critics having explored the presence of agape in English poetry from George Herbert to Coleridge and late Auden.[45] Of particular relevance to Riley is the example of Geoffrey Hill, both poets sharing an interest in (and occasionally a language of) the relationship of love to 'the mere diurnal grind'.[46] Throughout *The Orchards of Syon*, Hill posits the possibility of love (as Eros, as Law, as love of the landscape of Syon which is also sometimes Gerard Manley Hopkins's Goldengrove) as a redemptive force, although never without a counter awareness of the limits of such desire, writing: '[t]o love, determinedly and well, and to be / unfaithful: there should have arisen / particular broken forms to engage this'.[47]

Emily Taylor Merriman argues that one of the purposes of Hill's poetry is 'to fashion an opening to the metamorphosis of being at least momentarily lifted up.'[48] While Hill is always sceptical of giving himself over to *cupio dissolvi* (the Christian desire to leave earthly existence and join Christ in eternal life, *The Orchards of Syon* saying '[a]s for faith, / expose it finally, like ignorance'),[49] his poetry does display a sense in which love can

---

[45] See for example Russell Fraser, 'George Herbert's Poetry', *The Sewanee Review*, 95.4 (1987), 570-585, James Holt McGavran Jr., 'Coleridge, the Wordsworths, and Androgyny: A Reading of "The Nightingale"', *South Atlantic Review*, 53.4 (November, 1988), 57-75, and Monroe K. Spears, 'The Divine Comedy of W. H. Auden', *The Sewanee Review*, 90.1 (1982), 53-72.
[46] Geoffrey Hill, 'Annunciations', *King Log* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968), pp. 14-15 (p. 15).
[47] Geoffrey Hill, *The Orchards of Syon* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 46.
[48] Emily Taylor Merriman, '"Metamorphic power": Geoffrey Hill and Gerard Manley Hopkins', in *Ecstasy and Understanding: Religious Awareness in English Poetry from the Late Victorian to the Modern Period*, ed. by Adrian Grafe (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 145-160 (p. 154).
[49] Hill, *The Orchards of Syon*, p. 4.

be (sometimes, and not without being couched in ambivalence) 'the high rocks / where no man can climb', where 'love grows and [...] rests and is saved'.[50]

It is important to emphasise that this sense of intellectual love emerges in *Sea Watches* from direct exposure to the landscape of the peninsula. In 'Sandlogged' the speaker walks above a crowd of holidaymakers and from this vantage point is able to transmute the presence of the people below into an experience marked with religious resonances: 'Souls of the crowd chorusing like a bell / Of a clifftop church, clear over grass and rocks, each / To each extolling what we have and like to think' (p. 12). Here the associations of place with notions of transcendence are clear as the poem's narrator makes no concession in claiming an awareness of the '[s]ouls' of the crowd, which in turn form a chorus like the bells of the cliff-top chapels which would have populated the peninsula in medieval times. The crowd below becomes an informal congregation potentially offering hope and care to each other, a desire to 'spread the load' (p. 12).

Such experiences create, if only momentarily, a sense of community which helps situate Riley phenomenologically in the landscape. Here implacement is dependent not simply on personal revelation, but on a sense of connected, embodied, experience with others on the peninsula, an experience which is both grounded in the present moment but gestures towards a longer history of human activity and occupation.[51]

---

[50] Geoffrey Hill, 'The Pentecost Castle', *Tenebrae* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), pp. 7-14 (p. 10).

[51] The use of implacement here, and throughout this thesis, is drawn from Edward Casey where '[i]mplacement itself, being concretely placed, is intrinsically particular', a binding of 'actual occasions into unique collocations of space and time'. See *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 23.

Arnold's annexing of an earlier Hellenic tradition in 'Dover Beach' re-emerges in *Sea Watches* as the tremors of an earlier religious culture, explicitly recalled by the linking of an immaterial quality to a material, aural experience. For Riley the souls of the crowd ring like the bell of a clifftop chapel while in Arnold the 'tremulous cadence' of the waves becomes the note of sadness heard by Sophocles.[52] In both matter and spirit are linked and made concrete and perceptible in the other, even if the direction of travel is reversed. Arnold's first-hand experience of the falling waves is projected backwards towards Sophocles and an emotional response, while Riley takes the immaterial souls of the crowd and joins them with the historic, though now absent, sound of clifftop chapels. Notably Riley's image is weaker, suggesting only likeness, whereas for Arnold the waves at Dover are the same as those heard by Sophocles on the Aegean, gesturing towards the more sceptical and contingent direction Riley approaches questions of transcendence and hope from in *Sea Watches*.

The linking of landscape, a sense of place and religious experience extends beyond the topographical features of the peninsula to encompass the vastness of sea and sky so that, as Didier Maleuvre suggests, the horizon becomes 'a groundling's view of a world rife with transcendental openness.'[53] 'Cliff-Top Annuals' describes the '[s]hifting slow and vast extent viewed from the cliff / Top, so large as to raise questions talking / Of the whole of a life not just now and never to stop' (p. 10). The 'vast extent' viewed from the cliffs is the sea that spreads out and surrounds the peninsula, possibly even a sense of the sea and sky mingling together and

---

[52] Arnold, 'Dover Beach', p.118.
[53] Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (London: University of California Press, 2011), p. xiii.

appearing as some unbroken field of space and colour, a phenomenon the Brighton-based poet Lee Harwood describes as

> the colours *soft*
> melting into one another
> the sea and sky with no clear
> horizon[54]

For Maleuvre the transcendence of the horizon is not inherently religious; rather it 'designates the second-guessing nature of human consciousness'.[55]

The speaker of the poems in *Sea Watches* finds latent in this obscuring of the horizon by the spatial vastness of sea and sky a different experience of the world, one suggestively tied to the religious history of the peninsula, without being overdetermined by it. Here a sense of spatial scale emerges in the contrast between human body and the expanses of space it finds itself situated within at the coast, helping to create an impression of the numinous, something beyond that which is readily perceptible, particularly in terms of the medium sized scale of human cognition and experience. As Timothy Clark explains,

> We experience phenomena at a (mostly) fairly stable and consistent speed - too slow and our perception would give us an almost static world in which nothing happened - too fast, and everything would

[54] Lee Harwood, 'Notes of a Post Office Clerk', *Boston-Brighton* (London: Oasis Books, 1977), pp. 39-59 (p. 48).
[55] Maleuvre, *The Horizon*, p. 3.

> blur into indistinctness [...] A particular human scale is inherent to the intelligibility of the Earth around us[56]

While Riley's sense of sea and sky is not readily approaching the quality of the hyperobject Clark is alluding to, there is a sense that the vastness of space the speaker is encountering provides, if only momentarily, a disruption to a previously conceived sense of the intelligibility of the world. The potentially transcendent landscape at play in these parts of *Sea Watches* (because Riley is always at best sceptical of such propositions) also clearly recalls the common critical linkage of the coastline to a sense of the Burkean sublime, as explored by Alain Corbin and Anna Ryan among others.[57]

Light too, as part of the daily human experience of the peninsula, has a persistent presence in the poems, being implicitly aligned with the vast extents of sea and sky as well as alluding to a cultural sense of light as divine inspiration, William Cowper's 'Light Shining out of Darkness'. One stanza depicts '[p]yramids of light flickering on and off / On the sea surface, wedges of light' (p. 10). The penultimate stanza of 'Performing Dogs' more explicitly brings together love, light and the terrain of the peninsula, all bounded and approached through an everyday encounter with the topography of Llŷn. The stanza opens with a tentative pronouncement about what love, as it has been construed in *Sea Watches,* might mean:

---

[56] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism On The Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 29-30.
[57] See Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The discovery of the seaside 1750-1840*, trans. by Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 53 and Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 27.

> Love is where centres meet, I think I see,
> Gathering mushrooms at twilight on the high cliff
> Pastures, those white domes glowing like clocks
> Here and there on the dark ground and the dawning
> Sea light over my shoulder and they don't just grow or
> Gravitate. But beam and echo name to name. (p. 18)

The moment of potential revelation, the 'I think I see' (whose linguistic hedging could also be considered a moment of scepticism), then pivots into perceptions of the clifftop at twilight. With this switch from interior cognition to external perception the narrator of the poem brings together elements of the world, the 'white domes' of the mushrooms 'beam' like light on the sea, into a landscape of human activity which allows for a thinking through of notions of finality and transcendence.

In these lines not only do the mushroom caps light up but they are 'glowing like clocks' which, especially in the 'dark ground' with dawn coming, are highly suggestive of a sense of time, the ideas of ending and beginning, and the transition between them. The final line depicts the mushrooms growing so that they 'beam and echo name to name'. The stanza therefore ends with a suggestion of transcendence that has been picked up elsewhere in *Sea Watches*, specifically recalling both the image of the crowd in 'Sandlogged' and the phrasing of the experience: meeting 'each / To each extolling what we have' (p. 12). In both, the finiteness of life, and questions of the worth of a life lived, has been placed against a desire for connectedness, of a lifting out of isolation.

Much like ideas of journeys and movement, the image of light has been something of a constant presence in Riley's writing. As Tom Lowenstein says of *Sea Watches*, if 'one impulse is to descend, another is

to travel through light'. [58] In a poem titled 'Mornings with a Walkman at Rhwyngyddwyborth (1989-90)' (Rhwyngyddwyborth being a small coastal farm on the peninsula) light is the central image:

> Nothing can take this light,
> passed on, generation to generation
> it is everywhere.
> And to bear it, to take it in hand
> we make it a dark light
> a light spread over
> the dull gleaming acres of sea shifting
> this way and that, a constant light
> worked through the dark seething land
> forking and crossing and burning at points
> in living rooms and supermarkets
> the light the line the lineament of love
> longing for its lost spaces, the departed air. (p. 54)

Here light is inexhaustible ('[n]othing can take this light') and omnipotent ('it is everywhere'). It is at once heavy with a history, 'generation to generation', requiring a serious attentiveness and care, a need 'to bear it, to take it in hand', yet still travels with an expected weightlessness. Its role as an image of stability in an uncertain life is emphasised by the contrast of a 'constant light' with a 'shifting' sea and a 'dark seething land'.

These lines make clear, in a way never quite explicit in *Sea Watches*, Riley's deployment of light as a poetic image of salvation, as a

---

[58] Tom Lowenstein, 'Excavation and Contemplation: Peter Riley's *Distant Points*', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 185-195 (p. 186).

way of making sense of the '[i]ntercourse of love and pain' (p. 10). The light is 'the line the ligament of love' which connects Riley's experiences on the edge of the peninsula with other people and other experiences, 'forking and crossing and burning at points / in living rooms and supermarkets'. That such light is 'longing for its lost spaces, the departed air' emphasises the role of the littoral landscape in providing a sense of place from which Riley can make these poetic enquiries.

Riley's use of light, like the notion of an intellectual love, links him into earlier sacred traditions. The lines 'a light spread over / the dull gleaming acres of sea' from 'Mornings with a Walkman at Rhwyngyddwyborth' echoes '[t]hat light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it' from John 1. 5 while John 1. 9 ('[t]he true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world') shows a shared sense of a differentiated sense of light (this light, that light, the true light) which illuminates people's condition on earth. These biblical resonances, which also recall the invocation to book three of *Paradise Lost* ('since God is light'),[59] find themselves at work in a variety of English poetry which, if not directly alluded to, nonetheless imbues this language of light in Riley with an implicit cultural resonance of the divine. George Herbert finds God's grace kindled in the light refracted through church windows, combining light with sacred space, so that 'the light and glory / More rev'rend grows'.[60] Meanwhile Henry Vaughan describes a perception of eternity as 'a great *Ring* of pure and endless light, / All calm, as it was bright'.[61]

---

[59] John Milton, 'Paradise Lost', *John Milton*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 355-618 (p. 402).
[60] George Herbert, 'The Windows', *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse,* ed. by Donald Davie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 76-77.
[61] Henry Vaughan, 'The World', *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, ed. by Donald Davie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 116-117 (p. 116).

This recourse to images of light to portray some notion of hope, redemption or transcendence, reflects Kierkegaard's description of love as '*essentially* inexhaustible' and '*essentially* indescribable'.[62] If love, especially intellectual love or agape, is something that ultimately lies beyond description then it makes sense for a poet to find an equally inexhaustive metaphor.

For George Steiner, 'language does have its frontiers', bordering 'on three other modes of statement - light, music, and silence - which gives proof of a transcendent presence in the fabric of the world'.[63] While Riley is by no means as assertive as Steiner about such presence, it is clear Riley uses a language of light to convey a sense of something beyond or outside normal frames of perception. This use of light in *Sea Watches* seems particularly fitting given the experiential impact of light's interaction with land and sea at the coast, 'a physical presence' which for Ryan 'dramatises and heightens all of the other action that occurs' there.[64] So do the vast extents of sky and sea viewed from the cliff-tops and the horizon they form. As Brenda Chamberlain notes of her own experience at Llŷn, 'the sea makes clean our hearts.'[65]

Riley builds on a cultural sense of the coast as, if not the only space to engage with question of transcendence and the numinous, a particularly potent landscape for such activity. Yet, for this to be made useful and approachable in a world in which active religious faith is no longer an essential part of daily life, Riley asserts that love, transcendence and redemption have to be situated in the material experience of the peninsula. A sense of implacement grounded in the particulars of daily life which can

---

[62] Kierkegaard, 'Works of Love (1847)', p. 278.
[63] George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p.39.
[64] Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea*, p.15.
[65] Chamberlain, *Tide-race*, p. 30.

open onto scales of feeling and perception seemingly, the poems would suggest, absent from the terrestrial core the peninsula is at the very margins of.

The archipelagic sensibility of the sequence emerges not as a joining together of diverse locations but through the sense that this marginal edge of North Wales is connected both to wider spatial dimensions of sky and sea and longer rhythms of temporal activity which have shaped the landscape. The potential for transcendent experience at the coast for Riley is, unlike Arnold, available not as a momentary epiphany, abstracted from material conditions, but as the product of a deep awareness of what has occurred previously at this site and an acknowledgment of the physical activity of the body required in arriving at such potentially differentiated space.

Diversions and Recoils

At the same time *Sea Watches* does not find Riley simply reliving an earlier medieval pilgrimage in a modern context. Rather, for every move towards opening space for the consideration of the transcendent, there is a countermovement, a purposeful undermining of any kind of claims for the numinous within the sequence itself. As Riley says, 'bringing-down from various mental constructs is to me precisely one of the principal functions of the movement in poems, undercutting both your own claims and those you find in the air around you'.[66]

It is this process of questioning, undercutting and circumscribing claims of truth which gives the sequence, and its representation of the

[66] Peter Riley, interviewed by Keith Tuma, *Jacket*, 11 (2000) <http://jacketmagazine.com/11/riley-iv-by-tuma.html> [Accessed 19 May 2017]

spaces of the Llŷn peninsula, a post-secular quality. By examining how the poems convey this sense of the post-secular, this chapter is in part contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how contemporary poetry, specifically contemporary landscape poetry (and its critical responses), can approach ideas of the post-secular in relation to understandings of place and littoral space. The sequence is not simply a conservative gesture of faith but is rather exploratory and generous in its questioning of how hope and transcendence might be talked about in a geography markedly shaped by an earlier, and still lingering (if only in ruins), Christian culture.

As soon as the opening stanza is concluded, with its description of the 'final extent / Of a life's coming and going', the second stanza deflates this potential for comprehending life in its totality, stating that 'pilgrim's goal' is something '[t]hat we shall not reach today and is quite / Obviously already all we are' (p. 9). The summation of a life, all its coming and goings, does not then seem to be externalized, in some graspable totality.

Interestingly, these stanzas both echo and refute the Eliot of 'Little Gidding', another poem deeply interested in the relationship of place and religious feeling. In the first part of 'Little Gidding' Eliot, who like Riley is on a pilgrimage to a particular and meaningful location, seems to share a sense that arrival at one's goal is fraught with disappointment: '[a]nd what you thought you came for / Is only a shell, a husk of meaning'. While tonally the end of Eliot's poem ('[w]e shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started') may match the ending lines of the first stanza from Riley, the intent is different.[67] Eliot urges completion and unity (the end is in the beginning

[67] T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), pp. 191-198 (pp. 192, 197).

after all) while Riley's notion that we are 'already all we are' is an assertion of the frayed and contingent quality of human life and sense of place that is worked into the sequence.

This tension across the two stanzas, between a full comprehension of human life and a focus on the present moment which refutes any totalising perspective, is evident in the contrast between how the speaker moves through the landscape of the peninsula in these opening stanzas. In the first stanza the speaker of the poem is relatively static, hesitating 'high' on the edge of Britain. This places the speaker of the poem in a bird's-eye view, able to survey the landscape, 'the whole story', with ease. In contrast the second stanza finds the speaker moving through the peninsula, refuting the idea of an inert singular focus. The final lines of the stanza switching from reflections on abstract notions to a focus on the constituent parts of the landscape as the car '[t]akes sunken roads through fields that carry / Sea-glow, yellow scatter, proud, tall and thin' (p. 9). These lines emphasise the materiality of the landscape, the small details that are not observable from a fixed point high on the cliffs.

Other examples of this pressure to deal with life not as an abstract entity but as the coming together of inchoate pieces of the everyday continue across the sequence. In 'Sandlogged' this is figured in the detritus and relics of a family visit to the beach.

> Cooling and getting hungry we slowly
> Walk back along the long sands carrying beach-
> balls, blankets, fish-nets, binoculars, crabs,
> Two small girls, books, towels, pebbles to keep, brush
> And comb, bucket and spade; we carry what we conceive,
> We carry carrying, being carried, fear and fatigue, we carry it all.
> (p. 12)

Here the use of repetition in the final line casts the carrying of bucket and spade, blankets and fishnets, as a triumph of domesticity. What is being hauled along in this mundane image of family life is not just things but also 'fear and fatigue', 'what we conceive'. These lines elaborate how instances of everyday action are posited as being their own worthy response to ideas of a life's coming and going.

In the sixth stanza of 'Cliff-Top Annual' there is a similar emphasis on the domestic scene of the speaker's family 'in the caravan at meal-time'. What is important here is that it is 'a meal-time close to others' (p. 10). A closeness to family members but also other inhabitants of the peninsula (here farmers on the estate where the caravan is parked). Echoing Riley's engagement with pilgrimage, this domestic proximity also has a temporal quality. It is a nearness to all those other family meals the speaker has had in this spot on the peninsula year after year. In this way a small act of normal life is placed in a web of connection and care, one which extends out from the present moment across a decade of annual visits to Llŷn. Place here becomes open-ended and ambivalent despite being heavily situated in specific personal and social histories, allowing recourse to both considerations of the transcendent as well as reaffirming the particulars of everyday life.

This emphasis on the domestic activity which goes on right in front of the speaker's perception is, therefore, found in many of the same places where the sequence makes movements towards the transcendent. This in part arises from the fact that the pilgrimage which informs *Sea Watches* is not a straightforward journey from A to B. In fact while 'Cliff-Top Annual' ends with Bardsey Island in sight, the caravan the family stay in being about an hour from the peninsula's end, all the poems up to the final

'Seawatch' occur either with minimal movement away from the caravan or detail excursions back inland and away from Bardsey.

As Riley himself says in the 'Topographical Notes': '[t]he sequence of stanzas edge slowly towards the sight of Bardsey, but with many tactics of diversion and recoil' (p. 115). While diversion here makes sense in the wider context of the sequence as a series of journeys, recoil does stand out as an interesting word choice. Recoil, which suggests a visceral aversion to what is being edged towards, emphasises that any movement in the sequence towards the numinous and transcendent is always contingent upon this sudden reversal, of drawing away from the pilgrims' goal.

Such tactics of evasion are particularly prominent in the middle poem titled, fittingly enough, 'Forth Out and First Back':

> And up on the side of North Wales to a town
> Selling death back to the lost people from industry
> As coloured wrap with glints of distance, toffee stick,
> And here-we-are-before-we-were-again (pastoral) that slides
> Off before you can suck it. So buy quick and go,
> On by the cool straits, the calm woods, and railways. (p. 15)

Riley says this poem 'escapes entirely from the peninsula in a solo excursion northwards, back along the approach route and on up the coast'. For Riley these inland zones acknowledge the darker currents of Anglo-Welsh relations:

> This area beyond the border of Llŷn presents a long history of exploitation and occupation from which Llŷn itself was more or less exempt - English castles, estates, watering-places, amusement

> parks, new world encampments, quarries all over the place mostly now abandoned (p. 117)

These stanzas are then a poetic indictment of post-industrial North Wales, towns '[s]elling death back to the lost people from industry' (p. 15). This hinterland registers what Llŷn itself remains a partial escape from but also marks the uses of place that make a naive, sentimental encounter with the peninsula difficult. As Riley says '[t]here is a torse / In the pastoral disc, an incision at the quarry beds / Letting through the dark' (p. 16). If the recoils and diversions Riley makes across the peninsular are a rejection of Arnold's static, monumental, speaker, this awareness of the dark hinterland of the peninsula is a crumbling of the reassuring line of the shore which in Arnold is also the secure contours of the nation state.

The alignment of the personal with the national as a response to crisis, even if in Arnold this gesture is itself contingent and threatened, is no longer thinkable for Riley, here fitting with a more traditional sense of the spatial qualities of the archipelago in a British context of devolution as marginal edge. The sequence is set on the fringes of Britain, rather than in the geography Paul Gilroy dismissively describes as 'the nation-defining ramparts of the white cliffs of Dover.'[68] In Wales, England is, as hinted at with the naming of 'English castles', an occupying force. At the same time Riley also insinuates this is not just the product of local neglect but rather larger movements of global capital: '[a]nd remember, far away / From here management decides hurt' (p. 13). Any identification of the coast with the outer limits of a unitary nation is therefore disrupted by the presence of transnational economic processes and histories of oppression and

---

[68] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 14.

occupation. Instead, the individual in crisis is turned back either onto the domestic and unglorified family world, or a spiritual quest in the remains of seaside chapels.

'Forth Out and First Back' does gesture towards an Arnoldian settlement with the nation, the third stanza saying that '[a] country must be sure to be more than a pause / In a life' and the coastline described as warmly embracing the geography of the peninsula: '[t]he mountains gather towards the sea […] And the coastal strip sweeps under in a curling arm' (p. 15). Yet this shift towards national self-fulfilment and containment is immediately turned into 'the scattered threads / Of a remote history', as Riley 'shoots' over the 'sliding geography' of the peninsula, engaged in '[n]othing but evasion' (pp. 15-16).

These counter movements are something imbued not just in the language of the poems but in the construction of *Sea Watches* as a poetic sequence. What is noticeable in 'Cliff-Top Annuals' is how each succeeding stanza seems to undercut or make contingent ideas raised in the preceding one. This alternation is not a distinct antithesis, as images associated with one of these positions often runs into the next stanza. At the same time the form of alternating stanzas is not necessarily found intact in the other poems.

For example, 'Sandlogged' does possess this switching back and forth but it operates between groups of stanzas. Stanzas one, four and five are all focused on the narrator taking a solitary walk along the cliff top. This emphasises a sense of inward reflection and echoes the overarching perspective on people and land that is present in the opening stanza of 'Cliff-Top Annuals', providing a physical perspective in which the speaker can attempt to work together the purpose and meaning of an entire human life through a symbolic reading of landscape and pilgrimage. In contrast stanzas two, three and six focus on the poem's speaker being with their

family, among people down at the beach, highlighting those experiences of domesticity used to undercut ideas of an abstract, intellectual love.

This alternation is something Riley uses as an image in the sequence, tying the formal structure of the poems more directly into the metaphysical tensions that characterise *Sea Watches*. As Riley writes in the third stanza of 'Cliff-Top Annuals', '[a]nd the same us with different / Surfaces, year after year we are here again. / Alternatim to eternity, if our love is proven.' An alternatim is a Christian music form, sometimes part of the Mass, which features the alternation of choral singing with organ music wherein the organ can symbolise the majesty of God, inexpressible by human voices. 'Alternatim to eternity' is symbolically the unchanging organ music, the focus of a life's events in the opening stanza, that idea of agape or an intellectual love, while the human voices are the changes and occurrence of daily life, distinct but always being drawn together by the organ music.

The idea of the alternatim is also encoded in the poem's rhyme scheme. In a note on this Riley writes 'the stanzas of *Sea Watches* rhyme alternately ABCDEF', this 'means that the end-rhymes are twelve lines apart and cannot without difficulty be held in the reader's mind. Their function is thus structural' (p. 113). Going back to 'Cliff-Top Annuals' as an example, stanzas one, three, five and seven, which seem to explore ideas or contain images of abstract, impersonal, human relations, all share end rhymes like 'soft […] cleft […] cliff […] off' or 'extent […] different […] resentment […] instrumental'. The same can be seen in stanzas two, four, six, eight which explore or suggest notions of the personal, material and domestic. This sees the structure and form of the poem adopt that of the alternatim, but instead of alternating between musical voices it is alternating between ideas of measuring and comprehending human life and experience.

By taking this approach Riley is producing a tentative framework in which the other poems in the sequence can move forward and unfold. This is not necessarily to find a definitive answer; rather it provides a structure in which to constantly question both ideas present in the world and the speaker's own claims of knowledge. The use of the alternatim, given its association with sacred music, is suggestive of an underlying structure that, while allowing diversions, nevertheless pulls the sequence towards some kind of reckoning.

The presence of a musical structure might also suggest something about the difficulty of language in addressing the themes and ideas present in *Sea Watches*. In a later prose poem titled 'Llŷn, Pausing', Riley writes that 'there is no dictionary to explain the terms of this great distance [...] Only the chapels [...] A hymn in Welsh reaching us through the thick walls' (p. 107). At the same time the rhyming structure in *Sea Watches* is dependent on half-rhymes such as 'cliff' and 'cleft', or 'extent' and 'different', undermining any kind of transcendental unity at the level of structure, instead introducing moments of disjuncture and slippage into the sequence at a deep structural level.

In tracing the ways Riley undercuts and makes contingent those moments in the sequence which move towards a potential sense of the transcendent, it is possible to see how notions of interconnection and embodied experience of the landscape inform both aspects of *Sea Watches*. At the same time, Riley registers the difficulty of sustaining liminal experiences at the peninsula, being acutely aware of not just the religious history of Llŷn but also the wider historic relationship of Wales to England, an odd sense of '[w]orld politics' which 'lurks far round the coast selling plastic corn flakes to the survivors' (p. 113).

In the movement between 'cracked dreams' and '[c]ommon musings' (p. 113), Riley is not so much caught in the disjuncture of local

and global but an experience of place formed from the interchange of the immediacy of the family caravan and the vastness of sea and sky which, from the edge of coastal cliffs, gesture towards a potentially different sense of being in the world.

A Post-secular Moment?

To fully understand how these poems emerge in a post-Christian moment, but are nonetheless deeply engaged with the earlier Christian landscape of the peninsula, it is necessary to explore the wider context of religious thought and feeling from which *Sea Watches* arises. The traditional explanation for the status of religion in social and civic life since the end of the Second World War has been based on the idea of the 'secularization thesis'. This holds that there has been a process, evident since the Enlightenment but having accelerated in the twentieth century, where religion (as both an explanatory force and a social service in terms of education and welfare) has been increasingly eroded by more rational, scientific discourses.[69]

This process is thought to have had a profound effect on poetry's capacity to address ideas of religious experience. Helen Gardner notes that the modern religious poet 'has to meet a problem of communication that did not exist for earlier centuries. Words and symbols that lay to hand for earlier writers as sure to evoke a universal response have lost their power.'[70] While J. Hillis Miller calls such disenchantment of language the breaking down of the 'lines of connection between us and God', resulting in

[69] Sinfield, 'Varieties of Religion', pp. 89-90.
[70] Helen Gardner, *Religion and Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 137.

the isolation of the individual, a 'separation from everything outside himself'.[71]

Such concerns emerge from the idea that religious poetry, unlike the personal nature of lyric poetry, can only successfully function as a form of signification by reaching out to a recognisable and living religious culture beyond the confines of the poem itself.[72] As the poet David Jones notes, '[i]f the poet writes "wood" what are the chances that the Wood of the Cross will be evoked? Should the answer be "None", then it would seem that an impoverishment of some sort would have to be admitted'.[73] It is not difficult to see how a decline in religious observation, and therefore the absence of a general religious culture from people's day-to-day lives, contributes to the deadening of certain potentialities for the poetic use of religious language.

These contexts (the social and literary) raise the question not simply of what religious poetry is but whether it is possible to have a relationship between poetry and religious experience today that is not simply anachronistic or reactionary. While the decline of organized religion may have weakened one source of language and symbol for the poet interested in modern religious experience it has not signalled the end of religious feeling itself. There is a space for writing which reaches towards the sacred while reflecting modern experiences of contingency and doubt. This often occurs in ways that could be deemed post-theological (that is outside organised religion), and meets the absence of received symbols and images by creating new ways of talking about religious experience. Derrida, for example, poses questions about why discourse concerned with

---

[71] J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 2, 7.
[72] Gardner, *Religion and Literature*, p. 135.
[73] David Jones, 'Preface', *The Anathemata* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), pp. 9-43, (p. 23).

religion still reaches back to earlier understandings of the sacred, of redemption, and of the relationship of good and evil that now seems out of step with modern experience.

For Derrida it is crucial to articulate that '*faith has not always been and will not always be identifiable with religion, nor, another point, with theology* [his italics].'[74] At the same time this remaking of the religious, rather than simply discarding such ideas, provides modern poets the space to begin to address what might be considered serious questions about life, love, morality and human purpose that have often seemed at odds with more prominent strands of postmodern thinking. This allows the contemporary poet to risk, as Michael Symmons Roberts says, 'a greater reach', to make 'bigger statements' than they were permitted, or able to do, before.[75]

It is important to note how this concern with the post-secular is intimately tied up with the geography of the peninsula in *Sea Watches*. Inge writes that 'place is essential' for encounters with the sacred and the greater reach of Symmons Roberts is present in Riley's awareness of the vast seas and sky which surround the peninsula.[76] In much the same way as the decline of organized religion did not see an evaporation of religious feeling, so too any sense of post-secular space has to be aware of the earlier negotiations of sacred and secular geography. As Kim Knott says

> The spaces of religion are synchronically dynamic because at any time they are overlapping, co-existent, in parallel with other spaces,

---

[74] Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone', trans. by Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. by Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-78 (pp. 2, 8).
[75] Michael Symmons Roberts, 'Contemporary Poetry and Belief', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 694-706 (p. 701).
[76] Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, p. 91.

> and because they are internally in tension, being made up of multiple, contested, real, and imagined sites and relations. [77]

The earlier Christian landscape of the peninsula, therefore, 'is at once demolished, erased, and at the same time very much present' in modern experiences of Llŷn's coastal geography.[78]

As such, Riley uses this particular coastline of North Wales, in which Britain's sacred past and secular present overlap, as a way to explore, and not necessarily resolve (at least in any fixed way), the relationship between a place's earlier religious usage, its current secular ones and its post-secular potentialities, all the while tentatively offering a language and poetic practice for understanding such relationships.

Riley's work is also part of a longer tradition of English poetry stemming from debates of meaning at the coast. There is a particular strong strain of nineteenth century poetry in this regard with Swinburne's 'Triumph of Time', Tennyson in 'Break, Break, Break' and its emotional opposite 'Crossing the Bar', as well as Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'The Sea and Skylark'. The proliferation of the coastal landscape as a suitable terrain in which to reflect on the quality of religious experience enacts cultural coding of the shore as a liminal and transgressive terrain (as well as the growth of railways providing access to difficult to reach shorelines in the nineteenth century). Christopher Singer identifies the coast as possessing 'obvious' liminality, and views it as a place which challenges binary associations of life and death, dissolving the distance between 'I' and 'Other'.[79] More generally, Irene Klaver says '[b]oundaries are places where

---

[77] Knott, *The Location of Religion*, p. 23.
[78] Jacob N. Kinnard, *Places in Motions: The Fluid Identities of Temples, Images, and Pilgrims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 152.
[79] Christopher Singer, *Sea Change: The Shore from Shakespeare to Banville* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 15.

different entities, different modes of being, different ontological domains, meet, interact with each other, give and take from each other'.[80]

Both Riley and Arnold see the coast as a site in which to mediate, in different ways, the personal and domestic alongside and against vast impersonal processes. If Riley's reason for visiting the peninsula is an annual family holiday then Arnold's justification is his honeymoon. Hence 'Dover Beach' referring to ideas of faith and doubt which are addressed to the speaker's lover, someone to whom such doubt could be safely confessed (despite the irony of the public life of the poem): '[a]h, love, let us be true / To one another!'[81]

In contrast to this elision of personal and social moments of crisis, Riley's sense of vastness in the peninsula's geography is, as explored earlier, used as a way of conceptualising a scale of experience beyond the immediate confines of the individual. Arnold too finds the coastal cliffs befitting as an image of vastness, while the rhythms of the waves, how they '[b]egin, and cease, and then again', are felt to operate along a grand temporal axis, matching Arnold's own pan-civilizational reflections. The coastal landscape is not simply a backdrop to Arnold's abstract ponderings on faith, but rather constitutive of such thinking. As Riley uses the peninsula to think through the modern potential of redemption and transcendence, so too does Arnold's moment of crisis require both the 'darkling plain' of the English Channel and the firmer contours of the Dover cliffs to emerge.[82]

To consider Riley's work about the Llŷn peninsula through this prism of the post-secular is not to position him as a religious poet, or to make

---

[80] Irene J. Klaver, 'Phenomenology on (the) Rocks', in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. by Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), pp. 155-169 (p. 162).
[81] Arnold, 'Dover Beach', pp. 118.
[82] Arnold, 'Dover Beach', pp. 117-118.

insinuations about his own personal faith. Rather it is to pay attention to the way Riley's poetry begins to grapple with these questions of post-secular experience, and how an understanding of the coast as a potentially liminal space may allow for the emergence of religious feelings that remain somewhat contentious on the mainland. It is, however, also an awareness that offering the specific coastal geography of Llŷn as the ground for a potential return of the sacred is fraught with complexities, especially as *Sea Watches* resists the broader diagnosis present in Arnold's 'Dover Beach', in which experiences of spiritual crisis are not just individual but social as well.

Riley may be tentatively moving towards the kind of greater reach Symmons Roberts suggests but he is not doing so without both an appreciation of the contingency of such experience and a grounding in the contemporary critiques of these gestures. Any attempt to project the ideas of the sequence beyond the particular interactions of Riley and the Llŷn landscape (even though these are found to emerge across Riley's writing) proves immensely difficult.

Sea Watching

If Arnold and 'Dover Beach' is in some sense the archetypal coastal poem of faith and doubt which lays behind *Sea Watches*, then it is the work of R. S. Thomas which is more explicitly addressed in Riley's sequence, particularly through the notion of sea watching. Both poet and practicing vicar, R. S. Thomas was writing in the decades following the Second World War, when ideas of secularization and scientific modernity were perhaps at their most intertwined and potent. Thomas characterised this era with a

wariness of 'our increasing isolation' from people, from a sense of religious community, that makes the good life (and good poem) more difficult.[83]

Thomas himself, though often defined by his early poems of hill farmers and the emblematic figure of Iago Prytherch, has a deep connection to the coastal regions of North Wales. His father worked in the Merchant Navy and Thomas grew up largely in Anglesey. He said of his time there that 'Holyhead […] made me what little of a poet I am, a horrible little town with a glorious expanse of cliff and coastal scenery. I shall never outgrow my *hiraeth* [roughly the Welsh word for homesickness; a mix of longing, yearning, nostalgia, and wistfulness] for it'.[84] More importantly, for the interests of this chapter at least, is Thomas's return to North Wales when he became vicar of Aberdaron, a community at the tip of the Llŷn peninsula, from 1967-1978, staying in Llŷn after his retirement until 1993.[85]

The poem 'Pilgrimages' sees Thomas directly addressing the history of the peninsula and like Riley using it as a way of shaping responses to religious experience in the present. The poem opens by depicting this religious past: '[t]here is an island there is no going / to but in a small boat the way / the saints went'.[86] Then, as in Riley, Thomas makes clear how this earlier practice of pilgrimage shapes his own contemporary responses to questions of the sacred:

So I have gone

---

[83] R. S. Thomas, 'A Frame for Poetry (1966)', *Selected Prose*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Seren, 1995), pp. 68-73 (p. 73).
[84] R.S. Thomas, *Letters to Raymond Garlick: 1951–1999*, ed. by Jason Walford Davies (Llandysul: Gomer, 2009), p. 7.
[85] Rory Waterman, *Belonging and Estrangement in the Poetry of Philip Larkin, R.S. Thomas and Charles Causley* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 51-52.
[86] R.S. Thomas, 'Pilgrimages', *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 364.

> up the salt lane to the buildings
> with the stone altar and the candles
> gone out (p. 364)

While Thomas's pilgrimage does not contain the physical diversions of Riley, there is a sense of the religious doubts the speaker of the poem is going through as well as the comings and goings explored earlier in this chapter. This is a deviation from orthodox belief, such that the owl which looks like a god 'gone small and resentful' (p. 364).

Riley is a poet caught between a predominantly secular position and a tentative gesture towards the sacred and transcendent. Thomas, in contrast, can be seen as a man of relatively traditional faith trying to come to terms with a world that seems increasingly hostile to such belief. Yet there is also a kind of unorthodox religious hope at work in Thomas's writing about the peninsula. 'The Moon in Lleyn' (Lleyn being the anglicized spelling) observes that talk of the absence of God should not happen so easily in a place where

> These very seas
> are baptised. The parish
> has a saint's name time cannot
> unfrock.[87]

Such hope for Thomas is less than overwhelming: it seems merely a possibility rather than a certainty. Nevertheless, it signals something both Riley and Thomas feel in their own ways. A sense that through the active

[87] R.S. Thomas, 'The Moon in Lleyn', *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 282.

practice of poetry, religious feeling is not just revealed but can be made complex, new and relevant for the demands of the time.

The clearest point of contact between Thomas and Riley lies in the concept of the sea watch. 'Sea-watching' is the name of a Thomas poem, the plural form, *Sea Watches*, is of course the name of Riley's sequence and 'Seawatch' is the final poem in the sequence. Thomas has '[d]aily / over a period of years' watched the sea,[88] while Riley's poem is the product of annual visits to the headland over a thirteen year stretch.

Both poems emphasise a sense of stillness and emplacement within and as part of the landscape. Thomas says he 'became the hermit / of the rocks, habited with the wind / and the mist' (p. 306). Riley's sea watch opens with the speaker '[s]unk in a grass hollow in the cliff', the colour of his 'grave green chair' articulating a sympathy with the surrounding landscape, while 'grave', beyond an unsettling surface association with death (emphasising the finality of this last poem), also evokes the solemnity of Thomas's quiet watcher (p.23). The vigil-like quality of these sea watches recalls the physical and mental discipline of the pilgrimage, suggesting this activity is not just the conclusion of the pilgrimage in Riley's case but also, counterintuitively, a continual part of the journeying process.

Crucially both poems are concerned with reflecting on debates over meaning, and the possibility of discerning any kind of clear conclusion to such debates as these thoughts become registered both materially and symbolically in the way the landscape forms to the speaker's perspective. Thomas's sea watch is about searching for a sense of God's presence, the '[g]rey waters, vast / as an area of prayer / that one enters', yet the water

---

[88] R.S. Thomas, 'Sea-watching', *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 306.

is also '[n]othing / but that continuous waving / that is without meaning' (p. 306).

This difficulty and ambiguity is left unresolved by 'Sea-watching', the poem instead centring on the notion of prayer as something paradoxical and difficult to grasp: '[i]t is when one is not looking, / at times one is not there / that it comes' (p. 306). Riley, though lacking the clearer Christian dynamic of Thomas, also finds questions of truth, hope and transcendence difficult to resolve within geography that is itself ambiguous and changing, moment to moment or year to year. For Riley '[t]he sea is blue green white, / The sea is grey and folds, the sun is split', and the truth 'is never / Quite the same' (p. 23).

Thomas's representation of the shoreline reflects more broadly Arnold's 'tranquil bay', the spread of grey water matched by the vastness of cliffs in 'Dover Beach'. In contrast, the littoral terrain in Riley's sea watch is more fragmented and mobile, the sea shifting colour and disrupting a working over of truth. Where Thomas finds the sea 'an area of prayer', Riley's sea is febrile, folding over itself, resisting easy assimilation into a symbolic landscape of transcendence. This is the most marked deviation from Arnold's 'long line', a refusal to allow the shore to emerge as a place for the poetic ego to marshal some semblance of order or truth.

As the culmination to the sequence, 'Seawatch' encompasses both notions of fulfilment and diversion which have been present throughout the sequence. While the poem itself takes place at the very tip of the peninsula, with Bardsey Island in sight, it is worth pointing out that the island itself is never approached. Prior to this final poem Bardsey Island has only ever been reached imaginatively. These journeys occur at night, at the conclusion of a day's activities, escaping the concerns of the waking hours. 'Sailing, Sailing Away', for instance, depicts the poem's speaker '[l]ying dozing late in the dark caravan [...] I send my consciousness out

like a gull / Over the sea'. These dream-like excursions suggest that Bardsey Island, and what it symbolises, a movement 'away from the wasteful and gaudy shops / Of this life, away from my own tricks, indeed away / From the untruthful land' (p. 14), can only be grasped at in the unreal space-time of dreams. Nevertheless the final poem in the sequence does find the speaker approaching the end of a journey, in the place where '[t]he island lies before us on the sea' (p. 22).

The primary concern of the sequence as it was stated in the opening stanza of 'Cliff-Top Annuals' is the possibility of experiencing 'a life's coming and going' as pulled together by 'an intellectual love' (p. 9). Such concerns reappear in 'Seawatch' as a sense of being '[s]tuck in the middle of life' (p. 23). This situation initially seems to undermine, as Riley so often does in the sequence, the hope for transcendence, echoing Kermode's earlier criticism that life cannot be grasped from the middle. Hence the feeling of being stuck described as that which 'ungently / Grinds of ruin', and that light (hope and salvation as noted earlier) is being drawn 'from the fields until / Swathed in shade' (p. 23). Yet this loss of hope is itself countered by the penultimate stanza to the poem which opens assertively with 'it will be good'. Here the uncertainty of the earlier stanza, that all is swathed in darkness now, is replaced by a reassertion of presence, '[p]roving us truly here', and that '[s]ome portion of true hope lies open in the cut / Of a single life' (p. 24).

Like many of the other poems in the sequence, 'Seawatch' concludes with the speaker returning to the confines of the family caravan. In this return there is a tentative sense that the sequence is ending by emphasising the small scale victories of the domestic. This reorientation away from a sense of 'true hope' experienced out alone on the peninsula is emphasised by the mundane specificity of the opening lines of this final stanza: '[w]hen I get back to the caravan it is twenty / To four'. The

darkness of the caravan is not the earlier darkness of the peninsula but a darkness within which the speaker stumbles and hears 'a moan / Of blame' (p. 24). It is a darkness in which the sharing of life with another person is cast as the minor annoyance of a loved one; intimate, ordinary and seemingly notable because of these characteristics. Even if there is a moment of doubt, 'a sleeping urge to die and quit this mess', the domestic setting of the caravan assuages such feelings, there being 'no speed at all' to enact such desires (p. 24).

Both poem and sequence ends with a gesture towards connection, that even as the speaker is 'heavy with dew, / closing on sea moon and all', they are 'alive in you' (p. 24). Despite the heavy rhyme of 'dew' and 'you', which seems on the nose enough to potentially be ironic, this final rhyming couplet brings the strands of the sequence's alternatim together. Yet, this sense of final connection is itself multiple and referential, the only moment of the sequence which really extends outside Riley's specific engagement with the peninsula and its history. It is a 'you' that is the other person in the caravan but also 'you' as an address to the reader, wherein the actions of the poem are alive in the process of reading. Given the obfuscations and diversions of the sequence such direct address on Riley's behalf might seem strange but Riley has previously suggested that '[t]he poem can be conceived as an object between poet and reader […] a means of communication', albeit in a characteristic manoeuver it is simultaneously 'a barrier to communication […] neither opaque or transparent.'[89]

This conclusion to the poem still seems tentative. There is a sense that Riley will never be able to settle and that it is the constant movement and mediation between the intimate and vast, between different scales of embodied experience, which is the dominant and determining feature of

[89] Riley, 'The Creative Moment of the Poem', p. 93.

the sequence. Although *Sea Watches* ends with a return to the domestic, the peninsula and all it embodies, a sense of liminal space and the potential for transcendent experience, maintains. As Riley writes in a later piece titled 'Llŷn in the Rain, September 1998', 'no, we shan't get to Bardsey this year either, clearly, but the time will come' (p. 100).

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Riley is not content simply settling on an exploration of hope and transcendence. For every movement there is made towards a sense of love as an abstract intellectual force there is a counter movement towards the domestic and ordinary. This dynamic, which pushes the sequence forward line by line, stanza to stanza, is central to Riley's thinking about poetry more generally. For Riley the poem 'constantly shouts back at you a load of Buts, Ifs, Either/Ors', emerging as a site for 'the contestation of ideas.'[90] The multiple uses of the peninsula gives Riley a way into exploring and mediating negations of the region's sacred past and its secular present. The very material quality of the peninsula means Riley cannot make any firm conclusions about the serious questions that permeate *Sea Watches*, being left with, in Peter Larkin's words, 'a presencing which cannot be secured as an absolute ground'.[91]

Katharina Rennhak observes how 'Dover Beach' uses a firm sense of geography to 'lyrically negotiate the question of how an individual subject can stabilise his […] subject position when faced with the uncertain and the unknown.'[92] *Sea Watches* explores similar questions to 'Dover Beach', probing the capacity for the landscape to act as an anchor to subjective

---

[90] Riley, 'The Creative Moment of the Poem', p. 101.
[91] Larkin, '*Sea Watches*: Little More Than Arrival', p. 116.
[92] Rennhak, 'Dover Beach and the Politics and Poetics of Perspective', p. 39.

experience. Both texts are conducted through the viewpoint of a lone, masculine, speaker, using the littoral geography to explore questions of doubt, hope and endings. Yet *Sea Watches* reworks the shoreline of Arnold into a multiple, historically contingent, terrain. Importantly, Riley rejects the identification of the coast with the national, the sequence acknowledging Wales's fraught relation to England, and how the seemingly remote peninsula is still a product of larger forces of economic organisation.

Significant in this reworking of Arnold, one that is also mediated through the prominent presence of R. S. Thomas in the Llŷn landscape, is that Riley's sense of the peninsula is not the product of an instance of revelatory observation but of an embodied criss-crossing of the peninsula. This activity gestures towards an underlying archipelagic spatiality in the sequence, one registered in the marginal and liminal geography of the peninsula but also in the connective scales of temporal experience which link Riley's annual visits to the caravan with longer histories of human presence. In this, any movement the poems make towards embracing the potential transcendence offered by the horizon is met by a recognition of the immediate and mundane, the sore and bruised bodies of family members crossing the bay, '[l]imping from shelf to shelf' (p. 13). Here the distortions of local and global scales of geographic awareness, which inform some of the wider background to the sequence, are displaced onto the spatial tension between personal and abstract experiences of the peninsula, a product of the text's focus on scales of embodied, individual perception and action.

Similarly, the melancholic moment of Arnold's 'Dover Beach' can be contrasted to the way Riley's *Sea Watches* is part of a career long interest

in the specific coastal geography of the peninsula.[93] While the geographical scope of *Sea Watches* may still be generally limited to the perceptions of a singular subject, this wider work gestures towards how the coastline problematizes not just spatial but temporal scales of poetic writing and implacement, as well as the strategies a poet might adopt to engage with such littoral formulations of space-time.

The movement between vast, abstract conceptions of both space and life, and intimate, bodily moments of action, also relate to the notions of pilgrimage Riley finds so useful in *Sea Watches*. René Gothóni writes of pilgrimage that '[t]he journey itself encompasses transitions, series of happenings, setbacks and triumphs.'[94] Similarly, Riley says in the 'Topographical Notes' that 'the very difficulty of reaching it [Bardsey Island] seems to have been the main part of the attraction' (p. 115). The classical pilgrimages of medieval England could also be much more mundane and earthy activities, prefiguring modern secular holidays in several ways.[95] The presence of pilgrimage in the sequence therefore provides another sense in which the personal journey for a sense of the transcendence and the daily activity of family excursions across the peninsula often occupy the same space in the poems. A sense that the interest of *Sea Watches* is not so much in the opposition of antagonistic philosophical traditions but a mediation of different ways of being in the world.

---

[93] *The Llŷn Writings* contains prose pieces, poetic fragments and major sequences that cover the years 1977 to 1998.
[94] 'Introduction', in *Pilgrims and Travellers in Search of the Holy*, ed. by René Gothóni (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 1-8 (p. 1).
[95] See Eamon Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 164-177, and Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001) for explorations of these less exalted forms of pilgrimage.

Riley has said that 'only from the edge does any wholeness become contemplatable and achieve reverberation.'[96] What reverberates in *Sea Watches* is a sense of productive absence, traced in the ruined cliff-top chapels, the inability to reach Bardsey Island, and the sequence's lack of any firm conclusion. Riley embraces the ambivalent and unforeclosed potential of the peninsula, the archipelagic opening up onto both the Irish Sea and the vast panorama of sea and sky, such movement itself tentative and registering the desire for connection, both with other people on the peninsula and an abstract sense of intellectual love which can make sense of a life's comings and goings.

[96] Riley, interviewed by Keith Tuma.

Chapter Two: Contested Coastlines and a Geography of Loss in Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence*

Having looked at how an intimate, embodied relation of individual to place is affected by the temporal and spatial scales present at the British coastline in Chapter One, this chapter will move on to look at how such ideas relate to larger territorial notions of the region and the nation. Of particular interest is the way Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence* mediates a growing interest in the specifics of place and habitation with a sense of unease at the historic exclusions and oppression that mark the East Anglian landscape, as well as the threat to being in place posed by the material geography of the region through the presence of storm surges and flooding.

The notion of 'full flight' that Mulford uses to describe her initial movement to the east coast evokes a sense of the shore as a fugitive space.[1] It is a marginal terrain in which Mulford is able to work as a poet faced with the precarious situation of being 'out of a job and a single parent in the mid-80s' ('Preface'). As a region, East Anglia has often been characterised as being at the periphery of national life. Ronald Blythe reflects on Suffolk feeling 'strangely remote'[2] while the Pevsner architectural guide describes Norfolk as 'a destination, not a place *en route* to somewhere else.'[3] This is not destination in any positive sense but rather

---

[1] Wendy Mulford, 'Preface to the East Anglia Sequence', *The East Anglia Sequence* (Peterborough: Spectacular Diseases, 1998). Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number. Those from the Salthouse section are marked with an S, those from the Dunwich section are marked with a D.
[2] Ronald Blythe, 'Foreword', *By the North Sea: An anthology of Suffolk Poetry*, ed. by Aidan Semmens (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), p. 7.
[3] Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk I: Norwich and North East* (London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 17.

destination as the end of the line, nowhere left to go. A sentiment echoed by Aidan Semmens when he describes the region as 'not on the way to anywhere'.[4] Here the liminality of the shore shifts from the metaphysical towards an escape from traditional centres of power and authority, echoing archipelagic notions of edges and cores.

It is tempting to read such geographic marginality only as a symbolic mirroring of Mulford's position within the British poetry culture of the 1980s and 1990s. Linda A. Kinnahan outlines how the poetic 'work of women in general and feminists in particular has suffered marginal status and treatment', particularly within male dominated formations of 'experimental' writing.[5] Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle have argued for the 'disruptive works' of poets like Mulford, Veronica Forrest-Thomson and Denise Riley which seems to sit uneasily alongside a more confessional and direct mode of feminist writing.[6]

The modernist and poststructuralist preoccupations of Mulford puts her, as Claire Buck writes, 'somewhat at odds with the work of poets published in [the feminist poetry anthology] *One Foot on the Mountain*.'[7] While Mulford is perhaps as well known for running Street Editions (founded in Cambridge in 1972 and merged with Ken Edwards's Reality Studios in 1993 to form Reality Street), the life of the small press is another form of marginality, 'occur[ing] at the margins of viability' (albeit a

---

[4] Semmens, 'Introduction', *By the North Sea*, pp. 8-11 (p. 9).
[5] Linda A. Kinnahan, *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), p. 181.
[6] Jane Dowson and Alice Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 153.
[7] Claire Buck, 'Poetry and the Women's Movement in Postwar Britain', in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by James Acheson and Romana Huk (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 81-112 (pp. 83-84).

potentially self-selecting one, an active turning away from the literary establishment).[8]

At the same time, the preface alerts us to Mulford's desired for encounter 'with [an] other', which is framed as an authentic engagement with place: '[t]he quick of it [...] The all-but-buried particulars of its meanings.' This can be traced in the temporal scale of the sequence, covering a ten year period and two distinct locations: Salthouse, Norfolk in 1984 and Dunwich, Suffolk 1994. The poems employ an archaeological and intertextual poetics to get to the 'quick of' this sense of place. In the Salthouse section this sees the utilisation of a variety array of sources: 'the meteorology, archaeology, geology, ecology, ornithology, prehistory, the recorded history of place' ('Preface'). This compositional technique of accretion underpins a poetic logic of inhabitation, as the sequence can be seen as an attempt by Mulford to write into being a complex sense of place that she can position herself within, which permits and reflects the transition from 'fly-in' to immigrant.

This chapter argues that, though informed by a cultural sense of marginality, *The East Anglia* Sequence is more invested in wider social, economic and historic patterns of dispossession and exile, particularly those that affect women. This awareness of the oppressions and exclusions of the regional works against the sequence's desired for place making. The pull towards the 'quick' of a place is also constantly troubled by the geographic forces of coastal erosion. A material process that can undermine the capacity for place, erosion also marks the form of the sequence. This raises questions about language's ability to express a sense of implacement, especially when what is attempting to be articulated is a

---

[8] Nigel Wheale, 'Uttering Poetry: Small-Press Publication', *Poets on Writing: Britain, 1970-1991*, ed. by Denise Riley (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 9-19 (p. 9).

female subjectivity that has historically, and often continues to be, excluded by discourses of place, community and nation. Much like Riley, Mulford's sense of the connectivity of the coastline emerges not spatially (although there is an awareness of East Anglia's relation both to other east coast regions such as Hull and to a wider Northern Europe and North Sea regional character) but temporally, in linking her own experiences of dispossession to earlier traces of privation in the region.

Mulford primarily organises questions of exile and marginalisation around contested notions of ownership, something that has been recognised by two critics who have written with a particular focus on *The East Anglia Sequence*. Matthew Jarvis places the sequence within a broader environmental context, suggesting the tension is between humanity and the environment. 'In short', he writes, 'both the difficulties and the potentialities of being in the world are acknowledged'.[9] In a more explicitly coastal context, Amy Cutler notes that 'Mulford brings attention to questions of license and ownership' and raises the question '[w]hose remit — legally, economically and aesthetically — is the coast?'[10]

While both critics' work is useful in approaching Mulford's sequence, it is the contention of this chapter that they leave under-developed the full complexities of Mulford's place making. This includes overlooking the importance of gender to the poems in defining and examining the question of 'whose remit is this' (S, p. 8). Jarvis, for example, asserts that 'the environmental point of Mulford's poetry […] is actually to counter the erosions and incursions of the sea.'[11] Yet this misses both the historical and

---

[9] Matthew Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth: Wendy Mulford's Salthouse', *ISLE*, 16.3 (Summer, 2009), 469-486 (p. 479).
[10] Amy Cutler, '"Whitby is a statement": Littoral Geographies in British Poetry', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 120-133 (pp. 124-125).
[11] Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth', p. 484.

contemporary exclusions from village life the sequence covers as well as Mulford's suggestive identification of the feminine with the corrosive sea.

In order to make this argument the chapter will be split into three broad sections. The first will focus on ideas of ownership as filtered through a technical and bureaucratic language of coastal management, asking what Mulford is doing employing this specialist discourse in her poem and how anxieties of coastal management seep into the wider organisation of the sequence. The second will show how Mulford's depiction of the historic hardships of women in East Anglia relates to ideas of marginality, inclusion, and ownership. This will link to both the work of Mulford's contemporaries such as Susan Howe and earlier experiences of female marginality at the coast such as the Romantic poet Charlotte Smith, demonstrating that Mulford is part of a longer lineage of writing that links coastal spaces with female experiences of exile. The final section will focus on the sequence's ambivalent relation to loss, arguing that Mulford's poems are suggestive of a productive understanding of erosion in relation to place.

This chapter will contend that the coastal landscape of East Anglia provides Mulford with a way of rethinking her relation to a region that has historically excluded women, providing a sense in which bounded notions of place are exposed to the dynamic and erosive forces of the sea, questioning scales of belonging which are available to women, from the communal to the regional and national.

Storm Surges

In the 'Preface', Mulford writes that both sections of the sequence are part of '[t]he further tracking after [...] the place which is, finally, your home'. Yet, by opening *The East Anglia Sequence* with an account of the storms ('[m]any of the most severe floods are due to the effects of storms / acting

on shallow seas') that pose a continuous threat to the 'land areas at or below sea level' which constitute the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk (S, p. 1), she is underlining threats towards place.

To get a sense of quite how disastrous this kind of flooding can be it is worth turning to Dorothy Summers's account of the 1953 floods which devastated much of eastern England:

> On 31 January and 1 February 1953 a great storm surge, accompanied by gale force winds, swept out of the north, causing widespread flooding of coastal areas, and involving grievous loss of life [...] The damage extended over 1,000 miles of coastline, and involved breaches in the defences at some 1,200 sites.[12]

Far from being rare occurrences, this kind of flooding has been a constant presence in the lives of the people of East Anglia. Julian Tennyson writes that

> The devastation known as coast erosion has been going on for hundreds of years. I believe that a disaster was first recorded in the time of Edward the Confessor [...] Awful to think that a thousand years ago our ancestors struggled against it, succumbed to it, just as today we struggle and just as we succumb[13]

'Although the 1978 surge is immediately compared with that of 1953', geographer J. A. Steers notes, 'inundations of almost comparable height

---

[12] Dorothy Summers, *The East Coast Floods* (London: David and Charles, 1978), p. 7.
[13] Julian Tennyson, 'The Suffolk Sea', in *New Aldeburgh Anthology*, ed. by Ariane Bankes and Jonathan Reekie (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

are not infrequent', going on to list a series of dates when similar measures were recorded including 1817, 1883, 1897 and 1949.[14]

This long history of damage and destruction, both to the communities and to the material coastline of East Anglia, is marked in the sequence through the titles of individual poems. In the Salthouse section there is 'Danger Level 1820, 1980' while the Dunwich section includes a poem ('The Storms') whose opening lines list the date of various storms: '1250 1286 1328 1348 1349'. The poem declares in bold type that 'The Loss of the Port was an Incurable Wound' (D, p. 5), suggesting that these storms also threaten Salthouse and Dunwich at an intangible, existential level.

Dunwich was an important medieval town which once 'ranked as a port of no small consequence' and is now 'practically destroyed.'[15] Mulford gives an account of the town's fall to a succession of storms in the factual tone of the opening of 'Storm Surges' (although there seems to be an implicit value judgement in the final lines):

> in 1286
> the storm tore away half the monastery overnight and
> crumbled it into the sea mouth. Of the chapel only the
> west wall and graveyard remained.
> Here vanished in one night the whole of the lower the
> poorer part of the town
> leaving untouched the prosperous upper. (D, pp. 5-6)

---

[14] J. A. Steers and others, 'The Storm Surge of 11 January 1978 on the East Coast of England', *The Geographical Journal*, 145.2 (July, 1979), 192-205 (pp. 203-204).
[15] J. A. Steers, 'The East Anglian Coast', *The Geographical Journal*, 69.1 (January, 1927), 24-43 (p. 36).

However, because Mulford has set up the sequence as, in part, a negotiation of being in place she also builds the text out of a language of coastal management, in order to counter this history of destruction. In the tension between these two voices, as well as Mulford's ambivalent position in relation to discourses of preservation and erosion, *The East Anglia Sequence* is an exploration of what it means to inhabit a dynamic and changing landscape which is not necessarily always amenable to human inhabitation.

Outlining the responses to the 1953 disaster, Summers makes clear the long historical struggle around not just the storms themselves but coastal defence. 'For centuries the east coast of England has been a battleground in the unceasing conflict between land and sea, therefore defence against the sea is a persistent theme running through the history of every east coast town and village.'[16] Returning to 'Storm Surges' it is possible to see Mulford's awareness of this relationship. Following the description of the formation of a storm surge come the lines 'to secure the land against flood risk sea defences are / necessary' (S, p. 1).

This acknowledgement of the need for protection is, however, immediately challenged by the next section of the poem:

> To assess how high these must be we must assess the probability of seawater exceeding known levels. Problems include the restricted length of historical data, changes in land level relative to the mean sea-level, and variability of weather on all time scales (S, p. 1)

[16] Summers, *The East Coast Floods*, p. 9.

Despite the necessity for them, the poem acknowledges a series of problems which make installing sea defences difficult, reflecting the worries of many involved in coastal management. David Jones describes the coastal zone as 'possibly *the* "environment of concern"' in Britain because there is a mismatch between the environmental systems of the shore and the socio-economic solutions proposed.[17]

A sense of 'mismatch' occurs elsewhere in the sequence, suggesting Mulford sees these gaps as crucial parts of the littoral environment, disrupting and unsettling terrestrial logics of power and authority. It is present in the space between legal definitions of ownership and the actual uses of the coastline and, also, increasingly in the gap between the desire of language to communicate and its ability to do so, as will be explored later in this chapter in regards to the way notions of erosion and instability make their way into the meaning and form of the sequence.

Though seeming to undercut the necessity for flood defences by suggesting the difficulty of assessing and measuring the level of tides, 'Storm Surges' nonetheless seems to hold in balance the desire for protection with acknowledgment of the difficulties of such work. However as *The East Anglia Sequence* builds, or as Matthew Jarvis puts it 'Mulford's accretive and discursive construction of place' gathers momentum,[18] the gradual accumulation of this language does not work towards a sense of overwhelming security but rather begins to reveal the limits and fissures within the discourse itself. This brings out the discrepancy not just between intent and execution (that a stated need for coastal defences does not result in being able to defend the coast) but also the internal contradiction

---

[17] David K. C. Jones, 'Environments of Concern', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 8.4 (1983), 429-457 (p. 446).
[18] Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth', p. 481.

of management and protection unwilling to present an image of mastery to itself.

An illustration of how this occurs can be seen in the poem 'Pareto Optimality 1099, 1953'. In this poem, the economic cost of coastal management is brought up, raising questions about who and what is valued and deemed worthy of protection:

> by the time the sea-bank breaks the worst will be over
> approximately 40% of the houses are empty much of the year
> it would be cheaper to buy up all of the properties at risk
> than to spend £500,000 on sea defences (S, p. 6)

These lines jar with the earlier necessity for defence expressed in 'Storm Surges', the blank, matter of fact diction of the lines contrasting with the seriousness of the situation. If sea defences were crucial cost would not be a problem. Even if forty percent of houses are empty the majority are occupied, should they be left to suffer? In part this reflects the sheer complexity of the coast both as an ecosystem and as a social and economic zone; that no answer to the problem of coastal defences will respond adequately to every problem. Yet doing nothing is not a solution, as Simon Read says 'once you start meddling with a coastal regime, you are committing to continued interference.'[19]

While these chunks of managerial discourse lack rhythmical and aural distinction, Mulford utilises line breaks to gesture towards the wider implications of this language, although the blandness of the writing almost obscures this poetic effect. In 'Pareto Optimality' the preceding lines to the section quoted above see a long line juxtaposed with a short line: 'the cost

---

[19] Simon Read, 'Odd Times', in *New Aldeburgh Anthology*, pp. 44-46 (p. 45).

of the protection would be out of proportion to the value / of the limited land area protected' (S, p. 6). This visual dynamic sees the line break graphically isolating the word 'value' on the page, creating visual, if not aural, emphasis and implying the significance of notions of value to the poem. As Richard Bradford recognises, visual structure can replace aural signification as a way of thickening and intensifying meaning.[20] This moment of spatial separation provides the opportunity for a questioning over what is being valued and who is doing this valuation (especially as Pareto Optimality refers to an economic theory of resource allocation).

The notion of being 'out of proportion' is also teased apart in the poem, both in the visual proportions of long and short lines and also in a question over the proportionality of such language, carrying on that sense of mismatch, the text subtly suggesting that the affectless, bland, technical discourse of coastal management is, at least here, not in proportion to the threats East Anglia faces.

By themselves such formal disruptions cannot carry the entire weight of interpretation but, as parts of an accruing discourse of coastal management, these formal features help to begin to break down such language's own capacity to achieve its declared purpose from within the discourse itself. Mulford uses what Alice Entwistle has described as the 'flexible, self-fragmenting form' of *The East Anglia Sequence* to get these blocks of text to effectively critique themselves.[21] The sequence therefore enacts its own kind of displacement, opening up the language of technical, bureaucratic management not just to the polysemy and imaginative

---

[20] Richard Bradford, *Graphic Poetics* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 14-15.

[21] Alice Entwistle, 'Post-pastoral perspectives on landscape and culture', in *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*, ed. by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 136-153 (p. 141).

dislocations of poetic writing but also disturbing the link between the claims of the language and its material affects in the world.

This comes to a head with 'Danger Level 1820, 1990', another poem where the title's acknowledgement of historic storms is juxtaposed with the increasing impotence of the discourse of coastal management to prevent future damage:

> In the unsettled weather of the winter months the final warning
> may be a full danger warning when it is reasonably certain the
> danger level will be exceeded
> or an alert confirmed in borderline cases
>
> [...]
>
> whose remit is this (S, p. 8)

This whole process of accretion, fragmentation and self-reflection enacts tidal motions of building and falling, something Entwistle has characterised as 'the permanent/transient processes of [...] impermanent environments'.[22] Here the implicit irony generated by the sequence's handling of this language of coastal management in relation to the discourse's own desire to control and order an 'impermanent environment' becomes clearer, the authority such bureaucratic language is invested with breaking under Mulford's poetic registering of tides and storm surges in the syntactical and formal arrangements of these poems. In essence, the language is made to affectively admit its own limits: 'even on the coarse-

[22] Entwistle, 'Post-pastoral perspectives', p. 141.

grid model the predictions look convincing / appropriate action would of course be in the remit of / a different department' (S, p. 8).

In this context, 'whose remit is this' becomes both a searching question as well as a pointed accusation. The question of authority is something that has been picked up in the literature on coastal protection. Peter French, for instance, notes that 'management of the coastal zone operates at a series of levels […] Traditionally, however, the local level of management has been fragmented, resulting in the management of coasts being less effective.'[23] Pointed accusation because uncertainty over responsibility results in the prevarication over cost, Ian Shennan writing that '[s]ince it is not economic to protect against all possible threats, the exact area under threat is dependent upon how the risk is defined.'[24] For Cooper and Mckenna '[t]here is consequently a great deal of ambiguity regarding the perceived nature of coastal resources and the risk to which they are exposed'.[25]

This ambiguity is picked up in a careful teasing out of the multiple inferences of certain words and a formal use of line breaks which does just enough to disrupt the surface appearance of this managerial discourse, suggesting a sense of depth which is also the space for divergent or oppositional stances, something Mulford hints at when writing '[w]recks omit the ambiguity of depth' (S, p. 23).

Such antagonism also clearly has a political edge. The background to Mulford's writing in the mid to late 1980s and early 1990s is the political and economic logic of successive Conservative governments. Political

---

[23] Peter W. French, 'The Changing Nature of, and Approaches to, UK Coastal Management at the Start of the Twenty-First Century', *The Geographical Journal*, 170.2 (June, 2004), 116-125 (p.121).
[24] Ian Shennan, 'Sea-Level Changes and the Threat of Coastal Inundation', *The Geographical Journal*, 159.2 (July, 1993), 148-156 (p. 149).
[25] J. A. G. Cooper and J. Mckenna, 'Working with Natural Processes: The Challenge for Coastal Protection Strategies', *The Geographical Journal*, 174.4 (December, 2008), 315-331 (p. 315).

pressure on public spending and the privatisation of formerly nationalised industries also affected efforts to protect the coast from storms and erosion.[26] As such, questions of value and responsibility in the text are also critiques of a social and economic system which prioritises economic growth over human welfare, and whose bland deployment of terms such of value, efficiency and innovation often hide clearly ideological and politically contentious claims.

The Instability of Language

By asking 'whose remit is this' the sequence is also making a statement about the challenging fluidity of the coastline. As Mark Monmonier observes

> Flood mapping in coastal environments is more involved than its riverine counterpart because water-level data collected by tide gauges don't reflect the full complexity of catastrophic storms, submarine topography, irregular shorelines, and coastal erosion.[27]

This resistance to mapping and evaluation makes its way into the language of the poems more generally, especially if cartography is understood here as a particular way of reading the landscape.

Mulford has described how she attempts to make herself 'open to language itself, to allow language to enter in and claim the field of writing,

---

[26] Edmund C. Penning-Rowsell and John W. Handmer, 'Flood Hazard Management in Britain: A Changing Scene', *The Geographical Journal*, 154.2 (July, 1988), 209-220 (pp. 209-211).
[27] Mark S. Monmonier, *Coast Lines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 118.

rather than seeking to make language my tool.'[28] This means that, rather than trying to use language to impose an ordering vision on the landscape, Mulford's construction of the sequence out of strands of seemingly unrelated discourses allows space for the buffeting of storms and the erosion of tides to be felt not just thematically, but in the graphical arrangement of language on the page and the use of syntax and punctuation in the poems.

'The Condition of Northerness', for example, visually recalls tidal rhythms in the spacing of words within lines and the variation of line lengths across the poem, while capturing a similar sense in the aural patterning of alliteration and enjambed lines:

> lack light less
> energy slow
> moving
> regular (S, p. 9)

Elsewhere the language of the sequence is more stop/start, seeming to trail off or end before the full sentiment of the line is completed. This can be seen in 'A Tale of Loss' where punctuation is used to cut off meaning, articulation itself under threat of erosion:

> in the loss of the. and
> certainty.
> print blunts the imagination
> I too (D, p. 16)

---

[28] Wendy Mulford, 'Notes on Writing: A Marxist/Feminist Viewpoint', in *On Gender and Writing*, ed. by Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora Press, 1983), pp. 31-41 (p. 32).

In its fractured way these lines do not just raise the threat of a loss of certainty and exclamation but explicitly suggest print, the material production of texts, can 'blunt' imagination, the capacity to think anew about the terrain of East Anglia and one's position ('I too') within the landscape. This sees the sequence raise questions about its own capacity to answer the call for implacement evident in the preface.

Other poems seem to reflect a recognition of the precariousness of the East Anglian coastline in the visual length of lines on the page. For example 'Dunwich 1994':

> this human edge
> the king's town gone
> down to the fabulous
> unfathom despite
> diving seabed sand
> embalmed pocket
> ed the tale sus
> pended hangs in
> complete (D, p. 2)

These short lines mimic a shore which itself is precarious and liable to crumble into the sea at short notice. Here line breaks are used to fracture a linear reading of the poem, the visual sense of 'incomplete' is itself fragmented, split across the line break, leaving 'complete' intact on its own line and eminently readable, which works against the incompleteness of both place and language in the poem. More obviously, the tale of Dunwich 'sus / pended hangs in / complete', interrupted by the destructive capability of the North Sea.

The most extreme example of this graphical encoding of erosion occurs in two poems near the end of the Salthouse section, 'Samphire, Thrift, Sea-Aster' and '"Sea's Measure"'. These poems enact not so much the erosion of the coast or the back and forth pulse of the tides as much as they encode the sudden cleavage of cliff by storm and waves. Here is 'Samphire, Thrift, Sea-Aster':

S

amphire thrift sea-aster

S

alicornia zostera

E

el-grass sea-

L

avender shrubby sea blite – (S, p. 21)

Line breaks are utilised in an aggressive manner, creating the impression of an incomprehensible and unusual acrostic. This suggests something of the generative chaos of geographical processes of erosion, that the sea does not just destroy but also deposits and accumulates. That a new coastline (here mirrored in the vertical line of 'S … S … E … L') emerges but is itself unstable and difficult to map.

Tension between the destructive and creative impulses of tides match the discrepancy between the violent visual breakage of the lines and the thematic concerns of 'Samphire, Thrift, Sea-Aster'. The poem does not concern the destruction of the shore but instead lists littoral plant life found along the East Anglian coast. Hence the sea is described as 'scavenging / S / couring succouring' and 'seeding its own bed' (S, p. 21), recovering and rebuilding in the visual act of breaking apart.

The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics differentiates between list and catalogue poems, saying the catalogue includes 'more descriptive information', affording 'more opportunity for digression' or thematic development and enacting a principle of 'nearly infinite expandability'.[29] Although starting out as a list, the poem accrues significance as it builds, linking both visually, formally and thematically to the sequence's wider desire to be in place. At the same time the graphical fracturing of the line breaks, a visual as well as aural device which both 'intensif[ies] and destabilize[s] the continuities of sequential language', reflects how this accretion of place making is mediated in the text by a landscape which is shown to be unstable.[30]

This sense that language itself is under certain pressures of erosion, and that the form of the poems emerge from the particular landscape of East Anglian, is emphasised in the 1998 edition of the sequence. In this version, the lines from 'Dunwich 1994' are justified to the left hand margin, the remainder of the page given over to blank space. Ian Davidson observes that '[t]he space on the page becomes part of the rhythm of reading',[31] suggesting that the copious white space Mulford leaves around the poems should also be incorporated into an understanding of the visual mimetics of *The East Anglia Sequence*.

Marjorie Perloff argues for the active role of the empty page in 'the visual and aural reception of the poem'.[32] Similarly, Richard Bradford states that the visual format of a poem 'is capable of producing effects, perhaps

---

[29] *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Stephen Cushman and others, 4th edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 214.
[30] Bradford, *Graphic Poetics*, p. 26.
[31] Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 137.
[32] Marjorie Perloff, 'After Free Verse: The New Non-Linear Poetries' (1998) <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/perloff/free.html> [Accessed 12 September 2017]

of creating patterns of meaning, independently of its role as a score for vocal performance.'[33] This means that the graphical dynamic between lines of text and white space in the sequence recreates an impression of the isolation and vulnerability of the coastline against the erosive forces of the North Sea. Between this and what David and Christine Kennedy call the 'truly expressive' punctuation of Mulford's writing,[34] which in this text extends to line breaks and the spacing between individual words, the form of these poems actively draw the stresses, erosions and collapses enacted on the littoral landscape into the semantic machinery of the sequence.

Instability also works itself into the broader formal patterning of the sequence. While this chapter has so far mainly engaged with Mulford's use of a language of coastal management (partly because it opens the sequence and partly because it is a useful way into wider considerations of the text), the sequence itself is composed of several different discourses. There is a more general language of land ownership and its contestations, a strand of writing concerned with the historical lives of people in East Anglia, an archival voice in the Dunwich section, and a visionary, lyric speaker — one which predominantly informs the coda but does move in and out of other sections. The text shifts between these voices in a way that acknowledges the difficulty of any singular voice gaining discursive dominance over a landscape which blurs distinctions and can give way at a moment's notice.

Matthew Jarvis writes that '[t]he collage method that Mulford's poetic adopts [...] is indicative of the complex multiplicity of such a project.'[35] While it is true that the sense of place Mulford constructs is

---

[33] Bradford, *Graphic Poetics*, p. 8.
[34] David Kennedy and Christine Kennedy, *Women's Experimental Poetry in Britain 1970-2010: Body, Times and Locale* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 64.
[35] Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth', p. 484.

complex and multiple, collage as a term articulating a specific set of historical poetic procedures seems to fall short of accurately depicting the way Mulford builds this evocation of place. Craig Dworkin describes the logic of modernist collage as that 'in which elements maintain a simultaneous reference to both their original contexts, which are never entirely effaced, as well as to the new collage composition into which they are introduced.'[36]

An obvious example of the kind of modernist collage is Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Yet Mulford's sequence never functions like this, there is no sudden jump cut between different voices within stanzas (the shift in 'The Burial of the Dead' from 'April is the cruellest month' to 'Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee' for instance).[37] In the 1998 version of 'The Coriolis Effect', where a section on the formation of storm surges, 'the effect of wind is generally more important' (S, p. 4), is spliced between more lyric sections, such as 'one seagull / holding its place in the air / I on the stubble-hill breast' (S, p.5), these voices are kept visually and semantically separate, one voice does not bleed into or unsettle the other. These distinct blocks of text are not just in different stanzas but are placed on new pages as well, physically separating out the multiple voices in the poem.

Mulford's sequence also seems to lack that Eliot-like effect of dislocation where the poem is working towards a new context for familiar content but the original source of the language is never completely effaced. Apart from three pages in the Dunwich section which come directly from Thomas Gardner's eighteenth century history of Dunwich (although this is not signalled or marked in any way), and the very last poem of the

---

[36] Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 13.
[37] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), pp. 59-80 (p. 61).

Dunwich section which is a unique case because it misquotes and paraphrases Virginia Woolf and Benjamin Britten respectively, the various strands of the poem do not seem to come from autonomous, original, texts. Rather, as with the discourse of coastal management, Mulford is simulating a generic but technical language which seems to be the domain of these kinds of reports and texts.

If collage is a meshing together of certain discrepant discourses and images into a new and different whole, the strands of *The East Anglia Sequence* remain unsettled in their depictions of Salthouse and Dunwich. There is no new, totalised sense of East Anglia which the sequence is building, a literary evocation of place which could be held up against the erosive forces of sea and society. The lyric, visionary sections of the sequence are at once of a completely different register to the sections on storm surges and coastal management and, with their identification of the poetic voice with the 'sister sea' (S, p. 3), seem to be actively opposed in certain situations. The representation of a sense of place which is contested and multiple therefore occurs at all levels of the text, from image and theme to word choice and the formal layout of stanzas.

In fairness, Jarvis is aware of this resistance to totalisation, describing Mulford's collage method as 'where one block of discourse is set against another, and various different approaches to place thus build up data and interpretations by accretion'.[38] The friction between the broad shape of *The East Anglia Sequence* as a kind of collage and a closer attention to the operation of voice in the poems emerges from the text's own in-between status in regards to traditions within English language poetry, caught between British regional modernism and a more American sense of formal innovation and syntactical deconstruction.

---

[38] Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth', p. 484.

Through exacting attention to the history and geography of place, the sequence is linked to a late modernist tradition of complex regional poetry that is typified by Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*. At the same time Mulford's poetic, especially in its urge to interrogate the social and political ideologies behind language, demonstrates the influence of American poets such as Kathleen Fraser, Rae Armantrout and Rachel Blau DuPlessis.

The presence of these divergent energies (an interest in the multifaceted particulars of place and a sceptical attitude towards language's capacity to articulate meaning and self) in part account for the slipperiness of calling *The East Anglia Sequence* a collage. It both acknowledges a variety of voices and texts, arranging them in a sequence interested in cultivating a deep awareness of the specificities of location, yet resists movements towards the totalisation of experience of place, in some cases purposefully breaking down a language of habitation and implacement.

Contesting Land Ownership

The discourse of coastal management is part of a wider awareness of the competing claims of ownership that emerge at the coastline. Jean Sprackland writes that the beach, at once part of the littoral landscape but as the most advanced edge of land given a certain social and cultural distinction, is both 'a place of freedom where we ought to be allowed to do whatever we like' and a site governed by comprehensive laws and regulations.[39]

For Mulford, the particular contestations she is interested in concern the historic expropriation of the East Anglian coastline. This is traced in the

[39] Jean Sprackland, *Strands: A Year of Discoveries on the Beach* (London: Vintage, 2013), pp. 11-14.

conflict between land owners and those who inhabit the land, as well as the environment both rely on. As Amy Cutler picks up, this is Mulford's description of 'the coastline in terms of legal wrangles and concepts of ownership'.[40]

These 'wrangles' take the form of narratives of dispossession and exclusion which reveal the ways women in particular have been excluded from claiming a sense of belonging in relation to the region. In a more liberatory sense, Doreen Massey writes that 'we recognise space as always under construction […] it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far'.[41] Yet this idea of 'stories-so-far' raises questions similar to earlier rethinking of value: whose stories about place are in the process of being told? Why might some stories be marginalised? Recalling 'Dunwich 1994', who gets to continue these suspended tales?

In focusing on how Mulford explores this meeting of land politics, exploitation and gender, this section will examine several poems which are concerned by the historic treatment of women in East Anglia. As much as the preface suggests there is something productive about Mulford's escapes to the Norfolk coast in the mid-80s, an escape from 'crowded routines' and the 'debt to servicing/maintaining bodily life' to a 'new territory' with '[f]resh enquiries', the poems themselves have a tenuous and ambivalent relation with Salthouse as a destination. This is more than just a product of the fragile coastline, rather the destabilisation of the region as a fugitive space Mulford can write from is also a result of the intertwining of coastal geography with the precarious position of women in relation to property ownership and the patriarchal household, as well as

---

[40] Cutler, '"Whitby is a statement"', p. 124.
[41] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2010), p. 9.

the exclusion of women from ideas of culture formed around the nation state.

Following 'Danger Level 1820, 1980', with its undercutting of the discourse of coastal management, there are a group of poems focused on the historic hardship of women at the East Anglian coast. These poems are 'Hannah's Tale', 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone', 'Gabriel Piggott' and 'The Pale Land'. In the revised edition of the sequence that appears in Mulford's 2002 selected poems *and suddenly, supposing*, three of the poems ('Hannah's Tale', 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone' and 'Gabriel Piggott') are explicitly grouped together as 'Tales', indicating a clear relationship between them. In this edition, 'The Pale Land' now precedes this group but has 1489 added to its title, suggesting that it still remains part of the historical framing of the 'Tales'.

If one function of this grouping is to recover a displaced history of female residence, even at the physical margin of the nation and community, then referring to them as 'Tales' suggests a kind of make-believe, fictional aspect to such reclamation, tales in opposition to history. At the same time it also illustrates how such avenues of official history have been unavailable for the kind of women Mulford has chosen to depict. Excluded from the archives and documentation of history proper, tales and stories are often what is left (a tactic picked up by Angela Carter among many other writers). The titles of the poems are indicative of this type of marginalisation. Only one, 'Hannah's Tale', includes the name of a woman and implies any ownership or agency on behalf of the female figure in the poem. The titles of 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone' and 'Gabriel Piggott' are named after the men through whom the women in the poems are defined.

'Zurishaddai Girdlestone', the longest of the four texts, is the most explicit when it comes to tying together the position of women in society, the politics of land ownership, and the precarious coastal geography of East

Anglia. According to a local history group, '[t]he Girdlestones are of interest to Salthouse [...] since they owned land here, provided us with a lord and lady of the manor, and supplied us with three rectors, over a period of ninety-nine years.'[42]

Zurishaddai Girdlestone himself was born either 1749 or 1750 according to the family tree in the *Genealogical Notes* of Robert Baker, published in 1904. The interest in a historical figure like Girdlestone reinforces the historical accent of Mulford's poetics in the sequence, that in its accretion of material it is also an imaginary and literary movement of recovery, display and recombination, even if that material records the erosion and fracture of coastal settlements in East Anglia.

Despite sharing its name with a historic local landowner, the poem is less interested in Zurishaddai and more concerned in uncovering (even if only imaginatively) the presence of his wife. Zurishaddai married Phoebe Maria Beetson, who was potentially twenty seven years younger than Zurishaddai, being approximately 45 when he died in 1823 aged seventy-two. Little more is known concerning Phoebe Beetson but what Mulford imagines is a life of hardship and struggle:

> all the labour
> all the stench of it
> all the cloths
> the boiling
> the broiling the
> plucking the baking
> scrubbing shaking

[42] Val Fiddian, 'The Girdlestone family of Kelling', *Salthouse History* (2005) <http://www.salthousehistory.co.uk/girdlestones.html> [Accessed 4 May 2017]

she to carry it

watch contrive it

she to be blamed for it (S, p. 12)

This depiction of domestic hardship emphasises the material struggle of such work: its 'stench', the physical activities of 'plucking' and 'scrubbing', a kind of sensory revulsion that feels like it is drawing on a muscle memory of oppression, such is the pointed, tactile nature of the language.

The use of the present tense (boiling, broiling, baking, shaking) suggests the work is ongoing, a struggle never complete. Zurishaddai's wife in part stands in for a general female experience which is tied to domestic servitude. Despite this, the unnamed 'she' remains crucial to the running of the house, having 'to carry it', the weight of her oppression, but also the responsibility of looking after the estate. Yet despite this she is ultimately blamed for 'it'. '[I]t' is both the conditions that require the work being done in the first place and her own degraded status, and perhaps even simply having the temerity to exist as a woman.

One component of the labour she is depicted doing (or in this case not succeeding in doing), is child-raising: '[o]ne drowned in the harbour / one miscarried at birth / one dead o' the pox' (S, p. 12). The local history group suggests that the Girdlestones died without having any children. Successful childbirth in this context means inheritance, that one passes on one's property onto one's children, not only continuing the family name but preserving wealth, ownership and status. The sad fate of their children is not just a personal catastrophe but also prevents the continuation of the Girdlestone's domination of the land. The 'it' then, is not just carrying the responsibility for the upkeep of Zurishaddai and the estate (the cooking, the cleaning) but also the continuation of the Girdlestone line and its ownership of land around Salthouse.

This straining of the female body into patterns of reproduction of both the family unit and certain dynamics of social and economic power, are suggested in the poem by Mulford playing with the surname 'Girdlestone':

> burrowing battering progeny
> girdling the hearth
> quick as mongoose feet
> how hot how wearisome (S, p. 12)

In this context girdling picks up on the idea of enclosure, particularly with an emphasis on restriction. Here the image associates such 'girdling' with 'the hearth', linking the 'wearisome' labour of Girdlestone's wife to the domestic sphere. Such constriction is seen to reduce the fantastical quality of Girdlestone's wife as '[c]hangelling […] queen / o' the dark nights' to something hot, wearisome, a burden which is 'never ending' (p. 12).

Elsewhere this sense of enclosure is extended more generically to the estate of Zurishaddai Girdlestone, the poem suggesting that even after the failure to bear an heir Girdlestone's wife remains 'the flag of our name' (S, p. 12). Not an autonomous individual but a cipher for the desires of domestic, sexual and legal ownership of the patriarchal figure (flags bearing all sorts of obvious associations with ownership).

Nira Yuval-Davis writes that as much as women are associated with the body-politic through functions of childbearing 'they are often excluded from the collective "we" [...] and retain an object rather than a subject position',[43] Girdlestone's wife being literally objectified here as a flag. While referring explicitly to the nation state, Joanne Sharp's delineation of the

---

[43] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: SAGE, 1997), pp. 45-47.

relation of women to notions of communal belonging is also relevant as it notes that '[m]en are incorporated into the nation metonymically [...] Women are not equal to the nation but symbolic of it.'[44] Zurishaddai's wife is both symbolically and materially crucial to the reproduction of a social order which to a large degree denies her personhood.

The poem sets this particular struggle of ownership, the questions of progeny and inheritance, within wider patterns of shifting economic and social dynamics at the coast (rhythms of exile and return which play off the tidal aspect of the region, as well as suggesting an experience of constraint is a more general quality of the landscape). The poem starts by asking what might happen

> When we return
>
> to that straightened sliver of land between
> coast & heath
> eaten by sea
> abandoned by trade (S, p. 11)

Here the struggle and violence associated in the poem with the Girdlestone's inability to conceive is part of a broader decline, the sense that the brutal failure of love in their marriage is inextricable from the precarious coastline 'eaten by sea', a region 'abandoned by trade'.

There is a prominent sense of pathetic fallacy here, the coast's economic bareness echoing the inability of the Girdlestones to produce healthy progeny. Further, the Girdlestone estate is 'that straightened sliver

---

[44] Joanne P. Sharp, 'Gendering Nationhood: A feminist engagement with national identity', in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 97-108 (p. 99).

of land' caught 'between / coast & heath', foreshadowing the restriction of Zurishaddai's wife to the hearth and the constriction implied by Mulford's playing with the Girdlestone name.

The question of what happens on returning is answered twice in the opening stanza with '[w]ho can escape' and who 'could hope to escape' (S, p. 11). This lack of escape is defined by Zurishaddai's violence, the speaker of the poem (who refers to Girdlestone as 'my master') saying 'SHOOTA-DA-BLOODY-LOT- / & indeed he would' (S, p. 11). There is also a kind of complacency at play, a reference to Zurishaddai as 'in / heritor of the heath's riches' seeming ironic given the earlier description of the land 'abandoned by sea' (S, p. 11). This adds to a feeling of futility in the text: what use is the brutalisation of Girdlestone's wife, her reduction to a means of securing secure continued ownership of the estate, for such a desolate strip of land?

There is a temptation to read this poem parallel to Mulford's own flight to East Anglia, one which seems partly accurate although it is a mistake to read these nameless women only as a cipher for Mulford's experiences, denying the wider social awareness of the sequence. The preface's sense of the 'scars of its sometime habitation' seemingly acknowledging the underlying violence present in the landscape. In tracing earlier histories of oppression and dispossession Mulford is at once highlighting the complex and contingent nature of place but also potentially, by acknowledging this past and giving some form and voice to these female experiences, clearing the ground in preparation for possible habitation.

Exploitation and Expropriation

Similar concerns with the exploitation of women and contested notions of ownership permeate the other 'Tales' poems, the East Anglian coastline emerging as a space not just of connection across time but where a shared (and ongoing) history of expropriation can be registered. 'Gabriel Piggott', for example, concerns questions of tenancy, Piggott's mother 'gather[ing] up her family into / St Nicholas porch', having been evicted from their home (S, p.14).

This loss of shelter takes the form of a list of grievances that link this removal of dwelling to a wider sense of dispossession from the local environment:

> listing her grievances viz.
>
> loss of eels
>
> loss of fish
>
> samphire
>
> grazing
>
> flags furzes
>
> whins from heath
>
> wildfowl plants marshland
>
> herbs
>
> loss of food warmth shelter living (S, p. 14)

There is a sense in the poem that Gabriel Piggott's mother has, due to this intimate relation to the local environment, as much of a claim on the land as the legal rights of the landlord. Noticeably, unlike in 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone', Gabriel Piggott's mother is more active and successful in contesting the actions of her landlord, her series of complaints challenging

'his & nature's expropriation' and resulting in her landlord being 'compelled to rehouse them' (S, p. 14). Yet by ending with the list of grievances, the 'loss of food warmth shelter living', Mulford draws attention not towards the successful challenging of the landlord but the initial act of dispossession.

In 'The Pale Land' a woman waits for the return of her partner who is out fishing, the imagery and sound patterning recalling Anglo-Saxon poems like 'The Seafarer':

> Each long night I climb to the lightless church
> Kneel on the cold stone sorrow-worn
> [...]
> My prayers rigid in my teeth
> My blood cold earth-clamped
> Only the blood of my lover flows hot
> Only the warmth of the struggling man
> Dissatisfied never thwarted wrestles
> The death-dealing sea (S, p. 15)

Despite positive associations of the lover's warm blood, the poem still depicts the harsh life of a woman dependent on the vagaries of a maritime way of life, particularly how such hardship is first felt in the domestic spaces of the family:

> The worse for us waiting
> Banished from warmth
> [...]
> all desire all
> Plenitude gone

No wool no woods no salt no fish no God

To grant safe passage to these mariners

Seeing the children starve (S, p. 15)

Here there is a sense of desperation ('[t]he worse for us waiting') and also of potential exile, the poem's speaker suggesting not just banishment from warmth but also 'marsh heath common pasture / River-bank sea-shore' (S, p. 15). This anxiety that removal from place, a loss of access, can only lead to destitution, as well as the listing of stark noun phrases ('[n]o wool no woods no salt no fish no God'), clearly chimes with 'Gabriel Piggott'. At the same this listing also reinforces that the speaker of 'The Pale Land' is, like Gabriel Piggott's mother who profits off the local environment (the hunting of eels and fish, the picking of samphire), also involved in a more general exploitation of natural resources, suggesting questions of ownership in the sequence are not just between land owners and those who live off the land but also around the right of humans to subsist on the environment in the first place.

Mulford's interest in these 'tales' of hardship and suffering, especially in regards to their role as part of a broader and multiple sense of place, bear a resemblance to the work of another East Anglian poet, George Crabbe. Crabbe, born in Aldeburgh, Suffolk in 1754, wrote *The Borough* about the town of his birth. Like Mulford's sequence, Crabbe's text is produced through attention to multiple strands of data, from the botanical to the scientific to the moral. As Neville Blackburne writes, '[t]hrough Religion, Law, Medicine, Trade, and frivolities, the reader is led to an inspection of the public institutions [...] and by these heaped descriptions a portrait of the place is painted.'[45]

---

[45] Neville Blackburne, *The Restless Ocean* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Limited, 1972), p. 136.

While Mulford makes no direct allusions to Crabbe, the poem 'Inheritance' does include a footnote referencing Benjamin Britten. Britten, who established a prominent music festival in Aldeburgh, composed the opera *Peter Grimes*, based on a poem of the same name from *The Borough*. The presence of Britten in the sequence raises the potential for Mulford's awareness of 'Peter Grimes' and Crabbe.

In its original context 'Peter Grimes' is one of several poems that feature in a section of *The Borough* titled 'Poor of the Borough'. Grimes is initially described disapprovingly as possessing 'greedy eye' and knowing 'not Justice'. Once exiled for brutally mistreating several apprentices he is depicted nursing 'the Feelings these dull Scenes [the tidal marshlands of Aldeburgh] produce […] Where all presented to the Eye or Ear, / Oppress'd the Soul!'[46] Where Mulford's poems seem to generally empathise with the struggle of poor and dispossessed women, Crabbe's possess a complex relationship towards these figures, displaying a moralising impulse and an oddly expressed sympathy. This disposition extends to Crabbe's evocation of Aldeburgh, E. M. Forster noting that 'Crabbe's antipathy to his birthplace was to play an essential part in the creation of Peter Grimes', but it was also 'connected with a profound attraction.'[47]

Whether cognisant or not of this earlier precedent, and with the important distinction that Mulford is an outsider to the region, where Crabbe was born and raised there, *The East Anglia Sequence*, in its attention to the multiple discourses out of which a sense of place is produced and desire to reflect a full breadth of experience (the poor, the historically overlooked), is in some capacities a modern response to *The*

---

[46] George Crabbe, 'Letter 22. The Poor of the Borough: Peter Grimes', *The Borough* (Ilkley: The Scholar Press, 1973), pp. 297-312 (pp. 300, 306).
[47] E. M. Forster, 'George Crabbe and Peter Grimes: A Lecture Given at the Aldeburgh Festival of 1948', *Two Cheers for Democracy* (Harvest Books: London, 1977), pp. 171-187 (p. 174).

Borough. Where Mulford's 'Preface' states a desire to get to the buried particulars of a place Crabbe's work begins with a similarly difficult desire to '[d]escribe the Borough', to trace 'all that gives distinction to a place'.[48]

In this concern with the historical and domestic lives of women, particularly in regards to their exclusion from social life, Mulford also engages with her own poetic contemporaries, bringing theoretical and material practices largely associated with innovative American poets to bear on experiences of Salthouse and Dunwich.

In 'Susan Howe: A Reading of the Evidence', Mulford describes Howe's poetry as 'work in the darkness of archaeology, of digging up/out, realigning, contextualizing, map-making our lost history'.[49] The notion of archaeology, of 'digging up/out', has clear resonances with the methodology laid out for *The East Anglia Sequence* in the preface. It also relates to what has just been explored in the 'Tales' poems, the 'digging up/out' of these stories of female hardship that further erodes the ground of East Anglia as a culturally settled place.[50] Reminding one of Howe's own remark that the '[s]ounds and spirits (ghosts if you like) leave traces in a geography [...] The tale and the place are tied in a mysterious and profound way.'[51] This touches on what Mulford calls the 'realigning, contextualizing, map-making our lost history' in Howe's poetry, something evident in *The East Anglia Sequence* in the (re)contextualizing offered by a poem such as 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone', with its resistance to reading East

---

[48] Crabbe, 'Letter 1. General Description', *The Borough* pp. 1-14 (p. 3).
[49] Wendy Mulford, 'Susan Howe: A Reading of the Evidence', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 4.1 (1993), 60-62 (p. 60).
[50] Alice Entwistle groups Mulford alongside poets like Lee Harwood and Denise Riley who 'anticipate' a scepticism towards questions of cultural place. See 'Writing [W]here: Gender and Cultural Positioning in Ireland and Wales', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry,* ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 461-480 (p. 467).
[51] Susan Howe, interviewed by Edward Foster, *Postmodern Poetry: The Talisman Interviews* (Hoboken, NJ: Talisman House, 1994), pp. 48-68 (p. 48).

Anglia as an unproblematic geography in which Mulford can find refuge as a writer, mother and person.

However, aside from the poem 'Perfect Haven' in the Dunwich section of the sequence, *The East Anglia Sequence* poems generally resist the more dramatic formal deconstruction of Howe's work in texts like 'A Bibliography of The King's Book or, Eikon Basilike'. In part this is because, alongside the urge to dig 'up/out', Mulford is pushing towards some sense of habitation, a sustained presence, in connection with the region, albeit one that, as has been argued here, is ambivalent, precarious and unsettled. While Mulford destabilizes language, particularly through the formal arrangement of the page, there retains some sense of legibility, it is never given over completely to dissolution (a tension also traced in the difficulty of classifying the sequence as a collage).

This reading of the 'Tales' poems begins to make sense of the presence of Virginia Woolf in the last line of 'Inheritance'. Mulford's misremembering or deliberate misquoting of Woolf in 'Women have no country' (D, p. 11) has two resonances for the sequence. Firstly it is a recognition with Woolf's characterisation of women (admittedly a limited and particular class of women) as 'outside of things'. At the same time there seems to be a critique of the full phrase: 'as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.'[52] Mulford's version changes 'woman' to the plural 'women', a minor change but one that reflects the solidarity the sequence is suggesting between historic and contemporary exclusion.

The line from 'Inheritance' also omits the more utopian intent of Woolf's original, that women's absence from the nation is actually positive as this exclusion opens them out towards the world. For Mulford the

---

[52] Virginia Woolf, 'Three Guineas' (1938), in *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), pp. 781-923 (pp. 798, 861).

implication seems to be that women, because of the very outsider status Woolf praises, struggle to exist within society, whether that is perceived as the village community of Salthouse, the region of East Anglia or the nation itself. Even at the crumbling edge of England, women have been, and to a degree remain, excluded and marginalised.

Exile and Inheritance

Mulford ends the main body of the sequence with the poem 'Inheritance' and, despite appearing so late in the sequence, ideas of inheritance are crucial to how the text makes sense of the various dispossessions it traces. For Mulford, by moving to East Anglia, she is not just inheriting the threat of erosion, an awareness of the destructive power of storms and tides, but also the territorial marginalisation of women as explored in the 'Tales' poems.

This section will analyse ideas of inheritance in the sequence in relation to the formation of place and belonging, arguing that Mulford finds implacement disturbed by scales of national community and culture. It will also show what can be gained by looking at *The East Anglia Sequence* alongside the late eighteenth century poet Charlotte Smith. Smith's work is deeply embedded in the littoral geography of the south coast and demonstrates a recognition of, and sympathy with, exile. Linking Mulford with the much earlier work of Smith shows that there is a significant poetic awareness concerning female experiences of marginalisation at the English coastline.

The line attributed to Britten in 'Inheritance' which raises the potential presence of Crabbe in the sequence is '[f]or music to be universal it must first of all be national' (D, p. 11). The origin for the phrase seems to be Britten's essay 'England and the Folk Art Problem'. Unlike with Woolf,

the line is less a misquotation and more a paraphrase of the final sections of the essay. Here Britten writes: '[i]t should be obvious that the national character of a composer will appear in music, whatever technic [*sic*] he has chosen or wherever his influences lie'. Yet this is much more nuanced and critical than the form Mulford's paraphrase takes. Later, for example, Britten writes that '[t]he attempt to create a national music is only one symptom of a serious and universal malaise' and that '[i]t is only those who accept their loneliness and refuse all the refuges, whether of tribal nationalism or airtight intellectual systems, who will carry on the human heritage.'[53] Britten's words, with their scepticism of the usefulness of a national music culture, and a language of loneliness and refuge, actually seem very sympathetic to the displacements Mulford has been depicting in the sequence.

Heather Wiebe notes that Britten possessed 'a highly ambivalent but powerful preoccupation with geography, community, (English) national culture, and the past'.[54] There is a sense that, despite the affinities between *The East Anglia Sequence* and 'England and the Folk Art Problem', Britten would be willing to engage with the junctures of culture and nation in a way Mulford is unwilling or, recalling Woolf, unable to. For example, the essay on Crabbe by Forster which triggered Britten's return to England has a highly idiosyncratic, but nonetheless intense, relationship with the country. In it Forster writes 'remember Aldeburgh when you read this rather odd poet, for he belongs to the grim little place, and through it to England.' Though this is not the England of green and pleasant lands, and Foster goes on to distance it from a stereotypical 'John Bull' English

---

[53] Benjamin Britten, 'England and the Folk Art Problem (1941)', in *On Music*, ed. by Paul Kildea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 31-35 (pp. 34-35).
[54] Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Past: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 19.

identity,[55] it is nonetheless suggestive of a deep identification with a version of the country which had an impact on Britten.

At the same time Britten is difficult to fully assimilate into a celebratory national culture (unlike say Ralph Vaughan Williams), Britten picking sources for his operas which always seem to stand slightly outside the comfortable and expected (not just Crabbe but Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* and Mann's *Death in Venice*). Given that he was born in Lowestoft, Suffolk, the appeal of 'Peter Grimes' might be regional instead of national, that the return home is to East Anglia as opposed to England at large. Furthermore, as a gay man at a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence, the appeal of Aldeburgh for Britten might be in its very real marginal quality, geographically but also socially and culturally.

How then to understand '[f]or music to be universal it must first of all be national' (D, p. 11) and its attribution to Britten? Seeing as the next line is Mulford's misquoting of Woolf, it seems to be deployed in a critical manner, highlighting the problems women writers can face inheriting notions of culture and nature. 'Inheritance' opens by telling the reader that Dunwich is 'England's spent / heritance' (D, p. 11) linking the specifics of place Mulford has been following with a sense of the nation which is tired out and exhausted.

The association of music to nation is also something Mulford would critique given that the absence of sound, the '[h]ush' (S, p. 18), is associated in the poems with a patriarchal social order and land politics that has historically exploited and marginalised women. At the very least the positioning of this line immediately before 'Women have no country' and in a poem called 'Inheritance' raises questions about how those not

---

[55] E.M. Forster, 'George Crabbe: The Poet and the Man', in Philip Brett, *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 3-7 (p. 4).

included in the nation, whose inheritance is 'spent', are meant to relate to a culture which is figured in national terms. Not only does this build from the particular historic cases of marginalisation seen in *The East Anglia Sequence* it also refers to Mulford's exteriority to the wider literary world.

The positioning of Mulford at the margins of a poetic community can be characterised through her status as both feminist poet and a poet of experimental or innovative verse. Linda A. Kinnahan says Mulford's 'commitment to language innovation set her apart from communities of feminist poets who favoured expressive and accessible poetry'.[56] Claire Buck has noted 'the very real marginality' of feminist poetry in general, while Redell Olsen and David and Christine Kennedy have all mentioned the lack of attention afforded to feminist writing which, like Mulford, resists absorption into a self-confessional lyric mode.[57]

According to Harriet Tarlo, 'linguistically innovative practitioners [of poetry] are cultural outsiders [...] As such they engage with the elements of land politics that pastoral desire has often excluded'.[58] In a similar vein Frances Presley suggests that one reason for poets to write about land ownership is to recognise and explore the 'politics of the landscape', the '[c]ultural statements and fictions [that] are imposed on and limit the landscape, and the people who once worked there'.[59] There is then a

---

[56] Linda A. Kinnahan, 'Feminism's experimental "work at the language-face", in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*, ed. by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 154-178 (p. 155).
[57] See Buck, 'Poetry and the Women's Movement', p. 83, Redell Olsen, 'Strategies of Critical Practice: Recent Writing on Experimental and Innovative Poetry by Women: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 33.2 (Winter, 2008), 371-387 (p. 372), and David Kennedy and Christine Kennedy, *Women's Experimental Poetry in Britain 1970-2010*, p. 3.
[58] Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *Jacket*, 32 (April, 2007) <http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml> [Accessed 15 May 2017]
[59] Frances Presley, 'Common pink metaphor: from The Landscape Room to Somerset Letters', *How2*, 3.2 <http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_2/ecopoetics/essays/presley.html> [Accessed 15 May 2017]

suggestive link between an interest in contested notions of land ownership and Mulford's own status in relation to the literary culture at large.

Such marginalisation has been, through the 'Tales' poems, linked to a more general sense of the position of women in contemporary and historic society. Reading *The East Anglia Sequence* in relation to the much earlier work of Charlotte Smith concerning exile and the English coast provides a context in which Mulford, whether she is actively aware of it or not, is working within a longer tradition of writing in which particularly female experiences of dispossession are intimately bound up with the coastal landscape. This is despite Mulford's anxieties about inheritance expressed in some of the poems of the sequence.

Stuart Curran describes that, 'in December 1783, the mountain of her husband's debts collapsed, and Charlotte Smith joined him in the King's Bench Prison in London'.[60] Following this, initially to support her husband and pay off his debts, Smith began writing novels and poems. In 1787 her husband returned to France while Smith remained in England, effectively ending the marriage, living most of the rest of her life along the south coast. Biographically there are some similarities with Mulford. While not pressured in quite the same way as Smith, Mulford's decision to go to East Anglia is one forced by the material necessity to look after herself and her family.

Smith, though popular during her time, has also experienced critical marginalisation. John Anderson observes that a tradition in which *Lyrical Ballads* has been seen to inaugurate English Romanticism means that various earlier writers including Smith (*The Emigrants* was published in 1793, five years prior to *Lyrical Ballads*) have been overlooked or ignored, although more recent critics have been active in breaking down and

---

[60] Stuart Curran, 'Charlotte Smith and British Romanticism', *South Central Review*, 11.2 (Summer, 1994), 66-78 (p. 67).

challenging this strict historical periodisation.[61] Both poets then, albeit to different degrees, have endured experiences of marginalisation and separation.

These struggles have made their way into the poetry through a shared interest in the figure of the exile. For example *The Emigrants* displays a deeply felt sympathy for those banished from France due to the outbreak of revolution:

> Behold, in witness of this mournful truth
> A group approach me, whose dejected looks
> (Sad heralds of distress!) proclaim them men
> Banished for ever and for conscience sake
> From their distracted country, whence the name
> Of freedom misapplied, and much abused
> By lawless anarchy, has driven them far
> To wander [62]

Unlike Mulford, Smith makes her shared affinity with these figures explicit, writing 'I mourn your sorrows, for I too have known / Involuntary exile' (p. 141). It is not that Smith simply recognises another person who belongs to the class of exile, rather it seems that Smith's own sense of exile is produced in relation to these figures. As Melissa Sodeman suggests, 'the narrator's wandering identifications with fellow exiles […] permit her to express seemingly personal sorrow through figures of otherness'.[63] Though

---

[61] John M. Anderson, '"Beachy Head": The Romantic Fragment Poem As Mosaic', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63.4 (2000), 547-574 (p. 549).
[62] Charlotte Smith, 'The Emigrants', *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 131-163 (p. 138).
[63] Melissa Sodeman, 'Charlotte Smith's Literary Exile', *ELH*, 76.1 (Spring, 2009), 131-152 (p. 139).

Mulford's poems lack the specific identification between the 'I' and the historical figures of the 'Tales', she nonetheless expresses something of her own sense of exile through the women she depicts.

Like Mulford, Smith's identification with, and experience of, displacement and marginalisation is both reflective of the poet's own situation and an acknowledgement of external social forces. Curran writes that a 'sense of the legal system as an arbitrary machine of power operating without any essential relation to enquiry runs deep in Smith's writing.'[64] This can be seen in *The Emigrants* where Smith writes

> How often, when my waery soul recoils
> From proud oppression, and from legal crimes
> […]
> How often do I half abjure Society,
> And sigh for some lone Cottage (p. 136)

This is a recognition that 'legal crimes' create both the conditions for exile and also instil in those who recognise their marginalisation by the law a desire for escape. For Smith '[s]uch are in this Land, where the vain boast / of equal Law is mockery' (p. 136), wherein women suffer the consequences of a social system which they have no power to shape. This is a pointed overlap with Mulford who, in the 'Tales' section, depicts women at the whims of forms of land ownership produced within a patriarchal social order.

Both also share an obvious interest in coastal landscapes. With Mulford it is most sustained in *The East Anglia Sequence* (although the coastal cliffs of west Wales feature in *The ABC of Writing* and a sense of the

---

[64] 'Introduction', *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. xix-xxix (p. xxi).

littoral permeates short poems like 'The meaning of blue') while for Smith the geography and history of the south coast informs the majority of her work. Smith finds in this coastal terrain a powerful correlative to internal feelings of exile and also an organising metaphor for the wider social forces that produces this sense of marginalisation.

In *The Emigrants* the speaker sometimes identifies her failure to find restorative seclusion away from society with the restless and mournful rhythms of the 'baffled wave' which 'yon rough beach repulses' (p. 137). At other moments the representation of the coastline as 'the troubled waves' which 'with reluctance gives / To this cold northern isle its shortened day' (p. 135), cast the shore as part of a national geography (in contrast to a personal landscape of exile) suggesting a more social arena in which the variegations of the tides embody broader processes of exile and marginalisation which the individual is caught in and overpowered by.

This brief tracing out of the connections between Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence* and Charlotte Smith's work, particularly *The Emigrants*, is useful because it shows that Mulford is writing within a literary historical context in which the conflux of female experience, observations of displacement and marginalisation, and the particulars of coastal geography are part of a mobile network of images and ideas that retain potency over hundreds of years. As Jo Shapcott has pointed out more generally, '[b]orders and edges of territory and language […] have always offered some of the most attractive hide-outs for women writers'.[65]

Much like Riley, the connective notions of archipelagic spatial formations are repurposed for exploiting temporal scales of experience, linking the modern poet with a range of historical activity. While there may

---

[65] Jo Shapcott, 'Confounding Geography', in *Contemporary Women's Poetry: Reading/Writing/Practice*, ed. by Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones, pp. 40-46 (p. 45).

not be a formally recognised tradition of women poets at the coast, Mulford is nonetheless, and despite the insistence of 'Inheritance', inheriting an image of the coastline as a productive ground from which to poetically explore experiences of displacement and exile, particularly those shaped by gender.

A Sense of Loss

So far this chapter has shown how *The East Anglia Sequence* is an account of the strains and stresses, both geographical and social, which play across Wendy Mulford's decade long exposure to this regional shoreline. There are moments, however, where such fracturing and instability can be read positively, as a breaking up of restrictions. Echoing Shapcott, Aileen Christianson says 'there is a lure in fragmentation and the margins for some of us; there are possibilities of ambiguity and for the power of the marginal, the dispossessed, the peripheral, to assert our right to existence'.[66] Therefore, this final section will explore how Mulford employs a sense of loss as, counterintuitively, a way of being in place.

This is a notion particular to Mulford's condition as a woman and a poet, one which seeks to escape the kind of social restrictions depicted in the 'Tales' poems. Loss as the 'condition of paradise' (S, p. 19) is linked in the sequence to a more visionary and lyrical voice. As such this section will also look at how the poems deal with questions of lyric subjectivity.

This visionary speaker emerges at several points across the sequence before returning as the prominent voice of the 'Coda'. It first

[66] Aileen Christianson, 'Gender and nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries', in *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 67-82 (p. 71).

appears in 'The Coriolis Effect', the second poem in the Salthouse section, laying out the aims of the sequence:

> I on the stubble-hill breast
> front the glittering points of the sea
> to compose this view
> hold the church steady centre
> while the sea withdraws
> over one thousand years
> its commercial lure
> towards the millennium
> the heathland lugs
> its entombed secret the
> sacred places flattened
> beneath the bracken beds
> stumble into the under-
> world demesne of Persephone (S, p. 5)

This passage depicts the imposition of an individual sense of landscape over the local geography ('compose this view'), even if, as shown, the poems themselves work against stable notions of composition. There is an indication of the historical interests of the sequence, figured in the way 'the sea withdraws / over one thousand years', as well as the prominent economic past and current decline of the region ('its commercial lure') which is the background to many of the poems, although this is all filtered through a self-centred relation of individual to world. The final line, with its yoking of demesne, defined by the *OED* as a legal term referring to land owned explicitly by the landowner as opposed to let out by tenants, to Persephone, female god of the underworld abducted against her will,

foreshadows the contestations in the 'Tales' section between land ownership and historic female experience.

Through this lyric voice an emancipatory sense of loss is seeded prior to its eruption in the coda, Mulford employing the image of 'sister sea' (S, p. 3) and later 'sister water' (D, p. 4). Entwistle suggests that Mulford's poetry is 'inherently suspicious of certainty'.[67] So identification with these destructive waters is a product of a general scepticism towards fixed notions of place, identity and culture which pervades Mulford's writing. Yet, within the specific context of *The East Anglia Sequence*, this positive recognition with the sea is also a crucial imaginative response to the issues of inheritance and belonging.

Doreen Massey suggests that 'the need for security of boundaries, the requirement for such a defensive and counter-positional definition of identity is culturally masculine'.[68] This would read not just the more obvious instances of Zurishaddai Girdlestone or Gabriel Piggott's landlord but also the discourse of coastal management as an exercise in masculine control. Given the context of the sequence this seems to problematize a reading of the poems which, in Jarvis's words, see the sequence as a 'counter [to] the erosions and incursions of the sea.'[69]

Aligning one voice in the sequence with a distinctly feminized evocation of the sea enacts a positive sense of erosions as it undermines a landscape deeply marked by these histories of exploitation and marginalization. The more lyric sections of the sequence are, therefore, matched with an empowered, distinctly female, perspective, one that is active in the shaping of the environment, rather than subject to processes of exclusion and dispossession.

---

[67] Entwistle, *Poetry, Geography, Gender*, p. 142.
[68] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 7.
[69] Jarvis, 'Saving The Earth', p. 484.

This lyric voice dominates a coda which at once recapitulates prominent themes from across the earlier poems and moves the sequence towards a more assertive conclusion, replacing the absence of '[w]omen have no country' with a sense of dynamic female presence. The first two poems of the coda do, however, begin by reinforcing a sense of fragmentation and instability. 'Navigation' opens with an emphasis on the edge-ness of the terrain: 'hairline touch border the flowers / border the dune border the shacks border the street' (D, p. 15). The destruction of Dunwich is expressed in a burst of words, 'the mighty / swipe coast clearance collapses as all / gentle dalliance crumpled limped away' (D, p. 15), that seem to struggle against an assumed integrity of the poetic line just as the shoreline struggles against the storms.

After this, the coda begins to move towards a more liberating sense of erosion and spatial incoherence. In 'A Tale of Loss' there is the image of 'her […] dripping away / melting into the sea' (D, p. 16), recalling the feminized 'sister sea' of the main body of the sequence. 'Gold' figures loss as a spatial release from the 'hammered earth' (D, p. 17), brutalised both by storms and the social and economic processes. Here loss is positively viewed as 'off course loveliness' (D, p. 17).

This sense of being 'off course' is interesting in a text that nominally seems concerned with the specifics of inhabitation and place. Loss of direction here signals a breaking up of bounded, culturally received, notions of place, linking this to a release of social restraints on female personhood and a new active and mobile relationship to location. Loss means the female figure who was 'gritting eyes lips' (D, p. 16), is now positioned floating above the coast, 'glowing toes point[ing] back to' earth (D, p. 17). Such rupture, 'a relentless twisting to and fro of energy', is for Mulford still linked to some form of embodied, subjective experience, a 'continuing to work with a subject, and "I", despite or through its rifts,

absences, contradictions'.[70] Hence why it is the emergence of a lyric voice which is involved in this fluid breaking free of geographical and social relations in the sequence.

Breaking free of restraint and a coming into self is the focus of the last three poems in the coda. 'Hearing Eros' opens with images of restriction and commands to silence, 'incomprehension bound hand feet go / stumbling ahead YOU DO NOT HEAR' (D, p. 19). This is followed by a linking of sound with love, that 'by music is what we love' (D, p. 19), and then, if not words, breath, the poem moving towards the first tremulous notes of articulation: 'breathe. / linger for the falling notes' (D, p. 19). Earlier poems in the sequence such as 'Saltmarsh' and 'Salthouse 1986' link silence and hush with the absence of local life, its displacement by wealthy outsiders ('blow-ins lament' from 'converted barns', S, p.19), and the deprivation of the natural environment, the 'Babble Clamour Cry' of a gull in 'Saltmarsh' expelled from the land just as Gabriel Piggott's mother was, (S, p. 18). While the female subject of 'Hearing Eros' 'will not say', she is shown to be able to sing out against this imposed absence of sound and song (which in the sequence is a symbol of joyful inhabitation): 'my love can pipe my love can sing / in any key in any hush' (D, p. 19).

'Settlement' runs against its title, the poem full of images of movement and expanse: '[i]f brightness is winged', 'travelling clouds their journey make' (D, p. 12). In one sense this reaffirms the preface's outlining of the sequence originating in a sense of flight but 'Settlement' also emphasises that the sense of place that is emerging in these final poems is one in which fragmentation and displacement becomes radical and emancipatory, the speaker saying 'I'm here in exile of / becoming' (D, p. 20). 'Dream of Renewal' ends itself, and the sequence, with a spatial

[70] Mulford, 'Notes on Writing', p. 39.

expansion out from East Anglia which is also a movement not towards hush or breath but a moment of articulation: 'across the rushes white sailtops soundless the galaxy to / brush your cheek oh hear me out' (D, p. 21).

In ending the poem with this demand to be heard Mulford moves the sequence towards what she has called a desire '[t]o speak directly against the repressions, the deformities of our history with the tongue, the voice of unmediated desire'.[71] While the sequence itself ends in the moment before speech it nonetheless enacts a process of clearing the ground for speech. In this way *The East Anglia Sequence* fits with Andrea Brady's observations on a pattern of poems written in the 1970s and 1980s which 'reflect the brutal realities of that relation [between the first person pronoun and its formative relation to economic and social realities] but also attempt to sketch out an escape route.'[72] What is important in *The East Anglia Sequence* is that this 'escape route' is not the abandonment of self, or the complete dissolution of place, an entering into the uneven and unreliable terrain of the postmodern. Rather the coda to the sequence demonstrates an imaginative reformulation of the relationship between place and self, one that is relational and emerges from an implicit awareness of the social and historical forces that have restricted female subjectivity and produced the shifting and unstable ground of the coastline.

Tim Cresswell explains how '[t]he geographical ordering of society is founded on a multitude of acts of boundary making'. However such acts of territorialisation also possess an ambiguity that seems to 'simultaneously open up the possibilities for transgression'.[73] Loss of land, loss of living linked to the land, which elsewhere has been conveyed as destitution, is

---

[71] Mulford, 'Notes on Writing', p. 32.
[72] Andrea Brady, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Poet', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2013), pp. 707-726 (p. 707).
[73] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 149.

seen through the coda as a liberating sense of loss, the loss of a space shaped by patriarchal exploitation, the breaking up of a language which is determined by a capitalist mode of production, undoing 'the lie of culture' as Mulford has put it.[74]

Like Jarvis, Michael Thurston and Nigel Alderman read *The East Anglia Sequence* in terms of a record of place meant to withstand destruction. They write that, in the sequence, 'the loss of a place entails the loss of all that these many approaches and interactions invest that place with.'[75] Reading the sequence primarily in this way, as a landscape poem, overlooks how Mulford is highly sceptical of the image of place she depicts in poems like 'Zurishaddai Girdlestone'. Loss is important in the poems because it is in geographic and temporal cracks, as well as in gaps of sign and syntax, that a relation to place is evoked which allows for the female voice at the end of the coda to be registered in the moments before bursting forth in address.

Conclusion

The East Anglia Sequence is a record of Mulford's shifting relation to the region over a ten year period. For Dunwich this is predominantly historical and archival writing, which acts as a record of the destructive power of storms along the East Anglian coast. In the Salthouse sections the loss is ongoing and there is an interest in the potential of protecting the village from further destruction. Yet in paying attention to the threats these places are under, Mulford draws out the ironies and difficulties of trying to manage a shifting coastal geography.

---

[74]Mulford, 'Notes on Writing', p. 31.
[75] Michael Thurston and Nigel Alderman, *Reading Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 159.

At an immediate level this is the competing claims of various coastal management agencies, the notion that 'integrated coastal zone management' is often desired but difficult to achieve,[76] recalling the line from 'Danger Levels' that 'appropriate action would of course be in the remit of / a different department' (S, p. 8). Mulford's awareness of this kind of thinking is evident in how the desire to be in place in the poem is constantly confronted with the difficulty of overcoming and negotiating these multiple claims of ownership.

As the sequence progresses it accrues a variety of other writing about place to build up a rich and multiple sense of both Salthouse and Dunwich. The poems shift from the discourse of coastal management to an exploration of land ownership through the depiction of the historic exclusion of women at the East Anglian coast. In doing this, the geography which the preface suggests is Mulford's flight from the pressures of modern life is revealed to be crossed with patterns of exploitation (both historic and contemporary). This make the East Anglian coast difficult to inhabit for Mulford, borne out in a critical position towards ideas of inheritance in the sequence.

However, the multiple and accretive poetics of place out of which the sequence is constructed also includes a visionary lyric voice. From this speaker, particularly in the coda, there is a reworking of experiences of erosion, instability and displacement as a positive sense of loss. This discourse of loss exploits both the erosion of the landscape, one that has been shown to be shaped by the historic marginalisation of women, and the instability of language, which has itself been formed within a

[76] Loraine McFadden, 'Exploring the Challenges of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Reflecting on Contributions to "Integration' from Geographical Thought"', *The Geographical Journal*, 174.4 (December, 2008), 299-314 (p. 299).

patriarchal social order, to see the breaking open of place as necessary for an unrestricted sense of female articulation to emerge.

This differentiated experience of loss picks up on the distinction the 'Preface' notes in Mulford's position across the sequence between 'blow-in' and 'immigrant'. While immigrant denotes someone more settled than a 'blow-in' it still retains a sense of mobility, that the immigrant could get up and leave, that they do not have as strong attachment to place as a citizen. Notably, Mulford self-describes as an immigrant in reference to the Dunwich section of the text which, though written ten years after the Salthouse section, concerns a site almost eradicated by the sea. Here a firmer sense of being in place is also associated with the history of a lost landscape.

Reading of the relationship of poetry and place in this manner also shows why the regional quality identified in the sequence's title does not particularly result in a sense of the parochial. By being flexibly produced through a variety of sources and discourses, the regional scale of East Anglia allows Mulford to both delve into the specific past of place and connect intimate, domestic experiences with questions of culture and belonging more traditionally performed at the national level.

Alice Entwistle identifies the region as 'a sufficiently problematic term', asking how the regional is 'best distinguished and/or characterized for those who might identify with them?'[77] In embracing the flux of the tides and an emancipatory conception of loss, Mulford begins to think of the regional less as a territorial marker and more as an approach to composition, a perspective through which the deep histories and particulars of place can be pulled together in a manner which does not foreclose change, expansion and alterity.

---

[77] Alice Entwistle, 'Writing [W]here', p. 463.

Here the littoral landscape is, like in Riley, less concerned with spatial connection and more with linking contemporary experience of the coast with earlier human activity. It is also a form of implacement which is sceptical of scales of national and communal belonging, registering the experiences of expropriation and exploitation which can block and prevent notions of archipelagic interchange. Rather, it is in the self-reflexive accumulation of language about place, and the fissures this causes, as well as the very crumbling of the East Anglian landscape, that the sequence suggests the possibility of a sense of place and habitation coming in to being for Mulford, allowing some kind of poetic flourishing.

Chapter Three: Transnational Memory and the Estuarine City in Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson.

The previous two chapters have focused on both the potentialities and limits of archipelagic thinking as ways of understanding scales of geographical experience and questions of place in modern British poetry at the coast. Whether through Peter Riley's exploration of how the transcendent is seemingly not suitable for the terrestrial mainland or Wendy Mulford's engagement with the marginalisation of women which troubles her ability to inhabit the marginal edges of East Anglia.

At the same time, these chapters have also argued for other ways in which contemporary poetry responds to ideas of place and geographic scale, relying not just on spatial disjuncture but exploiting the connectivity of the shore in relation to ideas of time (particularly ideas of inhabitation through duration). There is also a sense of scale as more than a temporal or cartographic category, traceable in the way Riley engages with questions of the numinous at different levels of perception (from the abstract to material), or Mulford's examination of belonging and inheritance, from local to regional and national levels.

Chapters Three and Four are more familiar in their engagement with the coast as a site of spatial expansion and contraction. However, they emphasise the archipelagic as a way of thinking about place and belonging in Britain not just through the lens of devolutionary politics (and its political and cultural histories), but in relation to the mediations of inhabitation between local, national and global sensibilities. In doing this, spatial experiences of British geography marked in the poems which follow, shift from a more insular sense of the archipelagic (where exchange and transmission is confined to that between England, Scotland, Wales and

Ireland) to one which is more fully situated within the global and transnational flows of the Atlantic. This chapter argues that, by doing this, they contribute not just to an awareness of the shore as a site of interconnection but also as a space in which fractures, tensions and possibilities around ways of being in place are made perceptible.

The focus in this chapter shifts from a conventional coastal landscape (shore, beach, cliffs) to an explicitly estuarine one, looking at the work of two poets, Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson, and developing an understanding of how their attention to the spaces of Liverpool, not just as a city but as a littoral zone, opens up experiences of home to transnational forces. In doing this, the chapter will contribute to an understanding of how poetry can deal with the spatialisation of memory in a complexly global experience of place and location. This will be carried out through attention to how scales of history (whether as a process of social archiving or intimate remembrance) respond to the movements between the particular and the planetary.

While some poets have written about urban experience at the coast (Lee Harwood's *Boston to Brighton* is a prominent example) the estuarine quality of urban areas such as Liverpool or Hull have often been overlooked in accounts of the poetry of these cities. For example, Peter Barry notes that the Hull-based poet Peter Didsbury's work 'often seems to look concertedly away from [the urban landscape]' but fails to mention the estuarine landscape of Hull and its opening up on the North Sea as a potential source for this.[1] In order to give a full account of this kind of

---

[1] Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 107. See David Wheatley, '"Dafter Than We Care To Own": Some Poets of the North of England', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 407-423, and Sean O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998), pp. 139-146, for similar absences.

writing the presence of estuarine space in cities such as Hull and Liverpool cannot be dismissed or overlooked

Beyond this absence, estuaries possess many of the same marginal qualities as the shoreline, Aidan O'Sullivan writing that '[e]stuaries are peculiar landscapes, a waterlogged space between sea and land, influenced by freshwater rivers and brackish tides.'[2] The poet Philip Gross describes the estuarine topography of *The Water Table* as 'always trying / to be something other', touching on wider ideas of the shore as a site of transformation and transgression.[3] For Joseph Conrad '[t]he estuaries of rivers appeal strongly to an adventurous imagination', possessing the quality of 'an open portal'.[4] Therefore, the estuarine port city emerges as a distinct site for the exploration of geographic scale at the coastline, exposed as it is to transnational flows of people and goods, and its effect on the poetic spatialisation of memory.

This chapter will engage with two different forms of memory. In the poetry of Matt Simpson it will be memory as something fundamental to the formation of the self, an understanding that when 'we think of ourselves we immediately begin to sort and arrange memories'.[5] In this conception the space of memory is centred on the individual psyche and body as it navigates the world. This is a form of memory that has often been found in close relationship with a type of poetry which, as Charles Armstrong suggests, is ghosted by the question of 'how are present and past capable

---

[2] Aidan O'Sullivan, 'Place, Memory and Identity among Estuarine Fishing Communities: Interpreting the Archaeology of Early Medieval Fish Weirs', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 449-468 (p. 465).
[3] Philip Gross, 'Betweenland I', *The Water Table* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2009), p. 10.
[4] Joseph Conrad, 'The Faithful River', *The Mirror of the Sea* (London: John Grant, 1925), pp. 100-115 (pp. 100-101).
[5] A. S. Byatt, 'Introduction', in *Memory: An Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. xii-xx (p. xii).

of being meaningfully linked together?'[6] A question which sits at the core of Simpson's work and its relation to ideas of place.

In exploring Robert Hampson's *Seaport* this chapter will make use of the notion of social or collective memory. Lewis Coser explains that 'individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past'.[7] As such collective memory can take on a form of common sense about how recollections of the past inform experiences of the present, acts of recall firmed up by the continuation of social groupings and institutions themselves and, importantly for this chapter, the spaces these collective rememberings shape and are shaped by.

By charting the movement from imperial port to post-industrial city, and the occluded histories that are revealed by paying attention to these processes, there is also an interest in how the in-between nature of Liverpool affects not just what is remembered but how it is remembered.[8] This is particularly in regards to the way the maritime history of the region blends the spatial imaginations of the city with a sense of the transnational. Transnational here is not a synonym for globalisation or global capital. While the role of these processes in the decline and transformation of Liverpool are present in these poems they are not the main focus. Rather transnational is being used to describe a spatial imaginary which is not limited to the regional or national and, because of this, is able to undermine expectations about place and memory. This is an

---

[6] Charles I. Armstrong, *Figures of Memory: Poetry, Space, and the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 3.
[7] 'Introduction', in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1-34 (p. 22).
[8] In the nineteenth century Liverpool was viewed less as an English city and more as a North American enclave. See 'Introduction: Sounding Liverpool', in *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 1-28, p. 8.

approach drawn from the work of Paul Giles who, though talking specifically about transatlantic literature, states that such writing 'might engender double-edged discourses liable to destabilize traditional hierarchies and power relations'.[9]

The chapter begins with an overview of the relationship of theories of memory to their externalisation in space and writing, specifically in relation to how literary writing can undermine historical accounts and question what and how things are remembered. The next section explores Robert Hampson's *Seaport*, looking at the long durée which informs the text's account of Liverpool from the late eighteenth century to the Toxteth Riots. This part will also see how *Seaport* is transnational not just in its historical scope but also in its adoption of poetic techniques. The focus will then move onto Matt Simpson, examining how he represents a conflicted sense of his relationship to the Merseyside town of Bootle. This section will argue that, in following in his father's footsteps to Tasmania, the poetry is able to find some resolution to anxieties of home and belonging.

This chapter traces the distinct ways Simpson and Hampson explore the interrelations of memory and urban landscape in the transnational, estuarine spaces of North West England. In doing so they resist what Steinberg calls the sea 'as a site of past glory and culture',[10] reworking notions of place in a manner which is attentive to the elsewheres (geographies of maritime trade and circulation) which shape and colour spatial experiences of Liverpool, and which have often gone overlooked themselves in accounts of poetic writing about place and city.

---

[9] Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 5.
[10] Philip E. Steinberg, 'The Maritime Mystique: Sustainable Development, Capital mobility, and Nostalgia in the World Ocean', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 17.4 (1999), 403-426 (p. 405).

Memory, Space and Writing

The French architectural critic César Daly's assertion that '[t]o neglect history, to neglect memory [...] is then to deny oneself'[11] may seem hyperbolic but it reflects the centrality of memory and history as objects of study in western thought. For the American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson 'Memory is a primary and fundamental faculty, without which none other can work; the cement, the bitumen, the matrix in which the other faculties are imbedded'.[12] Yet, this is almost too broad an understanding of memory. If so much depends on memory then how does one identify what is worthy of specific attention? The needs of this chapter require thinking of memory primarily as the processes of the recollection and remembering of past events. This is perhaps a more conservative notion of memory but it is one that provides firm ground from which to investigate memory in terms of poetry and geography.

This chapter takes as its guide Paul Ricoeur's definition of memory as 'a claim […] of being faithful to the past'.[13] In its focus on memory as a way of acknowledging what has passed, Ricoeur is echoing Aristotle who writes that 'memory is of the past; no one could claim to remember the present while it is present'.[14] Yet this does not imply that memory is the perfect, unadulterated, recollection of events. Despite the stability suggested by the image of grand palaces of memory in book ten of his *Confessions*, Augustine suggests that '[s]towed away there is everything

---

[11] César Daly, 'Vue Intérieure d'un Tombeau Etrusque à Corneto' (Paris: J. Claye, 1862), p. 8 quoted and trans. by Richard Becherer in *Science plus Sentiment: César Daly's Formula for Modern Architecture* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1975), p. 253.
[12] Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Memory', *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols (London: Routledge, 1903), XII, pp. 61-81 (p. 63).
[13] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 21.
[14] Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, trans. by W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 289.

we reflect upon either by accentuating or depreciating it or in any way whatever modifying the actual things which our sense apprehended'.[15] To recall a memory is, therefore, to reconstitute it and modify it, to be aware that what we are remembering is not an exact replication of the event as experienced.

Modern developments in science and philosophy continue to shift understandings of memory without ever quite losing touch with these earlier formulations. Mary Warnock emphasises the non-linguistic nature of memory, that 'it seems wrong to make language the pre-condition of such remembering'.[16] This echoes Wittgenstein's questioning of William James's account of the recollections of the deaf mute Mr Ballard. Here Wittgenstein poses the question '[a]re you sure - one would like to ask - that this is the correct translation of your wordless thought into words?' For Wittgenstein this is 'a queer memory phenomenon' in which '[t]he words with which I express my memory are my memory-reaction' and not the memory itself.[17] Wittgenstein and Warnock see memory as crucially pre-linguistic, this means that with the recollection of memory through language there is always a degree of displacement and corruption in the reconstitution of past events.

For writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the relation of memory and forgetting has emerged as a crucial concern. As early as the *Confessions* Augustine describes memory as that which 'forgetfulness has not yet consumed and buried'.[18] Yet, within a pervasive modern anxiety about the value and efficacy of memory, the connection between memory

---

[15] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by William Watts, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912), II, p. 87.
[16] Mary Warnock, *Memory* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 11.
[17] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 109-110.
[18] Augustine, *Confessions*, II, p. 87.

and forgetting has taken on a particularly resonant charge.[19] This is a context informed by the weight of human atrocity in the twentieth century (the Holocaust, Hiroshima, gulags and killing fields) and the persistent after-effects of nineteenth century imperialism. It is also shaped by different ways of thinking about the human psyche, most prominently Freudian psychoanalysis where the character of the individual is shaped by past traumas. There is a tension here between what A. S. Byatt describes as the 'need to forget, in order to survive' and an anxiety over memorialisation of the past, a desire to both move on but also to find ways to remember in order to avoid repeating these mistakes.[20]

Maurice Halbwachs argues that 'memory depends on the social environment'.[21] This is something Ricoeur recognises as well: '[w]hy should memory be attributed only to me, to you, to her or to him'? Because of this, Ricoeur finds this type of remembering to be closer to the official codifications of history enacted in public memorials and government archives.[22] The linking of memory to public spaces, as well as the spatial metaphors which have helped convey ideas of memory such as Augustine's palaces, enumerates the links between memory and place. Memory is not just an internal, psychic process but rather 'it is both localised and non-localised', often situated in objects and materials external to the human body.[23] Nuala Johnson and Geraldine Pratt see memory as an 'inherently geographical activity', while Donlyn Lyndon asserts that the '[t]he

---

[19] Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and Memory Crisis* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 316.
[20] Byatt, 'Introduction', in *Memory: An Anthology*, p. xviii.
[21] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 37.
[22] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp. 93-94,119.
[23] Steve Rose, 'Memories are Made of This', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 54-67 (p. 67).

experience of place is infused with memory'.[24] Esther da Costa Meyer goes a step further (at least rhetorically) when she asserts that '[m]emory preys on places: there are virtually no un-situated recollections.'[25]

The spatialisation of memory is not always about externalization either. Edward Casey offers memory as a location itself, somewhere to find refuge, 'a place wherein the past can revive and survive', although Casey does not mention what happens if one gets lost in this internal terrain.[26] In thinking about the relation of memory to place it becomes clear that place is more than just a store for memories but rather is a crucial part of the processes of recollection and recall that helps constitute memory.

This chapter will demonstrate that attention to the relationship between memory and space in the poetry of Hampson and Simpson emphasises a sense of place which is relational and dynamic, that 'identities in and of places are always being unmade and remade in a complex interplay with the (remembered), (settled) past and the novel events of present moments.'[27] In doing this it traces how poetry can respond to scales of memory, from the intimate and familial to the histories of cities and regions, as they play out in the transnational, estuarine geography of Liverpool.

Another crucial way memory has been externalized and made comprehensible is through writing, both as a material practice and as an

---

[24] Nuala Johnson and Geraldine Pratt, 'Memory', *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. by Derek Gregory and others, 5th edn (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 453-455 (p. 453), and Donlyn Lyndon, 'The Place of Memory', in *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. by Marc Treib (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 62-85 (p. 63).
[25] Esther da Costa Meyer, 'The Place of Place in Memory', in *Spatial Recall*, pp. 176-193 (p. 177).
[26] Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 187.
[27] 'Introduction', in *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*, ed. by Owain Jones and Joanne Garde-Hansen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).

explanatory metaphor. In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates asks Theaetetus to consider the soul as containing a waxen block on which we

> imprint […] whatever we wish to remember from among the things we see or hear or the thoughts we ourselves have […] whatever is imprinted on the block, we remember and know for as long as its image is in the wax, while whatever is wiped off or proves incapable of being imprinted we have forgotten and do not know.[28]

This figurative thinking about memory finds its modern form in Freud's essay 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"'. Here, Freud looks at three different methods of writing as metaphors for the internal process of memory. Yet the metaphors also suggest the very real way in which writing can be used as a supplement or aid to remembering. For instance Freud argues that '[i]f I distrust my memory [...] I am able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing.' Freud finds that the externalization of memory through writing has certain benefits in that written memory can be reproduced at any time and 'with the certainty that it will have remained unaltered' by the distortions of 'actual memory.'[29]

Writing emerges as a technology which allows for the expansion of memory across time and space: people can carry with them journals and letters full of remembrances from one place to another, sharing and reproducing them, extending communities of kinship and friendship across the world.

---

[28] Plato, 'Theaetetus', *Theaetetus and Sophist*, ed. by Christopher Rowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1-98 (p. 70).
[29] Sigmund Freud, 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), XIX, pp. 225-232 (p. 227).

Freud's essay is developed by Jacques Derrida in 'Freud and the Scene of Writing'. Derrida's work is full of the language of traces and frayings, which in part gains its rhetorical power from its implicit deconstruction of another common metaphor for memory as links in a chain. Importantly, Derrida suggests that this more complex metaphor of memory is not the unbecoming of what was once previously intact but a continual process of fraying where the difference between these traces are productive and significant in and of themselves.[30] This notion of fraying is an important part in the relation between writing and rhythms of spatial and temporal inhabitation at the coastline across this thesis. Mulford finds in such activity a liberatory sense of loss in regards to place, while the alteration between hope in, and then scepticism of, the transcendent (which could be figured as a kind of fraying) structures the movement of Riley's *Sea Watches* around the peninsula.

Derrida's re-reading of Freud identifies an intimate connection of memory, writing and space in which the process of writing itself is altered by exposure to the changing spatiality of remembering. According to Derrida

> we find repeatedly the persistent attempt to account for the psyche in terms of spacing, a topography of traces, a map of fraying; an attempt to locate consciousness or quality in a space whose structures and possibility must be rethought

At the end of this process of frayings and traces Derrida suggests writing returns as 'the interruption and restoration of contact between the various depths of psychical levels' (pp. 84, 111). This reworking of Freud's original

---

[30] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Yale French Studies*, 48, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (1972), 74-117 (p. 78).

metaphor informs modern developments, which see memory as something much closer to the partial fraying Derrida describes.[31] At the same time, by foregrounding the relationship of writing as both an intervention into the process of remembering and as a metaphor and externalization of memory as trace, Derrida suggests a way in which one can begin to conceive of the complex interrelation of topography, memory and legibility.

The estuary has its own distinct literary and critical relationship to memory. Simon Schama emphasises the importance of the 'gull-swept estuary' of the Thames to his developing sense of the relationship of landscape and memory, particularly as a landscape in which the past meets the present as figured in the meeting of salt water and fresh water.[32] This transhistorical quality is demonstrated in the opening section of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* where '[t]he sea-reach of the Thames' evokes 'the great spirit of the past'. Yet this celebration of 'the seed of commonwealth' is interrupted by Marlowe who notes that this has also 'been one of the dark places of the earth', the character reflecting on the 'very old times, when the Romans first came here', when Britain was 'the very end of the world'.[33]

The Thames estuary is, in *Heart of Darkness*, a portal that allows the coexistence of both modern, imperial Britain and an ancient, darker sense of the country which unsettles the notion of the civilized (and civilizing) global empire. This reflects Michael Bracewell's observation that shorelines have 'an extraordinary capacity to recollect their history' and

---

[31] See Ulric Neisser, 'Memory with a Grain of Salt', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 80-88 for example.
[32] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 3-4.
[33] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007), pp. 3-6.

through this they can 'articulate the past within the present with particular, at times unsettling, intensity.'[34]

In figuring the interrelations of memory and place, this chapter shows how both Hampson and Simpson pay attention to language's complicity in a violence of remembering which makes the urban spaces of Merseyside difficult to inhabit. At the same time, Hampson and Simpson suggest a contrapuntal capacity in poetic language to begin to uncover the contested grounds of memory and its spatialisation, offering ways of opening up recollection to revision. As Peter Middleton and Tim Woods point out, '[t]he potential reflexivity of literary textuality makes possible subtle [and] original […] insights into the changing conditions of social memory and the uses of history.'[35]

By grounding such writing in the estuarine geography of Merseyside they explore how different scales of memory respond to the transnational forces and spatialities of the port city. Here, archipelagic thinking does not just urge linking with other places and other times, and between local and global geographic experience, it also, as has been shown in Riley and Mulford, registers points where such connections becomes difficult, ideologically charged, and potentially a site of exploitation.

'an infinity of traces': History in *Seaport*

Robert Hampson's *Seaport* (2008) is a long sequence that charts the growth of Liverpool as a port from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century, culminating in the events of June 1981. Though the

---

[34] Michael Bracewell and Linder Sterling, *I Know Where I'm Going: A Guide to Morecambe and Heysham* (London: Book Works, 2003), p. 8.
[35] Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 4.

Toxteth riots do not emerge until the last ten pages of the poem this event is the originating point of the sequence, the spot in time and space from which the text's account of Liverpool unspools backwards across history. This section will demonstrate how Hampson engages with historical discourses which frame contemporary understanding of the city's history, particularly its role in the slave trade, and how this is traced in the spatial experience of Liverpool's docklands.

Part I of *Seaport* is titled 'Landfall and Departure' and provides a seemingly empirical account of the development of Liverpool, encompassing both the material progression of the docks and the development of the city as a hub of immigration and emigration. The epigraph to Part I, taken from Joseph Conrad's 'Landfalls and Departures' (which also gives the section its title), describes landfall as a self-contained moment, 'made and done with at the first cry of "Land Ho!"' Departure, in contrast, is a process, a distinct 'ceremony of navigation'.[36]

Hampson's sequence is shaped by both landfall and departure. It departs from the riots, navigating backwards through history and (cultural, geographic and social) memory to trace origin and cause. It also complicates Conrad's notion of landfall. The opening poem of the sequence, 'perch rock', depicts a ship passing through the estuary. This sense of approach is picked up by the sequence, the text moving towards a temporal landfall which is the modern city in 1981, albeit one weighted down by historical and psychological experiences of repression and violence that have been obfuscated both in the cultural and spatial memories of the city.

'[P]erch rock' is placed between the epigraph and 'seaport', which quotes substantial material from Quentin Hughes's *Seaport: Architecture*

---

[36] Joseph Conrad, 'Landfalls and Departures', *The Mirror of the Sea* (London: John Grant, 1925), pp. 3-13 (p. 3).

and Townscape in Liverpool and Daniel Defoe's accounts of Liverpool from *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*. '[S]eaport' breaks up the progression of poems in Part I and offers the early history of Liverpool as a port. This initially seems to set up a gap between historical and poetic knowledge, where historical 'fact' is needed to ground the poetry in an objective, material world. The section from Hughes's *Seaport* provides a sense of Liverpool's origin:

> For centuries Chester had dominated the northwestern approaches [...] Liverpool, however, grew fat and prosperous on the takings of the slave trade and, buttressed by the swiftly expanding output of manufactured goods from the hinterland of Lancashire, the town witnessed rapid development.[37]

This passage marks the first, albeit passing, mention of the role of the slave trade in the sequence. The reality of the slave trade, in particular the contested ways it has been remembered in regards to the city and its spaces, is something that will grow into focus as the text proceeds towards a consideration of the events in Toxteth during 1981.

Hughes and Defoe are the only sources that are explicitly acknowledged by Hampson in this section. In other poems from Part I, particularly 'the docks: emigrant trade', Hampson uses quotation marks to suggest that certain lines, both lineated and unlineated, are direct quotes from other material but does not give any source for these. Yet, there is often little in tone and intensity to distinguish the lines marked by quotation marks and those without. The content of these lines is predominantly empirical information about the development of Liverpool as

---

[37] Quentin Hughes, *Seaport: Architecture and Townscape in Liverpool* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), p. 1.

a port. For example, compare 'St George's Hall / begun 1839 / completed 1854' to '"a town of so much trade'".[38]

Isolated these lines seem to share a flat, explanatory tone but, within the context of the wider passages, there emerges a slight but charged inflection produced by the arrangement of quoted and unquoted lines. The line about Liverpool as '"a town of so much trade"' is immediately followed by

> but already: the problems
>
> the bigger ships that enforce obsolescence
>
> the dangers of stilting (p. 21)

The subtle undercutting of the quoted claim by what is gestured at through the lack of quotation marks suggests the poet's own intervention into this historical discourse (recalling Mulford's intervention into the language of coastal management and Riley's scepticism of his own writing's movement towards the transcendent).

In contrasting the quoted and unquoted lines, Hampson is hinting at the way historical accounts can, even when seemingly objective and factual, present accounts of past events that are at best one-sided or, more unsettlingly, wilfully ignorant of other historical data. As Keith Jenkins notes, '[o]ne cannot recount more than a fraction of what has occurred'.[39] The historical claim, demarcated by quotation marks as an authoritative source, is revealed to be, at best, short-sighted, circumscribing the limits of historical knowledge.

---

[38] Robert Hampson, *Seaport* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008), pp. 21, 24. Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.
[39] Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (Routledge: London, 2003), p. 14.

This is not the rapid montaging of different images, rather it seems like carefully scalping lines of text from the body of one source and placing them in another which, though different, is drawn from the same concerns and subject (something distinct from Mulford's clear separation of voice in *The East Anglia Sequence*). Similarly, Peter Barry describes it as verse which avoids 'any kind of lexical or imagistic embellishment, and apparently acting simply as a denotative "seeing eye".'[40]

The effect of reading *Seaport* is not the sudden movement between two disparate images or ideas (which in itself can denote an active, if scrambled, subjectivity), but of minor shifts in register, away from the simply descriptive to something slightly more critical. The admittance of 'the problems' into the history of the city troubling nostalgic understandings of Liverpool's past as a grand imperial port. Ricoeur observes that in the process of translating observed events into history, 'suspicion unfolds itself all along the chain of operations'.[41] Hampson lays bare this chain of operations in the formal arrangements of this opening section, making it clear to the reader how the quoted historical sources are not totalising accounts of the city's development, charging them with an element of suspicion from the outset.

The title of Part II of the sequence gives us a name for this operation: 'spunyarn'. Hampson takes this term from Herman Melville's semi-fictional account of his life as a sailor, *Redburn*, which centres on a voyage to Liverpool and whose action is the focus in Part II of similar techniques of pulled quotation and re-contextualising. The epigraph for this section quotes Melville describing spunyarn as the 'manufacture [of] a clumsy sort of twine' used to repair sails and cloth on board a ship. Significantly, the source of the material is old rigging 'which are picked to

---

[40] Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, p. 159.
[41] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 162.

pieces, and then twisted into new combinations, something as most books are manufactured' (p. 31). This recalls both the act of dismantling and reassembling historical sources in Part I as well as Derrida's notion of memory as productive fraying.

The textual element ('something as most books are manufactured') signals that language itself is involved in these processes of recombination, an anxiety expressed in the opening poem to Part II, 'the chart', where the 'swell' of language, its 'migratory grammar', is placed alongside a need for 'precise expression' (p. 33). The attention to historical accounts of the city's development is therefore not just a suspicion about historical narratives but a worry that language itself, in any capacity, is unsuitable to registering events and passing them into social memory. Or that to engage with historical accounts of a place or community is to be aware you are participating in acts of fiction, stories that have been told and retold so many times their origins have become untraceable.

While quotation marks highlight the use of different texts within the poems, even if the sources of these lines remain unacknowledged, Hampson quotes other material in a way which remains concealed from the reader. For example this extract from Hughes:

> Ships run in from the Bay along an easterly channel close to the flat coastline of Crosby with its mud sand beach and battered timber groins. Perch Rock stands on the starboard bow, and piled up behind it the close sub-urbanism of New Brighton, point blocks of flats, the bulbous domes of the pleasure gardens, and the lines of terrace houses[42]

[42] Hughes, *Seaport*, p. 1.

Can be compared to ‘perch rock’, which is quoted here in its entirety:

ships move in

from the bay

close to the flat coastline of crosby

into the narrows

perch rock stands

to starboard

the close

vestibular landline

runs

from the point blocks

of flats

to the graceful lines

of dark-brick

terraced houses. (p. 18)

What is noticeable is how Hampson has not simply used Hughes as a resource to inform his own poetic evocation of a ship's approach to Liverpool. Rather, it is almost the wholesale lifting of Hughes's writing and the repurposing of it as poetic language through the application of line breaks and spacing.

While these lines are relatively easy to trace in Hughes, the quoted material from in 'the docks: emigrant trade' is more difficult to identify. This text originates from Terry Coleman's *Passage to America*. Reading Coleman reveals that the unquoted material, which earlier seemed like the poet's own intervention into historical discourse, is, following the model of Hampson's appropriation of Hughes's text, Coleman's as well. Returning to the cluster of lines which seemed to undercut assertions of Liverpool's grandeur with mention of the human suffering and exploitation such wealth depended upon, it is possible to find both sentiments in Coleman:

> Liverpool was a port which had grown rich first with the slave trade and with privateering, and then with the American trades of cotton and emigrants. By the end of the eighteenth century, five-sixths of the English slave trade belonged to Liverpool [...] *Today Liverpool is easily the grandest English city outside London. The centre of no other English city is planned on such a scale*[43]

One is inclined to ask, given this textual operation, what exactly is happening in *Seaport*? Realising that all the material in this section can be

[43] Terry Coleman, *Passage to America: A History of Emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Hutchins, 1972), p. 63. My italics, this is the section acknowledged as being quoted from another source in the text.

found in Coleman's text undermines the earlier reading of this section as setting up a contrast between the poet and the historian. Of course the presence of the poet is still felt in terms of the selection and arrangement of material from these sources. In this practice the intervention of the poet is at a more removed level, and what seems to be happening in the body of the text is the exploiting of internal contradictions within the construction of historical accounts and discourses themselves.

A good example of this process comes at the end of Part I where several pages detail how nineteenth century emigrants in Liverpool were exploited and abused at almost all stages of their journey. Whether that was on their sea voyages:

> in 1848 the *Ocean Monarch*
> caught fire & sank in the Mersey
> all the first class-passengers
>
> were saved
>
> a long list was published
> of dead steerage emigrants. (p. 28)

Or in Liverpool:

> the emigrants were sold
> bad food & unnecessary
> pocket-mirrors, razors, bowie-knives
> pistols & telescopes
>
> 27,000 people lodged in 7,000 cellars (p. 29)

Having built up a case about the mistreatment of these emigrants which, like the earlier slave trade, contributed massively to the city's prosperity, the section ends with this quotation: "Both Whig and Tory governments did as little as possible, thinking it wrong to interfere unnecessarily with trade"' (p. 29). In Coleman this reads as a notable admission or point of order, the sentence prefaced by 'strangely, emigration was never a political issue.'[44] In Hampson the quoting of Coleman finds these words reading as a bitter indictment of the political inaction of the period, a failure to act which will find resonance in the last section of *Seaport*, provoking what Peter Barry suggests is the fundamental concern in the sequence about 'where things begin and end'.[45]

Hampson's manipulation and deployment of historical writing in these sections recalls Mulford's poetic process in dealing with coastal management discourse from the previous chapter. Like Mulford, Hampson's text is a substantial work focused on one geographic region and charting long historical durations of habitation. In adopting a technique in which certain discourses are opened up and rearranged within the body of the poem both poets exploit the capacity for the contemporary long poetic sequence to introduce reflexivity and fragmentation.

For Hampson this results in a poetry suspicious of history's claims about its own authority and comprehensiveness, and asserts a need for a literary awareness of how historical narratives are constructed and mediated by the authoritative notion of History itself. This mirrors some historians' own reflections on their discipline. Jacques Le Goff, for example, states that what is needed to grapple with the shaping of social memory by

---

[44] Coleman, *Passage to America*, p. 21.
[45] Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, p. 160.

the interests of power is 'a constant rereading of the past in relation to the present, which must constantly be questioned anew.'[46]

Yet the similarities between Mulford and Hampson extend beyond a sceptical approach towards various specialist disciplines' discursive claims. The fragmentation and reflexivity of the long sequence is matched by the demands of writing about a coastal or estuarine geography that shifts and changes over a span of attention defined by centuries. In order to mark out, develop and respond to the spatial growth of the docks or the sudden erosion of the east coast, both poets produce a writing which is itself malleable. Malleable not just in terms of the spatial arrangements of lines on the page but also in terms of the variation of voice within the poems. Mulford's sequence shifts from the dry, technical language of coastal management to a quasi-visionary lyric subjectivity. Hampson develops from the flat, objective historical voice in Part I to an imitation of the narrator of Melville's novel *Redburn* in Part II to, at times, a personal and reflective voice in Part IV. This flexibility is a kind of fragmentation but it does not signal dissolution as much as a recognition of the poetic suppleness required to write about a geography that resists being fixed and of which experience is constantly mediated, whether by technical bureaucracy or historical narratives.

Ezra Pound's *Cantos* provides Hampson with a useful poetic template which can provide for this interrogation of the construction of historical discourses and allow a thinking together of the historical and geographic. While the Malatesta cantos (cantos VIII-XI) mainly deal with first-hand accounts (letters), compared to the mediated historical documents Hampson works with, the way Pound shapes them is nonetheless instructive. One method is to block quote significant sections

---

[46] Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 18.

of letters into the poem, signified by the traditional formal features of letter writing: '"MAGNIFICENT LORD WITH DUE REVERENCE: / "Messire Malatesta is well and asks for you every day [...] "your faithful / LUNARDA DA PALLA. / 20 Dec. 1454."'[47] This echoes the way Hampson incorporates whole passage from Defoe or Hughes in 'seaport', reflecting Pound's view that 'I shd. quite definitely have to quote whole slabs and columns of histories and works of reference.'[48]

More interesting are the moments where Pound manipulates the historical material (in the following example Thomas Hart Benton's *Thirty Years View* in canto LXXXVIII), whether that is through lineation or the use of ellipsis: 'the Senate not being that day in session… / came to my room at Brown's asking was I / Mrs Clay's blood-relation?'[49] These distortions and manipulations of the original material are not simply indicative of gaps (sometimes Pound uses them when nothing has been left out) but more generally signify, as Michael Coyle suggests, a disruption in historical continuity.[50]

For Coyle the meaning of *The Cantos* is inseparable from the way Pound uses the page: 'Pound's interweaving of print and blank space affects our perception of his words'.[51] Hampson himself acknowledges Pound's influence on *Seaport* and, while it is not a Liverpudlian *Cantos*, they clearly provide a template for Hampson's deployment of historical writing within the textual space of the poem.[52] The section titled 'the

---

[47] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 42-43.
[48] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), p. 33.
[49] Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 613.
[50] Michael Coyle, 'The Implications of Inclusion: Historical Narrative in Pound's Canto LXXXVIII', *ELH*, 54.1 (Spring, 1987), 215-230 (p. 223).
[51] *Ibid*, p. 224.
[52] Robert Hampson, interviewed by Lidia Vianu, *The Argotist Online* <http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Hampson%20interview.htm> [Accessed 5 June 2017]

docks', for example, uses the material spacing of the lines to reinforce the movement of ships into the skyline of the city:

> right-angled to the river
>
> the high-masted ships
>
> penetrate the city
>
> masts mix with the city skyline (p. 21)

Like other sections of *Seaport*, these lines are taken from Hughes but here the translation from source to poem is not as literal as at other points, reducing Hughes's prose to key concepts. From 'the town ran at right angles to the river so that tall-masted ships penetrated the city creating a criss-cross skyline', Hampson retrieves 'right-angled', 'high-masted' and 'penetrate'.[53] Where Hughes is solidly in the past tense, Hampson places the action of the ships penetrating the city in the present, even while this section in 'the docks' is surrounded by references to 1710 and 1748. The effect of this, though subtle and not explicitly articulated, is to gesture towards how traces of these historical activities resonate into the present.

The spacing does not simply mimic geographical movement but, echoing Pound's manipulation of historical sources, charges seemingly objective historical accounts with a frisson of subjectivity, altering how these discourses are read in the context of the poem. What is 'a visual constituent of town life' in Hughes, a passive 'townscape' (p. 3), becomes for Hampson an active description of the psychological and material impact of the docks, as the ships 'penetrate the city'. '[P]enetrate' here is at once the physical movement of the ships, the penetration of capital as an economic and social order into the city (these are after all slave and

[53] Hughes, *Seaport*, p. 3.

merchant ships), and the imposing presence of the docks penetrating the 'place-image' of the city, so that for large parts of its modern existence, Liverpool, the docks, and North Atlantic maritime culture have been inseparable.[54]

Hampson's use of the way lines are graphically arranged dictates the rhythm of reading, how and where the eye travels, and for how long it might linger on a word or phrase. This is another similarity with Mulford, suggesting there is something in the flow and rhythm of these intertidal zones (whether the shoreline or estuary) which is amenable to a poetics which disassembles and rebuilds various discourses, both graphically and semantically, within the frame of the poem. In Hampson this spacing is used not just to open up historical discourse or mirror the geographical growth of the docks but to enact and register the effects of spatial ruptures and foreclosures.

This can be seen in the opening of 'docks (2)'. Here there is a recurrence of the interpretative weight placed on 'penetration' from 'perch rock', which is suggestively intensified by the adverb 'deep' and then the whole two word phrase is visually emphasised by the spacing of the page:

deep penetration

gives way to a lineal system

Hartley pushes the docks

north & south along the coast (p. 22)

[54] Rob Shields describes 'place-images' as the over-simplification or stereotyping of certain places whereby they become 'hypostatised from the world of real space relations to the symbolic realm of cultural significations', even being held as 'signifiers of its essential character.' Importantly, for both Shields and Hampson, '[p] lace-images, and our views of them, are produced historically, and are actively contested'. See Shields, *Places on the Margin* (London: Routledge), pp. 47, 18.

Yet, at the same time, this new lineal system is

> a seven-mile line of docks
>
> cuts the city off from the river
>
> cuts masts & funnels out
>
> of the daily life of the town (p. 22)

Here the previously spread out lines are suddenly 'cut' as the poem puts it, reflecting how this new geographical arrangement of the docks removes the 'mast & funnels out / of the daily life of the town'. The passage of ships in and out of Liverpool, suggesting an active, shared, social world of dock and city, is replaced both historically and in the spacing of the page by a more controlled and formalised spatial arrangement.

Barry has referred to the 'iconographic quality' of the text, noting that *Seaport* deploys different spatial arrangements of its lines in each section.[55] The sequence shifts from the wide, generous, spacing of Part I to the constricted layout of poems like 'July 1981' in Part IV:

> 3 young blacks
>
> in a car
>
> stopped by the police.
>
> all the windows
>
> smashed in
>
> with batons. (p. 65)

[55] Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, pp. 160-161.

The spacing is much more tightly controlled and formally sculpted, echoing William Carlos Williams in its sudden line breaks and focus on the particulars of things, though what Hampson is observing here in this flat, matter of fact language is racialized police brutality. The graphical constriction of the text reads as a visual symbol of the spatial segregation and control enacted on black people in Liverpool. Having in some ways been brought here on the penetrative lines of earlier poems, the lives of young black people are restricted by an atmosphere of violence and unease.

This demonstrates how Hampson's interest is not simply with historical documents but the relationship between history, geography and human experience, and how the spaces of the past resonate within modern spatialisations of the city and the graphical arrangement of the poems. As Hilda Bornstein reflects, narratives of deprivation and exploitation that accompany the description of the dock's development in *Seaport* are 'now inseparable from the topography of the city'.[56] This interest in geography is alluded to by the one explicit nod *Seaport* makes to Pound in an epigraph to the whole sequence: '*man does not know his own ADDRESS (in time) until he knows where his time and milieu stand in relation to other times and conditions.*'[57] It is this idea that helps explain the long durée depicted in *Seaport*, one that stretches from the sixteenth to twentieth century. To understand one's home, one must understand how one's own history relates to the other histories bound up in that location.

In making sense of his address, *Seaport* shows Hampson reaching out for a sense of history that allows him to articulate and emphasise that the character of Liverpool is that of a port rather than a city. The sequence

---

[56] Hilda Bornstein, 'Afterword: Spun Yarn', *Seaport* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008), pp. 79-84, p. 80.
[57] Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 83.

bringing notions of archipelagic interconnection into contact with the specific character of an estuary and docklands that enables both penetration and transmission.

By finding ways to articulate these qualities, Hampson makes use of techniques from an earlier Anglo-American modernism. While Pound has been the focus in this chapter there are also obvious traces of Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems* in the text. Peter Barry has observed this lineage but it is important to emphasise the transnational patterns of the poetics Hampson adopts in his poems.[58] The cultural, social and spatial conditions of Liverpool in the late twentieth century are formed by the global forces of slavery and transatlantic trade. For *Seaport* to fully account for, and grapple with, the development of the city it must at least register these transnational modes of writing.

A City at War

Having established the evolution of Liverpool from small port to imperial hub, the fourth part shifts to postwar Liverpool. This section will focus on the way *Seaport* represents the relationship between the events of 1981 and spatial experiences of Liverpool, arguing that Hampson frames the riots not as a contemporary, urban problem but as an event with longer roots in the city's role as a slave port. In this part of the text, a history of transnational circulation and penetration is shown to link Liverpool to the wider world but, instead of being an archipelagic celebration of marginal difference, it is a connection based on imperial violence, white supremacy and capitalist exploitation.

[58] Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, p. 159

Hampson says that he has been influenced by spatial thinkers such as Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre and this can be seen in the way power, capitalism and spatiality are implicitly brought together at the start of 'City in War'.[59] Hence 'the falling-off / of the cotton trade / in the 1930s' and 'the shift of sea trade from ocean routes' are implicitly tied into the spatial experience of the 'city centre / eviscerated in "urban redevelopment"' (p. 57), and the flight of businesses such as 'Dunlop [...] Meccano [...] Vauxhall' which result in a '*city of the dead*' (p. 62). As Diane Frost and Peter North describe it, '[c]ities and towns can survive and continue to exist long after the reason for their existence has evaporated, but they do so as poor, disinvested, ghost places where the role of public policy becomes no more than managing that decline.'[60]

For Hampson this experience of economic depression triggered by the collapse of the docks is also deeply imbricated with the experience of race in the city. As Doreen Massey notes

> Nor is our experience and interpretation of all these changes dependent only upon our place within, or without, capitalist class relations. Ethnicity and gender, to mention only the two most obvious other axes, are also deeply implicated in the ways in which we inhabit and experience space and place[61]

Building on earlier sections' unsettling of historical discourse, Hampson's exploration of the racial contexts of the riots begins not with the details of the arrest of Leroy Cooper, which was the immediate spark for the riots,

---

[59] Hampson, interviewed by Lidia Vianu, *The Argotist Online*.
[60] Diane Frost and Peter North, *Militant Liverpool: A City on the Edge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 4.
[61] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 164.

but with the murder in 1919 of Charles Wooton by 'a white mob' which 'roams Liverpool 8 / for blacks' (p. 63). Again this historical reportage is placed in the present tense by Hampson raising the question of the continual impact of these events. It has the effect of implicitly challenging assumptions about the cosmopolitan character of the city. That, as the poet Levi Tafari says, although 'Liverpool is multicultural and multiracial' because of its sea port, 'it doesn't really embrace that the way it should […] The black community is still looked down upon and vilified to some extent.'[62]

This can be seen in the way Liverpool denies the city's Afro-Caribbean populace identification as 'scousers' despite, as John Herson says, 'the fact that their roots lay further back than those of many of the city's white immigrants'.[63] Denying the long presence of black people in Liverpool, and England more generally, reflects what Barnor Hesse has called 'white amnesia'. Such amnesia 'repress[es] the historical context of racism' and produces a situation where, prior to the 1980s, there was virtually no official recognition of the daily and varying incidences of racial harassment.[64] As John Lennon, quoted in the epigraph to Part IV of *Seaport*, says, 'I don't know about the history [of Liverpool]' (p. 45).

This section of the sequence questions whether the Toxteth riots begin with the arrest of Leroy Cooper, the death of Charles Wotton, or with those first slaves brought to and transported through Liverpool. In this way

---

[62] Dave Ward, 'Putting Down Roots: An Interview with Levi Tafari', in *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007) pp. 252-264 (p. 255).
[63] John Herson, '"Stirring spectacles of cosmopolitan animation": Liverpool as a diasporic city, 1825-1913', in *The Empire in One City?: Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past*, ed. by Sheryllynne Haggerty, Anthony Webster and Nicholas J. White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 55-77 (p. 73).
[64] Barnor Hesse, 'White Governmentality: Urbanism, nationalism, racism', in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. by Sallie Westwood and John Williams (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 86-103 (pp. 87-88).

Hampson is fraying at the communal memory which enacts such 'amnesia', revealing ideas of Liverpool as a celebratory multicultural city to be a product of wilful misrememberings, designed to obscure the racist history of the city.

In *Seaport* one form of this forgetting is spatial, where the role of Liverpool as Britain's primary slave port (at one point forty-three percent of British slave ships originated from Liverpool) is eroded from communal (white) memory.[65] This is shown in Part I to be a material and historical process in which the docks themselves are concealed behind a '18 ft curtain-walls & castle-towers' which 'splits the docks from the dock-road', conveying what Hampson calls 'stronghold images' (p. 22).

Hampson shows that the riots are an enactment of a different kind of spatial remembering, an answer to white amnesia, the riot rewriting the memorialized spaces of the city as it physically deforms sites symbolic of capitalist and state power. 'July 1981' observes that 'the Charles Wooton Centre [...] did *not* burn in 1981' (p. 63). The poem then records those buildings that did burn down, specifically

> the Rialto
> owned by the Swainbank family
> (former tory city councillor)
> burned: July 5, 1981
>
> the Raquets Club
> [...]
> where judges stayed over

[65] Kenneth Morgan, 'Liverpool's Dominance in the British Slave Trade, 1740-1807', in *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, ed. by David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 14-42 (p. 14).

> Burned: July 5, 1981. (pp. 63-64)

The language maintains its seemingly empirical and objective status. However, as in the earlier parts of the sequence, minor graphical marks indicates the potential for an alternative, more subjectively and politically charged, reading. The italicized '*not*' when referring to the failure of the rioters to burn down the Charles Wooton Centre marks this event out for attention. In contrast, the Rialto and the Raquets Club were expressly targeted, the poem suggests, because of their associations with judges and politicians.

This is something explicitly recognized by some of the rioters themselves, as the anonymised 'David' says about the burning of the Raquets Club:

> Even now that makes me feel like "wow" — a private club for judges [...] These were the judges we the community knew were inherently racist [...] It was just shocking to think that you had this kind of over the top decadence in the middle of a deprived community with its lack of social housing, jobs, you know, people struggling to get by [.][66]

Hampson, then, is implicitly suggesting that the rioters had a very specific rationale for their violence, one born out of the longer social history symbolized by the murder of Charles Wooton. From the point of view of a white establishment that had forgotten this history, the riots could only be

---

[66] Diane Frost and Richard Phillips, *Liverpool '81: Remembering the Riots* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 105-106.

seen as dumb violence rather than the expression of people shaped by centuries of exploitation and degradation.

Liverpool City Council did not issue an official apology for the city's involvement in the slave trade until 1999, while a permanent slavery exhibition was only installed in the Maritime Museum at the Albert Docks in 1994. For Jacqueline Nassy Brown, who views Liverpool already as on the edge of the nation due to its history as a port, the decision that 'this "out-of-the-way-place" is where Britons should properly go to learn about slavery' is ambivalent at best, indicating a desire not to acknowledge the centrality of the slave trade to Britain's modern prosperity.[67] Coupled with the racially motivated murder of Anthony Walker in 2005, this suggests Liverpool still has some way to go in order to come to terms with its past and that Hampson's text is still a vital part of challenging the cultural and social memory of this North Atlantic seaport.

By grounding his investigation into 'the fabric / of these lives', in the 'palimpsest of / brick & tile' that emerges from 'Liverpool: the Carthage / of Britain's de-industrialisation' (p. 70) Hampson depicts the young black people of Toxteth not as mindless, violent, rioters but rather engaged in the spatial expression of what Christine Boyer describes as a need to establish 'counter-memories, resisting the dominant coding of images and representations and recovering differences that official memory has erased.'[68]

The use of Carthage by Hampson as a metaphor for Liverpool reflects the city's past glory: like Carthage was overtaken by Rome so Liverpool was overtaken by other ports. This is not a unique correlation on Hampson's part, the Liverpool-born poet Paul Farley also makes the same

---

[67] Jacqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 186.
[68] M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (London: MIT Press, 1996), p. 28.

association in his long poem 'Ports'. Here the city speaks for itself, drawing on both the celebratory (as in great classical city) and tragic associations of Carthage: 'because once I was Carthage / and still am in name, though like some poisoned inland sea / my horizons have shrunk to a port that handles zero tonnage' and 'I was Carthage, but nothing much comes or goes in this afterwards'.[69] Both poets convey a sense of the city as a kind of ruin, the modern economically depressed city haunted by the sentinels of earlier periods of wealth such as Pier Head and the Three Graces and, by implication, the sources of this wealth in the North Atlantic slave trade and the colonial project more generally.

According to Ricoeur '[i]f one wishes to avoid being stymied by a fruitless aporia, then one must hold in abeyance [...] the act of remembering and begin with the question "What?"'[70] This, to a large extent, is the process *Seaport* is engaged with. Hampson's focus is not on who is remembering but what the city of Liverpool remembers about itself, the texts that mediate this (from Defoe to Melville to Quentin Hughes) and how those rememberings shape the city and the lives of the people who live in it. The sequence's attention to the potential origins of the events in July 1981 and to the significance of the spatial activity and symbolism of the rioters emerges out of the long durée of the sequence.

While engaging with the spaces and history of an entire city means Hampson's representation of coastal and littoral geography in these poems is less immediately dramatic than Riley or Mulford such geography plays no less an important role in the poem. Not only does the coastal geography help shape the form of the sequence but, by emphasising the estuarine quality of Liverpool as a site of penetration and exchange, open to the

---

[69] Paul Farley, 'Ports', *Field Recordings* (London: Donut Press, 2009), pp. 12-20 (pp. 12-13).
[70] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p. 3.

world beyond itself, *Seaport* challenges cultural representations of the riots as a solely urban problem, suggesting how a poetry about cities needs to be more attentive to the divergent spatialities urban landscapes emerge from.

'ocean-minded streets': Bootle in the Poetry of Matt Simpson

If Hampson takes the long view of Liverpool's history then Matt Simpson's approach is much more intimate. The most dominant focus is the relationship of Simpson to his father as experienced in and through the working-class streets of Bootle. Though the interest in the relationship of father and son means that recollections of Bootle are carried out through personal memory, it is nonetheless exposed to the wider social contexts outlined in Hampson. As such Simpson's poetry is an account of his own unease in the working class world of his father and a series of elegies for a way of life that no longer exists as the docks suffer various declines.

Simpson published his first pamphlet in 1971 and his first collection, *Making Arrangements*, in 1982. A selected poems was produced in 1990 titled *An Elegy for the Galosherman* (from this point forward *Elegy*) and following this there was a more regular stream of published work. This section will demonstrate the various ways the poems of *Elegy* explore the interconnections of memory, home and place, looking particularly at how Simpson's recollection of the dockland streets of Bootle explores both a desire to return home and, at the same time, mark all the ways in which he is excluded from this neighbourhood.

Intimate scales of family memory, spatialised in cramped working class streets, are exposed to the potentialities of oceanic space embodied by the maritime culture of the docks, unsettling notions of place as bounded and secure. Simpson's poetry, it will be argued, shows how

coastal notions of marginality and connection can at once bring vastly different locales into contact (for Simpson that is Bootle, Tasmania and Canada) but also reinforce separation and exclusion. Simpson's father was prevented from sailing while Simpson removed himself from this particular, intense spatiality by a decision to pursue higher education at the University of Cambridge.

Emphasising the geographical importance in Simpson's work the opening poem of *Elegy* is titled 'Directions'. It is placed outside the groupings that structure the collection ('All at 231', 'Collecting Beetles', 'Dead Baiting' and 'Village in Heaven') suggesting the poem is a precondition for the writing to come as well as an introduction to the concerns of the collection as whole. 'Directions' depicts the Merseyside of Simpson's childhood, still struggling to recover from the destruction of the Second World War: '[w]ith a war to forget, we grew up / on what was left of something, weeds / on battered grounds where houses once had stood'.[71] The poem suggests both a sense of possibility and aimlessness, coming-up 'among strewn bricks' and the 'lamp-posts you could swing on' (p. 12). This directionless swinging (round and round as opposed to towards or away) is echoed in the poem's depiction of the 'irascible dock' as both 'a centripetal spin into a vicious hug of iron' and 'a centrifugal jerk to outer space' (p. 12). The movement of the child at play becomes the violent adult movements of Simpson's estrangement from home, resulting either in a 'vicious hug' or a 'jerk' into the unmarked and unfamiliar abstraction of empty space.

The spatial arrangement of the docks, and an estuarine geography that opens out into the Irish Sea and then the North Atlantic, is, in

---

[71] Matt Simpson, *An Elegy for the Galosherman: New and Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p. 12. Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.

Simpson, a constant presence. The docks are always physically in view, the houses are full of mementos of earlier journeys and the sea informs much of daily life. Yet, as 'Directions' establishes, this does not simply offer up a horizon of flight and freedom, there is also a sense of constriction and suffocation, in part reflecting Simpson's own unease in these surroundings. This is something another Liverpudlian poet, Robert McGough, hints at with his description that 'we live in a city that looks out to the sea, and we feel cut off by land'.[72]

The poem 'Bootle Streets' embodies a lot of this thinking. Here the salt winds hitting Bootle from the docks 'keep these ocean-minded streets / voyaging' (p. 60). In the poem Simpson also acknowledges how much the experience of the sea has marked former sailors, almost as if to suggest they are now unsuited for a life completely on land:

> There are men here who, landlubbered
> (wedded, winded, ulcered out), still walk as if
> steel decks were rolling underfoot:
> [...]
> insisting on
> manhood and sweet memories. (p. 60)

This ambivalence between land and sea is echoed in 'My Grandmother's African Grey'. The object of interest in this poem is a parrot brought home by Simpson's father, 'his proof / of Africa and emblem of the family pride' (p. 14). Yet the parrot senses both its own displacement and the wider unease of belonging in Bootle, nipping out its feathers in an act of self-mutilation until 'it looked / like poultry obscenely undead' (p. 14). Through

---

[72] Roger McGough, 'Keep your charity to yourselves - we are proud to be Scousers', *Daily Mail*, 2 October 1998, p. 11.

these representations of ambiguous settlement, men more suited to the fluctuating space of sea than the firm ground of the terrestrial, a dock that both pulls people in and repels them, the Bootle that Simpson conveys is one of constant unease, an experience and idea of place that is never quite settled.

Simpson also writes about the docks in terms of his relationship with his father. In 'Home' Simpson recalls how he has 'listened to / dragged furniture, smashed plates; / I've heard him spit my name at her' (p. 25). Here the ambivalent violence of the docks is also present in the childhood home. This encounter with an aggressive masculine working class identity, grounded in the hard labour of the port, produces the parenthetical acknowledgement that '(I'll never feel at home again)' in the poem 'Local' (p. 49). Simpson's unease at belonging is not simply a product of stressed family relations but predicated on the production of a kind of toxic masculinity which links home and docks.

Yet the poems also display a generosity to Simpson's father, understanding that he too, prevented from sailing by an ulcer, confronted with a son who would not follow in his own footsteps, part of a working class life that was disappearing as the docks suffered from economic changes, was stunted in his own way. In 'Family' Simpson writes:

> all the grim estrangements
> in his life:
> an ulcer
> brought home with his conscience
> from the war which banished him
> from ships that steamed beyond
> the river mouth

[...]

he looked
that cut-above-the-rest
they knew his wife to be
but puzzled over in the son
who wore a treachery,
the impudence of knowledge in his eyes. (p. 29)

This poem extends a degree of empathy towards the father, the use of 'estrangements' to describe his life drawing a parallel to the estrangements the poems of *Elegy* explore more generally. It also reconfigures the experience of the docks presented in 'My Grandmother's African Grey', recalling the contrasting jerks of 'Directions'. Not only are the docks a source of the exotic and unusual, a chance to escape, if only briefly, the narrow streets of Bootle, they become, in this poem, a symbol of a past life which is now denied. Just as ships steam 'beyond / the river mouth' that life now lies beyond Simpson's father, leaving him isolated in a place and situation he, like Simpson, feels uncomfortable in.

'Family' sees Simpson describe his 'treachery', the decision not to follow his father into shipping and instead go off to study English at Cambridge, as also deeply tied into dockland streets. There is a sense that whatever his father gained from life at sea, the same conditions did not exist for Simpson. That, as 'An Adenoidal Letter to a Former Classmate' puts it:

The docks
are emptying. Here's one drained,
a good-for-nothing siltscape glistening

[...]

a warehouse where a masochistic wind

cuts itself to pieces on smashed panes.

What's left is just another place

for dying in (p. 35.)

The earlier geography of wealth and power becomes an indication of the economic struggles of the city, that Merseyside is a place that people need to leave to get on in life.

In contrast, other poems make the betrayal of his class background more explicit. In 'Latin Master', the young Simpson's working class identity becomes corrupted by the eponymous teacher:

He altered all our history,

until the sea

seemed to lose its dragging power

and we learned to hate our dockland streets

and know ourselves barbarian.

His Latin verbs put me to work

inside the fort,

made turncoat of me in the end. (p. 37)

This idea of a 'turncoat' language implicates, by extension, the very form (poetry) he is using to try and make sense of his alienation as a source for that experience of dislocation.

It is noticeable how the growing distaste for his working class origins in 'Latin Master' is marked in terms of a psychic rejection of, and

distancing from, the geography of Bootle: a hatred of those ocean-minded dockland streets, the weakening of the ambivalent pull of the docks that allows Simpson to briefly escape to Cambridge. At the same time, the varying length of the lines seem to recall and enact the very dragging power of the sea the speaker in part mourns, suggesting that, even if local dialect was superseded by 'Latin verbs', something of the estuarine landscape of Bootle remains as a powerful presence in Simpson's writing.

For Edward Casey 'we "build up" memories [...] get "stuck" in them.'[73] Yet this characteristic of being 'stuck' in memories does not mean that Simpson's poems are focused to an exclusive degree on his own childhood. In their own way they recall the penetration and presence of the docks depicted in *Seaport*, reaching out through the prism of personal experience to the social and historical concerns which are Hampson's focus. In recalling his own uncomfortable relationship to ideas of home Simpson is also marking the decline of the maritime culture from which he himself feels alienated. At the same time, he sees in his decision to leave working class Bootle to pursue university education an odd echo of his father's own sea voyages.

Getting There: Geographies of Transnational Reconciliation

The relationship of memory and geography in Simpson's *Elegy for the Galosherman* sets the template for how he writes about these concerns in later collections. In the poem 'Shore Leave', from *Catching Up With History* (1995), Simpson characterises himself as a sailor, describing returning to the city as going 'ashore'. Yet this metaphorical relationship between the father's life at sea and his son's orientation to the place of his birth is as

[73] Casey, *Remembering*, p. 195.

much an act of reinforcing distance as it is a recognition of a shared emotional experience, the city remaining a brief moment of landfall among longer passages of voyage. Despite drawing on the maritime character of the Bootle docks, Simpson remains alienated from his home, noting that '[f]or all / they say of home, it's where you're used / to being more than any other place.'[74]

If this is the general approach Simpson takes to issues of home and belonging, the final part of this chapter will focus on two poems that mark Simpson's attempts to reconcile his uncomfortable relationship with his father and his unease in remembering his working class neighbourhood of Bootle. The first is 'To Tom in Canada' from *Elegy* and the other is 'A Long Way from Home' from the 2001 collection *Getting There*. For Simpson this partial reconciliation is only possible by expanding the spatial imaginary of Bootle out along the transnational routes of movement and emigration which have historically shaped experiences of the region, routes which are predicated on earlier patterns of colonial expansion implicitly present in *Seaport*.

While the relationship between Simpson and his father has been central to thinking about Simpson's own fraught relationship to the coastal geography of his childhood, the father in 'To Tom in Canada' is actually the dying parent of an old friend. Despite this, the poem is vital to understanding Simpson's wider project of reconciliation. Simpson himself actively recognises the role of memory in his poetry and how it shapes his interactions with the place he is from; that 'my past needed coming to terms with if I was to understand the person I had become'.[75]

---

[74] Matt Simpson, 'Shore Leave', *Collected Poems* (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2011) pp. 170-171 (p. 171).
[75] Matt Simpson, 'Voices, Accents, Histories: "The place a memory, the memory a place."', in *Liverpool Accents: Seven Poets and a City*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp. 165-169 (p. 166).

In an essay from the prose collection *Hugging the Shore*, Simpson writes of how a series of important events coincided: in 1973 his father died, in 1976 Simpson turned forty, and on a routine Christmas trip to Bootle he discovered a family friend's father was seriously ill. 'It was my friend's return "home" for the funeral that triggered the re-evaluation', Simpson notes, and it was then 'I started to contemplate what I had become, what kind of person I was, in terms of my background and history [...] how much my father was contained in me'.[76] From these events we get the poem 'To Tom in Canada' which provides what Frank Kermode calls the 'turn', 'the point from which all can be seen to cohere [...] that makes the writer, in his own eyes at any rate, worth writing about as a single person'.[77]

The first half of the poem depicts a casual journey Simpson made, with his daughter, to visit the old-friend's father, expecting his daughter to experience a sense of the 'house I'd once / learnt love in'. However the old man is found in a perilous state: '[h]is skin was bruised like windfall fruit, / bronchitis rattled at his throat.' The poem's narrator admits to his friend that he 'should / have written then' but in his defence proffers 'but shock's a thing / the heart will hoard.' Here there is a creeping sense of the self-disdain that is part of Simpson's fraught relationship with the past. The lines 'No longer / belonging, we looked official, parked / in the old-rope grey of that cold street' (p. 34) seem a clear acknowledgment of Simpson's own sense of how he no longer fits into the geography of his childhood.

The poem admits that time changes things, the swing of a clock's pendulum effectively cutting the poem in half and switching the focus to

---

[76] Matt Simpson, 'Departures and Arrivals', *Hugging the Shore* (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2003), pp. 184-191 (pp. 187-188).
[77] Frank Kermode, 'Palaces of Memory', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 3-13 (p. 9).

the after-effects of the funeral and the speaker's engagement with Tom, who is no longer in Canada but back among the estuarine, Mersey landscape of both his and Simpson's youth. The final stanza suggests an impetus for this strained and tense remembering: 'Love does this / to all of us'. Not just reflecting the pain of mourning, the lines suggest a breakdown of love in Bootle. As Simpson writes elsewhere about his poems, '[i]f anything, what I chart in my poems is failures of love and some of the things that get in the way of our loving each other.'[78] This sense of lives that are prevented from loving, brutalised by the harshness of working-class life, is tied intimately to the region's estuarine geography, the speaker asking '[a]s we walked the Esplanade, / did you feel it sharpening' (p. 34)?

The act of sharpening is ambivalent. Not only is it a question over whether the esplanade is actually sharpening but if it is doing so is it sharpening to a point or is the esplanade sharpening along the edge, keeping the speaker on land and enclosed within the streets of his Bootle upbringing? That the speaker asks this question implies that it may be happening to him and not to Tom, reflecting how the poems in *Elegy* are unable to access the freedom of flight, away from place, away from history and upbringing, which Tom and his life in Canada symbolises. For Simpson this is not a historic experience of transportation but something that still informs the feelings and associations Bootle generates in his writing. Tom's journey from Canada places the poem within a web of movements towards and away from Liverpool which creates a landscape of memory and feeling that, though centred on Merseyside, stretches around the world. To consider Liverpool as a port is not just to engage with the city, or its

[78] Simpson, 'Voices, Accents, Histories', pp. 168-169.

hinterlands, but also its frontiers, those places across the world where emigrants from Liverpool journeyed to.

If 'To Tom in Canada' presents one element of the flows of people that pass in and out of the region (and of the way memories of them stick around even when people have left), Simpson's work also explores other journeys. Parallel to flows of emigration and immigration are the journeys of the sailors themselves to far flung parts of the world. Though Simpson himself never went to sea he finds this yearning for the ocean, and by extension voyage and travel, is an 'inheritance passed on to us by a city' which was once more vibrant, something which is 'therefore part of my make-up'.[79] This reflects John Henson's work on the impact Liverpool's mobile population had on the city's image of itself:

> Even more important, perhaps, were Liverpool's own transient migrants — the sailors and other workers who went overseas but returned to home [...] There were tens of thousands down the years, and their experience of other countries and cultures must have had a small influence on their own identities and been an element in the city's evolving culture.[80]

If the poems of *Elegy* record this in the parrots and knickknacks that fill Bootle's terraced houses, it is only in his later poetry that Simpson is able to engage, both physically and emotionally, with this aspect of his inheritance, following in his maritime father's footsteps by going to Tasmania.

This process is detailed in poems from 1998's *Cutting the Clouds Towards*. Simpson found himself in Tasmania because he was offered a

---

[79] Simpson, 'Voices, Accents, Histories', p. 167.
[80] Herson, '"Stirring spectacles of cosmopolitan animation"', p. 74.

poetry residence at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art gallery in Launceston in 1994.[81] The location of the residency was fortuitous for Simpson because his father had visited Tasmania as a sailor: '[w]hen he mentioned Hobart, however, there was always a special twinkle in my father's eye that suggested other kinds of romantic experience.'[82] This offered Simpson a chance for a sense of resolution to the emotional pain detailed in *Elegy*, a resolution grounded in a spatial re-enactment of his father's life, a re-joining of the separated traumatic locale of Bootle and the exotic othered spaces offered by these maritime voyages. As Simpson puts it, Tasmania 'was also in a special sense the place my psyche and poetry had always been heading for [...] Suddenly there was the possibility of achieving - or partly achieving - some kind of resolution, making a kind of arrival.'[83]

While the poems that concern Tasmania appear in *Cutting the Clouds Towards* the poem that acts as a conclusion to the arc started by 'To Tom in Canada' is titled 'A Long Way From Home' and appears in *Getting There*. The poem is dedicated 'for Tom in Canada' and Simpson acknowledges that '[i]f the poem in the first book called *To Tom in Canada* is the pivotal one I've suggested, then *A Long Way from Home* can be said to complete a circle.'[84] 'A Long Way From Home' provides both an overview to the experiences explored in *Elegy* and also moves them on.

Where 'To Tom in Canada' was spurred by the death of Tom's Father, 'A Long Way From Home' starts with the death of Tom's mother. The poem opens with a description of Tom's garden where 'you showed me / where you'd put / your mother's ashes, Tom', the 'guttering bushfire / of

---

[81] Matt Simpson, 'A Poetry Residency in Tasmania — the story behind *Cutting the Clouds Towards*', *Hugging the Shore*, pp. 202-212 (p. 202).
[82] Matt Simpson, 'To Tasmania with Mrs Meredith', *Hugging the Shore*, pp. 196-201 (p. 196).
[83] Simpson, 'A Poetry Residency in Tasmania', p. 202.
[84] Simpson, 'Departures and Arrivals', pp. 190-191.

orange flower-heads' depicted as being 'at odds with / the gravitational / down-drag of earth'.[85] This image is suggestive of hope, that a proper space for coming to terms with the past and for remembrance is almost enough to counter the more general downward inflection of aging.

The next section is entitled 'Home' and seems to encapsulate the feelings raised in the poems from *Elegy*, that home is 'not where you / belong [...] streets left behind / where first we learn how hard it is to love, the ground of betrayals' (p. 348). Similarly, the section entitled 'The Leaving of Liverpool' (also the title of Part IV of *Seaport*, suggesting the prominence of ideas of emigration to the city's self-image) recapitulates ideas of education and class betrayal from the earlier poems: 'Talk of diaspora! All those friends of ours that education took / abroad' (p. 349). Even here the transition to 'abroad' is ambivalent, the line break allowing a series of more sinister implications connected to the idea of taken (taken away, taken against their will?) to play in the pause before 'abroad'. This reflects that the transoceanic spaces associated with Liverpool were not always a cause for celebration.[86]

However, in a sign of the partial reconciliation Simpson shows towards his own past, this diaspora of the educated is placed in the wider history of emigration that has shaped the communities and lived experiences of the region, a sentiment that was absent or only partially there in earlier work: '[y]et they were only doing what this restless city's

---

[85] Matt Simpson, 'A Long Way From Home', *Collected Poems*, pp. 347-350, p. 347.

[86] 'The Leaving of Liverpool' is also the title of a notable folk-song, collected in America in the late 1930s or early 1940s. The song is a sailor's lament for the love he is leaving behind on a long trip to California. Despite its title, the song itself is seemingly dismissive about the sailor's relationship to the city he is leaving, the song's refrain being the lines 'It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me / But my darling when I think of thee'. As such, its use by Hampson and Simpson is both an acknowledgment of the mark left in the cultural memory by Liverpool's role as a North Atlantic port and reflective of both poets' ambivalent relationship to Liverpool as a site of uncomplicated belonging.

always done: / ship out' (p. 349). Simpson now more clearly refigures his own sense of betrayal not as abandoning his home and his class background but rather as his own enactment of the departures and returns that have shaped life in, and cultural images of, Liverpool for centuries.

The final section begins by reaffirming that whatever reconciliation is achieved it is still part of a larger experience of shifting and uncertain geographies, that the urn of Tom's dead mother is

> letting us know
> we are always
> in between
> something or other:
>
> take-off and landing,
> shifting deck and solid quay (p. 350)

These lines encapsulate Simpson's attitude towards place and the idea of home in particular, the shifting deck and solid quay (the tension between movement and solidity), recalls the 'ocean-minded streets' of *Elegy*, pointing both out, towards the mouth of the estuary, and anchoring one in place. Much like Hampson, although at the scale of individual and family life, Simpson's understanding of Liverpool is, in the final instance, shaped by notions of landfall and departure.

In this last stanza Simpson is only able to reconcile his feelings of deracination and a desire to recognise something of home in Bootle by, ultimately, changing the terrain on which 'home' is understood. After he journeys back into his own memories and reflections on the ambivalent and violent Bootle streets of his childhood, and his journey in his father's footsteps to Tasmania, Simpson decides that home is not necessarily the

geographical location of birth or childhood but is, finally, where 'the heart, / among familiar things, / comes at last to rest' (p. 350). This reworks the more critical sense of home as merely the site one happens to occupy the most from 'Shore Leave' into a more positive and relational understanding of belonging .

Whether marking his own alienation, the larger decline of working class maritime culture in Bootle, or tracing his father's footsteps for some sense of reconciliation, place in Simpson (and the memory of it) is always on the move, never settled. As 'Directions' establishes, the force of Bootle and the docks is both centripetal and centrifugal. Such ambivalence is a product of a dockland geography which offers a constant, if unfulfilled, sense of escape and flight.

If other chapters have seen ideas of place at the coastline become fluid and dynamic, here it is the desire for place-making itself (instead of a sense of a particular place) which is reformulated. It is not that Simpson returns to a version of Bootle which is fluid and unbounded (in a sense it has always had something of this quality), rather Simpson now views himself, the memories he is in a sense a product of, his relation to ideas of home, as the aspect which has become mobile, situated hesitantly, but not necessarily disastrously, 'in between / something or other' (p. 350).

Where Hampson's investigation of memory and space frays historical accounts of Liverpool, Simpson's memories of elsewheres (both the adventurous maritime spaces denied to his father and the differentiated social and cultural spaces of Cambridge) seem to fray Bootle itself. As Simpson notes in the poem 'Blossom Street', '[i]t is myself / I am compiling, re-arranging a town / for reasons I don't understand' (p. 75). In Simpson's poetry memories of Bootle are also memories of opportunities not taken and of the people who left for other countries and other ways of life. By enacting his own kind of departure from the geography of

Merseyside in the later poems Simpson is able to engage in some form of reconciliation with his past. At the same time it is important to reinforce that Bootle itself never quite leaves him, entangled in these transnational spaces of emigrants and sailors as much as these elsewheres haunt the declining dockland.

Conclusion

John Belchem, in outlining the difficulty of urban regeneration in the early 1990s, writes that, in contrast to the image of the 'scouser', Liverpool's past is not well-known.[87] As such the work of both Hampson and Simpson can be seen as engaged in important work of recovering the history of Liverpool, particularly as a port city. For Hampson, this takes the form of an engagement with a wealth of historical sources, from the non-fiction accounts of Defoe, Hughes and Coleman to John Lennon's *Playboy* interview and Melville's semi-biographical novel *Redburn*. The manipulation of this material within the field of the poem, the repurposing of prose through the spacing of material across the page, and the use of graphical markers to suggest quotation and stress is a process of self-reflexivity, questioning claims of objectivity inherent in these discourses.

In this way Hampson's poem enacts what Ann Curthoys and John Docker outline as the modern search for historic truth that 'brings with it not a rejection but rather a greater awareness of the cultural specificity and the necessary limitations of historical practice. A self-conscious recognition of the fictive elements in historical writing'.[88]

---

[87] John Belchem, 'Introduction: the Peculiarities of Liverpool', in *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), pp. 1-20 (p. 1).
[88] Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* 2nd edn (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), p. 6.

At the same time this fraying and reassembling of historical sources is shown to be intimately tied up with the shifting spatiality of Liverpool from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Not only does the changing geography of the estuary demand a writing attentive to those flows and alterations, it requires a poetic practice amenable to tracing and representing the historical restrictions embodied in the evolving spatialisation of the city, able to capture the spatial amnesia, the physical locking away of the port behind walls and the discursive obfuscation of the city's role in transatlantic slavery.

Simpson, in his own way, is also engaged with tracing '[m]emories and places. A jumbled itinerary / of journeying undergone' (p. 75). In contrast with Hampson, Simpson's focus is on the intimate interconnection of family and home, and how remembering these moments affect efforts in the present to belong, the space memories having to knit together stretched across oceans and continents.

In *An Elegy for the Galosherman* Simpson depicts a child's coming into awareness of his surroundings inflected by the malaise of the adult alienated from home. The poems follow the leaving of the childish myth of the made up 'galosherman' behind and entry into a violent, masculine milieu of docklands and bombed-out streets criss-crossed and scored by Simpson's own sense of class betrayal.

The transnational spatial imaginary of Canada and Tasmania provides an elsewhere to Simpson's memories of Bootle, adding to the unsettled relationship to home found in the poems of *Elegy*. This category of the spatial 'elsewhere' in both Simpson and Hampson is simultaneously a particular kind of spatial relation and a geographic imaginary which places a desire for home alongside a yearning for experiences beyond the everyday. It is at once speculative and real (the exotic space that haunts some of Simpson's poems but also the material geographies of global sea

voyages), and a space which is mobile and disruptive in contrast to the implied stability and familiarity of home. It is how Bootle is made unstable, the landscape shifting not just with the roll of the tides but also through the penetration of confined working class streets by exotic relics and memories of other places, and it is the shadowy presence of Africa and North America (with their implications of colonial brutality, the slave trade and economic deprivation) in *Seaport* which contributes to Hampson's unpicking of historical narratives over the development of Liverpool.

As George J. Milne acutely observes, 'the maritime history of Liverpool has usually been written separately from its urban history, and the port and the city tend to appear in different books.'[89] This separation of port from city (what Paul Farley has noted as the damage done when '"city" became standard instead of "port"')[90] also occurs in critical writing on Liverpool's poetry. While Barry's writing on Simpson and Hampson remains a valuable source of criticism for these poets there is, nevertheless, an almost total absence of thinking about how the port, the North Atlantic, and the interrelation of landfalls and departures shapes these poetic responses to Liverpool.

Barry reads Simpson terrestrially, in relation to Wordsworth and national landscape; that in being alienated from Bootle 'the poet receives England'.[91] While there is a through-line from Simpson's work to Wordsworth's, especially if drawn through the Cumbrian poet Norman Nicholson, the claim his deracination delivered him access to a sense of Englishness seems more spurious. If anything, Simpson obsesses over Liverpool and questions of home, inheritance and lineage, his poems

---

[89] Graeme J. Milne, 'Maritime Liverpool', in *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 257-309 (p. 257).
[90] Farley, 'Ports', p. 15.
[91] Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City*, p. 154.

covering similar ground again and again. Like with Hampson's tracing of the penetration of slavery into the spatial configuration of the city, it is only by recognising and taking into account the transnational spatialities of Bootle that Simpson can make sense of who he is and where he has come from, that notion of address which is so crucial to *Seaport*. In turn this enlarges the scope through which the poetry of Liverpool is often geographically understood, seeing both Hampson and Simpson preserving and refining the unsettling coastal ambivalence of Liverpool as somewhere else, never quite solely an English city.

Chapter Four: Waste and Sustainability in the Littoral Poetry of Robert Minhinnick

In previous chapters representations of the coastline in contemporary British poetry have been traced from the individual, domestic scale of Peter Riley's *Sea Watches* to the regional framing of Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence*, and the tension between local and transnational space in Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson. This final chapter will build on the movement between a familiar sense of place and spaces of global circulation and transmission to explore the shifting territorial anxieties that are exhibited in the littoral poetry of the Anglo-Welsh poet Robert Minhinnick. This chapter will argue that, in tracing the development of place in Minhinnick's poetry over his entire career, it is possible to see how questions of inhabitation and sustainability have become increasingly inflected by notions of the planetary.

The particular focus this takes will be an examination of the changing ways Minhinnick employs rubbish and waste as it washes up on the South Wales coastline. As Kimberley Patton notes, 'despite the environmental data, we […] continue to behave as though we do not need to account for our actions toward the sea'.[1] Rubbish, is, however, more than just the evidence of contemporary ecological damage. It is also a way for thinking about 'connections amongst the variety of hidden, forgotten, thrown away, and residual phenomena that attend life at all times'.[2] Thinking about how things become rubbish is a way of thinking about how society decides how objects, people and places take on and lose value.

---

[1] Kimberley Patton, *Sea Can Wash Away All Evils* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 2.
[2] John Scanlan, *On Garbage* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), p. 8.

Minhinnick's use of rubbish has not stayed static in his poetry. Writing in 1987, Jeremy Hooker identifies Minhinnick's poetry as being characterised by a 'sense of self and of its relation to his native ground'.[3] As such images of rubbish in the early poems are constrained to this national focus. In contrast, Minhinnick's later poems explore how anxieties about the (linguistic, politic, geographic) frontiers of Anglo-Welsh experience are now global in their resonances and as such the connotations of waste and rubbish in the writing become more expansive.

Rubbish brings the poems into contact with environmental discourses both as a material form of pollution and as symbolic of wider issues of value, worth and care, qualities which are fundamental to any kind of serious ecological project. Minhinnick has long been interested in political environmentalism, as evident by his involvement with organisations such as Friends of the Earth Cymru.[4] His poetry has also been noted for its ecological interest, particularly in terms of the relation between the human and nonhuman. A review of his third collection, *Life Sentences*, notes that Minhinnick 'is fascinated by regions in which the human and inhuman touch, in which the mechanical intrudes upon, and may achieve unexpected relations with, the natural'.[5]

Minhinnick's writing also reflects ideas put forward by Timothy Morton who suggests an ecological thought 'without worlds'. This formation of the ecological resists the classic culture/nature distinction in which nature is that thing over 'there', rather saying that 'thinking ecologically

---

[3] Jeremy Hooker, *The Presence of the Past: Essays on Modern British and American Poetry* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1987), p. 181.
[4] Robert Minhinnick, interviewed by Sam Adams (Carcanet Press, 1997) <http://www.carcanet.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?showdoc=14;doctype=interview>
[5] Richard Poole, 'Natural Elegies', *PN Review*, 10.3 (January-February, 1984), 78-79 (p. 78).

abolishes distance, what remains is intimacy with all life forms'.[6] This adds another dimension to working through Minhinnick's relation to experience of geographical scales. The poetry does not just chart an expansion away from the national towards the global, but also an inverse telescopic movement in which global processes are linked with the functioning of smaller units of matter. It is in this mixing of human and nonhuman, an awareness of how the cultural is already always deeply imbricated with the ecological, and the way this affects understandings of place, that Minhinnick can be understood as an ecological poet.[7]

Rethinking the material experiences of tides and shore, building off notions of the coast as a shifting assemblage of processes and agents (each with their own temporal and spatial rhythms), exposes how the ecological anxieties of the poetry work alongside its territorial ones. Here, the border quality of Anglo-Welsh experience finds a match in the liminal character of the beach, this chapter developing an understanding of the poems in which the territorial and ecological are altered by exposure to ambivalent littoral terrain and the transgressive potential of the waste that washes up there.

For Christopher Bear this opens up the spaces of the shore to considerations of the ecological not just in terms of the responsibility of the human to the nonhuman but in terms of a challenge to an anthropocentric understanding of humanity's relationship to the natural world. As Bear says in regards to his own work concerning scallop fishing in Cardigan Bay, '[i]f

---

[6] Timothy Morton, 'Coexistence and Coexistents: Ecology without a World', in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, ed. by. Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby (London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 169-180 (p. 169).

[7] Ecological in the sense defined by Arne Naess, which is contrasted favourably to an environmentalism which is understood as human-centred, short-term and bureaucratic. See Naess, 'The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects', in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. by George Sessions (London: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 64-84, (pp. 66-67).

human activity within these boundaries can be policed, nonhuman actants may show no similar respect.'[8]

This chapter will begin by elaborating a critical and theoretical understanding of waste and rubbish. This will be followed by an exploration of the ways Minhinnick's earlier poetry negotiates issues of rubbish at the South Wales coastline, focusing particularly on the 1985 collection *The Dinosaur Park*. Subsequently, attention will shift to the later collections *After the Hurricane* and *King Driftwood* to see how the use of rubbish is developed in a more global context.

By looking at the way Minhinnick explores these poems' environmental anxieties it is possible to trace how the transgressive aspects of waste inform an imaginative stance towards the world in which instability and ambivalence are threaded through human experiences of habitation, and questions of sustainability (the sustainability not just of place but of self and language) become immediate and pressing.

Rubbish Theory

For John Scanlan rubbish 'is everywhere'. Yet, despite this omnipresence, it remains 'largely invisible to most of us', at least within the bounds of daily life.[9] To show how this leftover matter can prompt reflection on the functions of contemporary society, and such thinking's relevance to Minhinnick, this section will look at three different aspects of waste. First, attention will be paid to the material production of waste, particularly waste's relation to modern economic systems. There will then be an exploration of waste as a metaphor for more abstract processes. This

---

[8] Christopher Bear, 'Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery', *Cultural Geographies*, 20.1 (2012), 21-41 (p. 28).
[9] Scanlan, *On Garbage*, p. 13.

section will conclude by demonstrating the relevance of waste to the coastline and ideas of sustainability in the tensions between local and global experiences of place.

The act of wasting, in many respects, is part of the natural rhythms of life and death. As Susan Strasser explains, 'throughout the world, harvest and funerary customs include ways of dealing with excess that keeps it out of the trash.'[10] This implies that there is a qualitative difference between waste and rubbish, that waste is not only a natural product of living but is something which can be reincorporated into cycles of life and death. Rubbish is that which exceeds these rhythms, material that cannot be incorporated back into processes of social reproduction. There is also a problem of language, perspective and power here: what one social group views as a natural by-product of daily life may be classed as rubbish by another. Similarly, that which one group views as useless another may find productive; these distinctions are in part formed and mediated by wider social relations and cultural ideas of value and cleanliness.

According to Greg Kennedy, in pre-industrial societies objects often had to have a sense of being worn out before they were thrown away. This seems to have changed with the emergence of modern consumer capitalism. In describing the ways in which a polystyrene cup is deemed disposable, Kennedy notes that 'the polystyrene cup looks no different after the consumption of its coffee than before […] Before consumption, the cup was a marketable and desirable commodity; after, it is only trash.'[11] While we may question how desirable the cup was initially, it is the case that the

---

[10] Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), p. 4.
[11] Greg Kennedy, *An Ontology of Trash* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. xv.

cup has not been worn out, is perfectly reusable, and yet is now viewed as rubbish.

Kennedy finds that this easy disposability, the freedom from taking care of things, is the end design of consumer capitalism: '"[c]arefreeness" is the real promise of technology, and its real fulfilment is trash' (p. 122). Here ecological anxieties cross with notions of waste and rubbish at a more profound level than simply an opposition to pollution. In the 1980s, Bill Devall and George Sessions defined what they call 'deep ecology' as 'a way of developing a new balance and harmony between individuals, communities and all of Nature.'[12] Ecological impulses structured around a profound sense of care towards the environment are antagonistic to an economic system which promotes a radical carelessness, and in which the world itself may be allowed to go to waste.

This sense of the intimate relationship of waste to larger processes of economic production and organisation, that not only do industries produce raw waste in the manufacture of goods but that these goods themselves are destined to end up as only so much rubbish, reflects how much of modern life is structured around the accumulation and disposal of waste. As the character Detweiler says in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*:

> cities rose on garbage, inch by inch, gaining elevation through the decades as buried debris increased […] It pushed into every space available, dictating construction patterns and altering systems of ritual […] People were compelled to develop an organized response. This meant they had to come up with a resourceful means of disposal and build a social structure to carry it out - workers,

[12] Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1985), p. 7.

managers, haulers, scavengers. Civilization is built, history is driven[13]

Yet such processes are deemed invisible by those with economic and social power, the task of dealing with rubbish displaced onto the poor (themselves often conceived of as being less than, a kind of social waste), particularly in the global south.[14]

The prominence of waste and rubbish within modern processes of consumption and accumulation emerges not just from their material functions but from their symbolic impact. According to Scanlan, talk of waste 'generally foregrounds a concern with ends, outcomes or consequences'. Such material also 'helps to organize the boundary between order and disorder across various aspects of experience' and, importantly, how 'order and disorder determine each other'.[15]

Scanlan's reflections on waste's function in a moral economy of the good and proper draws on the earlier work of anthropologist Mary Douglas. In *Purity and Danger*, Douglas writes that '[r]eflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, and life to death'.[16] Waste and rubbish, therefore, provide both metaphor and material practice for the picking apart and examining of systems of order and disorder at various levels of existence. More radical is the suggestion that any consideration of dirt or waste is unable to stop at the level of the material, Douglas writing that the 'idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism' (p. 36). The experience of waste

---

[13] Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (London: Picador, 1997), p. 287.
[14] 'Introduction', in *Economies of Recycling: The Global Transformation of Materials, Values and Social Relations*, ed. by Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno (London: Zed Books, 2012), pp. 1-32 (pp. 19-21).
[15] Scanlan, *On Garbage*, pp. 22, 41-42.
[16] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 2, 6.

cannot be disassociated from its symbolic and metaphysical functions, often because such functions are integral to the physical treatment of waste in the first place.

Michael Thompson suggests that '[f]or the social order to be maintained there has to be some measure of agreement as to what is of value'. Yet Thompson finds that rubbish itself is able to move between categories of usefulness and waste, upsetting these boundaries and, potentially, the social order.[17] This disruptive quality, at both the symbolic and material level, is teased out by Greg Garrard in his analysis of environmental tropes. Garrard notes that 'until the seventeenth century' the concept of pollution 'denoted moral contamination of a person', but such an 'interior or subjective definition was gradually transformed into an exterior or objective – in fact, specifically environmental – definition between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries'.[18] In tracing the historical development of the word's linguistic meaning, Garrard shows how a concept like pollution is able to move between the categories of inside and outside, personal and social, and subjective and objective.

This transgressive characteristic (which resonates with the idea of the shore as a space which both establishes binaries of land and sea, life and death, but also works to erode them) has been picked up in literary and cultural representations of waste. In describing the rationale behind his long poem *Garbage*, the American poet A. R. Ammons says 'I wanted to play out the interrelationships of the high and the low' and 'used garbage as the material submitted to such possible transformations'.[19] Both the proclivity of rubbish in modern society and its ability to transgress

---

[17] Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 2, 9-11.
[18] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 8.
[19] A. R. Ammons, 'The Art of Poetry No. 73', The Paris Review, 139 (Summer, 1996) <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1394/a-r-ammons-the-art-of-poetry-no-73-a-r-ammons> [Accessed 22 May 2017]

boundaries of value and use, to be transformed in Ammon's sense of the word, is seen by the poet as making garbage suitable material for conveying, as Ian Sansom writes, 'an outward and visible sign of certain inward and spiritual truths'.[20]

In this generative sense of waste and rubbish (that it supplies material for artistic production, that pollution is able to change and adapt its linguistic meaning) a central paradox of modern society emerges. Waste and rubbish are inseparable from notions of abundance and excess, and are often interdependent on each other. Modern industry does not just produce things which are quick to waste but relies on this quality to drive consumption and profit. Wealthier countries discarding their rubbish on poorer ones creates employment and subsidiary markets in these regions.[21] At the same time, the wasteful processes of modern industry threaten the very viability of the planet which capitalist economies need to exploit to ensure their own growth. Even at the level of the individual waste and abundance seem intimately tied together, as suggested in Kristeva's work on the abject.[22]

If thinking about rubbish sets up to problematize the relationship of waste and abundance, and by extension ideas of order and disorder, then the coast has long been experienced as a geography that embodies and perpetuates such interactions. Andrew Marvell's poem 'Bermudas' draws on biblical imagery to present the island shore as bountiful terrain (or at least a fitting site to receive God's generosity):

---

[20] Ian Sansom, 'Cheesespreadology', *London Review of Books*, 18.5 (7 March 1996), 26-27 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v18/n05/ian-sansom/cheesespreadology> [Accessed 28 August 2017]
[21] 'Introduction', in *Economies of Recycling*, ed. by Alexander and Reno, p. 1.
[22] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). For example: 'refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live […] Such wastes drop so that I might live' (p. 3).

And makes the hollow seas that roar

Proclaim the ambergris on shore.

He cast (of which we rather boast)

The gospel's pearl upon our coast[23]

Marvell is drawing on deeply held cultural ideas about the sea as mother or womb, a space from which things spring forth. For the ancient Greeks, Aphrodite emerged on the beaches of Cyprus from the foam of the waves while, writing in the 1930s, Sandor Ferenczi observed that 'the symbolism of dreams and neuroses reveal a fundamental symbolic identification of the mother's body with the waters of the sea'.[24]

More empirically, Carl Sauer explains that the 'sea, in particular the tidal shore, presented the best opportunity for early humans to eat, settle, increase, and learn.' For Sauer, such interstitial tidal areas provided the perfect environments for human civilization to flourish, 'the congenial ecological niche in which animal ethology could become human culture.'[25]

At the same time, as the Introduction to this thesis has shown, there has been an equally long association of the sea with void and chaos, Milton's 'illimitable ocean'.[26] The etymological information provided by the *OED* for 'waste' draws attention to this conception by defining waste as 'a wild and desolate region' which can be applied 'to the ocean or other vast

---

[23] Andrew Marvell, 'Bermudas', *Metaphysical Poetry*, ed. by Colin Burrow (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), pp. 192-193 (p. 193).
[24] Hesiod, 'Theogony', *Theogony, Works And Days, Testimonia*, ed. and trans. by Glenn W. Most (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 2-85 (pp. 17-19)
[25] Carl O. Sauer, *Land and Life: A Selection of Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. by John Leighly (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1963), p. 309.
[26] John Milton, 'Paradise Lost', *John Milton*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) pp. 355-618 (p. 397).

expanse of waste'. As Astrid Lindenlauf suggests, because of this, the sea has often been treated as somewhere for rubbish to be thrown away, and even in antiquity '[t]he main motive for disposing something in the sea was to be rid of it'.[27]

The physical properties of the sea itself seem to account for the continued pollution of the marine environment:

> the seas […] seem to be eminently pollutable because they are endlessly self-renewing. Oceans are natural circulatory systems like the human body's blood and lymphatic systems [...] breaking up, carrying away, and sinking foreign objects in their depths, and absorbing harmful toxins into their saline waters.[28]

Even after some of this refuse begins to find its way back onto the shore there is a profound sense that the sea can never be full, underpinned by the metaphysical belief that, as Kimberley Patton says, '[t]errestrial life can be maintained only by expelling disorder and impurity', with the sea often seen as the obvious space for this activity (p. 37).

However, as the capacity for the ocean to absorb humanity's waste continues to be exceeded with devastating effects (such as acidification, dead zones and ecosystem collapse), this fundamental sensibility comes under immense pressure.[29] David Woods observes that humanity's ability to make sense of themselves and the world relies on being able to 'externalize what we do not want to consider' yet, due to human destruction of the environment, there is now 'no outside, no space for

---

[27] Astrid Lindenlauf, 'The Sea as a Place of No Return in Ancient Greece', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 416-433 (pp. 421-422).
[28] Patton, *Sea Can Wash Away All Evils*, p. 28.
[29] Stacy Alaimo, 'Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism and New Materialism at Sea', in *Material Ecocriticsm*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 186-203 (p. 186).

expansion' (something made material not just by the pollution of the seas but the filling up of the earth's atmosphere with the remains of satellites and other types of junk).[30] Timothy Clark emphasises this looming environmental and cognitive problem, noting the sea no longer exists as one of these externalities and that, as a result, 'the consequences of human action do not go away anymore'.[31]

The coast therefore emerges as a crucial terrain in which to trace responses to the destruction of the environment, both in its material affects and metaphysical dimensions. The shore is also often the first place such crises are experienced, and have emerged in the public consciousness as poignant images of an environment under threat at various scales, whether this is the plastic which washes up on the beach or the catastrophic damage of oil spills such as Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico. Yet the transgressive and liminal qualities of the shore see it as an environment not just marked by the material effects of pollution and rubbish but amenable to their symbolic reworking of order and value. As a site of both abundance and absence, the coast allows questions to be asked about the sustainability of human society, particularly around notions of place and habitation as it becomes exposed to both local and global transmissions of pollution and waste.

Waste, the Coast and Territorial Anxiety in the Early Poems

A poem from the early collection *Native Ground*, titled 'The Midden' after a type of shallow refuse pit, shows the prevalence of waste and rubbish in

---

[30] David Wood, *The Step Back: Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), pp. 172-173.
[31] Timothy Clark, 'Nature, Post Nature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. by Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 75-89 (p. 82).

Minhinnick's poetry. Drawing on Scanlan's notion that garbage is not just 'the removal of qualities' but also 'the mucky handprint of a being that carries on regardless',[32] rubbish is presented in this poem as crucial evidence of both human existence and survival. The speaker figures himself as a 'rooky archaeologist / Fingering dry midden earth', able to only scratch the surface yet still find 'History's black / Sediment [...] under my nails'.[33]

This makes a useful contrast to a more well-known example of poetic archaeology which serves to highlight how Minhinnick employs ideas of rubbish to convey a sense of human history and society. In Heaney's 'Bogland' the speaker is able to delve into the Northern Irish turf and uncover 'the skeleton / Of the Great Irish Elk', while the bog holes themselves are 'bottomless' Atlantic seepages.[34] There is a clear contrast between the rich, sodden ground of Heaney's bog, emphasised by the peat '[m]elting and opening underfoot' (p. 17), and the dry dirt of Minhinnick's midden where '[a]ll that survives is what people / Disregard' (p. 12).

If Heaney's poem recovers from the earth prominent objects of national importance (even the imagined intrusion of the North Atlantic gestures towards the history of Irish emigration), Minhinnick's shallow pit offers up bland rubbish (no single object is identified or picked out for attention) which stands as an ambiguous image of human existence: is it important to recognise the small things which survive us or is the survival of such rubbish a sign of futility, that, whatever we do, we all ultimately end in this place?

---

[32] Scanlan, *On Garbage*, p. 14.
[33] Robert Minhinnick, 'The Midden', *Native Ground* (Swansea: Triskele Books, 1979), p. 12.
[34] Seamus Heaney, 'Bogland', *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp. 17-18.

For Matthew Jarvis, Minhinnick's representation of rubbish in 'The Midden' is not as an ecological burden 'but rather that such littering is nothing less than the history of human activity.'[35] In this sense, humans cannot escape producing waste but that does not mean that rubbish here is solely a symbol of social decay. Neal Alexander finds that the 'omnipresence of litter' in the poetry is also part of Minhinnick's working back against simple oppositions of nature and culture, of 'the authentic and the artificial.'[36]

In 'The Midden', this unpicking of foundational oppositions of western thought happens in a quiet but deliberate way, through the transformation of the speaker from archaeologist (an expert and product of western rationalism) to something that, if not an animal, is not quite human either. By the final stanza the speaker forages animal-like, 'fox[ing] out the shared genealogy' the rubbish suggests (p. 12). The metamorphosis helps to counter the potential nihilism lurking within the poem. By stepping outside the bounds of the strictly human, the poem is able to emphasise a sense of connection that can be recovered through such acts of rummaging.

There are many other poems where Minhinnick includes references to, or explorations of, waste. In 'A Sale of Lots' from *Life Sentences*, Minhinnick returns to the idea that what remains of us is not presence but rather a kind of absence ('[a]nd a generation vanish leaving only / Fingerprints'), although in this poem, the foraging of 'The Midden' is replaced with a more pessimistic view: 'these small acts of salvage will not

---

[35] Matthew Jarvis, *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 82.
[36] Neal Alexander, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 71-85 (pp. 81-82).

restore the dead'.[37] 'Development Area' from *The Looters* tries to grapple simultaneously with the material and symbolic experience of garbage, Minhinnick writing that '[o]n the glacier of the city's / Rubbish the children pick / For futures already discarded'.[38] The poem suggests rubbish is simultaneously experienced as a material fact of refuse and excess, and as a symbolic cleavage between inside and outside, those that have a future (both socially and environmentally) and those that do not.

If rubbish has been a constant part of Minhinnick's poetry so too has Porthcawl and the South Wales coast. Like Minhinnick's use of rubbish, the coastline is often portrayed as a geography in which traditional boundaries are questioned or begin to be unpicked. At the same time it is a complex landscape, suggesting Minhinnick's approach to resolving seemingly intransigent oppositions is not to reject complexity but to recognise and deepen it.

In 'Sker' (also in *Native* Ground and titled after Sker Point, a section of headland between Port Talbot and Porthcawl), Minhinnick holds several different cultural and symbolic experiences of the coast in relation to each other. There is the sense of the shore as a site of vibrant natural life, 'the sea, pungent as mustard' being 'all we know / Of wilderness'. There is the coast as a national border which both reinforces limits but must also be protected from incursions: 'the concrete foxholes / Made for war.' The coast is also heavily saturated with both the past and the ignorance of it, figures in the poem acting like 'naked children [...] before history', not seeing '[t]he storm, climbing over' the beach.[39]

---

[37] Robert Minhinnick, 'A Sale of Lots', *Life Sentences* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1983), p. 21.
[38] Robert Minhinnick, 'Development Area', *The Looters* (Bridgend: Seren, 1989), p. 16.
[39] Robert Minhinnick, 'Sker', *Native Ground* (Swansea: Triskele Books, 1979), p. 57.

Jeremy Hooker outlines the status of the Anglo-Welsh writer as inhabiting a 'border' or 'frontier' situation.[40] A prominent way these frontier anxieties manifest in Minhinnick's poetry is through the image of trespassing. In the early poems this often takes place around rural stately homes which are emblematic for Minhinnick of the English landowning class, reflecting Ian Gregson's view of the earlier work's interest in a 'specifically Welsh sense of invasion and occupation'.[41] 'J.P.' is a prominent example of this, the poem moving between 'the inquisitive gleam' of the 'jealous landowner', '[s]low decaying farms' and '[t]he magistrate's estate', as well as a sense of 'tribal defiance' which is both heavily felt and strangely distanced from the poem's speaker.[42] The coastal landscape of 'Sker' does not escape these associations. The speaker observes that the 'dunes lie [...] where the house, great / Medieval wedge, stands fused by weather / And memory to the skyline' (p. 57), linking the ambivalent terrain of the shore with anxieties about territory and an Anglo-Welsh concern with borders.

'Sker' concludes by reinforcing the long history of the coastline, '[h]ere on / The Viking promontory', but in ending sets up a tension between the joyful physical exertion of the poem's narrator running down to the sea and their ignorance of the history which surrounds them, that they identify as 'the inheritors of':

> We stop, breathless, laughing, looking
>
> Round. We, the inheritors, looking round

---

[40] Jeremy Hooker, *Imagining Wales: A View of Modern Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 13.
[41] Ian Gregson, 'The Baghdad Moon, the Pepsi Globe: Robert Minhinnick', *PN Review*, 31.6 (July-August, 2005), 52-55 <http://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=2516> [Accessed 24 May 2017]
[42] Robert Minhinnick, 'J.P. *Native Ground* (Swansea: Triskele Books, 1979), p. 43.

To receive what we will never understand.

But beginning our occupation with faith. (p. 57)

The reoccurrence of 'looking / round' to bookend the second line of the extract suggests this circular movement as both repetition and paralysis, recalling the horse which forever walks in circles from Joyce's 'The Dead'. The vaguely spiritual quality of this passage (receiving an occupation with faith) suggests both the importance of ideas of inheritance and history but also that there is something lacking, a critical mindset which will escape the thoughtless laughter (what exactly is funny in the poem?) and repetitive 'looking round' (which is also potentially a search for absent meaning).

Questions about territory, place and belonging are intertwined with notions of history and inheritance, and are inflected by the liminal quality of the shore, knitting together both the deep past and a vague sense of the future (something that has been seen across the poems in this thesis, 'Sker' particularly recalling Riley and *Sea Watches*), establishing a group of concerns which shape much of Minhinnick's early writing.

In a relatively short poem Minhinnick is able to craft a dense and multiple sense of the coastline. The temporal and material porousness of the shore sees it emerge as a fitting ground to explore more general concerns with territory, borders and inheritance. While not explicitly concerned with rubbish, the littering of old concrete bunkers, 'the rusted / Wire of the gun-range', as well as the presence of a 'dunghill' (p. 57), does enough to suggest the linking of waste and decay at the coastline with ideas of history and the extent of the nation, of the beach as a place which both breaks down and reinforces limits, even at this early stage in his career.

Cultural Decay at the Shoreline

This section will demonstrate what happens when Minhinnick more consciously brings rubbish and the coast together, turning to the longer sequence 'The Resort' from *The Dinosaur Park* (1985). The final poem in this sequence, 'On the Sands', states that '[o]ur culture has its midden on the sands'.[43] The clarity of this statement stands out among the ambivalent qualities of the littoral terrain. Other declarative lines such as '[t]he present sucks us in' (p. 29) seem, on further reflection, to lead to more questions: sucks us in where, how? Taken in isolation the line evokes a general feeling of condemnation towards capitalist excess and of social and political waste.

Yet, it is 'our' culture that the speaker of the poem indicts on the Porthcawl shoreline, suggesting a degree of ownership, that this is a culture that has emerged from the people gathered on the beach at the end of the poem. These figures are caught at 'the very tip of Wales' (p. 29), at once exposed to something beyond themselves (sky, sea, horizon and the feelings aroused by this landscape) and simultaneously reminded of the shore as a limit which gives definition and meaning to the nation: here is where Wales begins and ends.

The national significance of this cultural midden is part of a broader scepticism towards Welsh identity and culture in *The Dinosaur Park* (and much of Minhinnick's early career). The particular form this critical attitude takes is a studied observation and removed distaste towards the Welsh working class who inhabit Porthcawl over the summer. In 'At "The Knights"' people are described as '[u]gly, staring, full of youth's conceit' (p. 26). 'The Saltings' depicts a 'grizzled' couple on the beach, the woman with '[t]he man's name needled on her arm'. The poem ends with an offering of

---

[43] Robert Minhinnick, 'The Resort', *The Dinosaur Park* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), pp 25 to 29 (p. 29). Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.

sympathy to those deemed by society as so much rubbish (the tattoos being described as 'badges of contempt / A small defiance [...] Like the bottle smashed against the kerb'), concluding '[t]his is the life that persists beyond our thought / And has no-one to speak for it'. Yet, considering the poem also refers to the couple by saying '[w]hen you are born dumb / There are only gestures to make', and, even in the final line, insists on an odd distance between their life and 'our' thought, there is registered a certain contempt for these people.[44]

This is a sentiment Minhinnick confirms in an interview where, talking about the role of the fairground at Porthcawl as a site which allows him to study people, he says '[t]hat's where the real Welsh working class is to be found, having a day out on beer, amphetamines and doughnuts. Absolutely terrifying.'[45] Though Dai Smith sees the coalfields of South Wales as a landscape central to modern Welsh identity, Minhinnick extends sympathy to these people as part of an exploited social and economic group but is still highly wary of the masculine working class culture that emerges from the valleys.[46]

The feeling that Welsh culture is decayed waste in 'On the Sands' is not just a product of disdain but also of the anxiety around history present in 'Sker'. 'Natural History' (also from *The Dinosaur Park*) ties Welsh culture, particularly its valorisation, into apprehension about territorial oppression and inheritance. The poem describes the childhood remembrances of an old man which seem to fit the heroic image of industrial South Wales. Yet the presence of an interlocutor intervenes in this process, accusing the old man of hypocrisy: '[y]ou cut the lawns and trimmed the vinery / For sixteen

---

[44] Robert Minhinnick, 'The Saltings', *The Dinosaur Park* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), p. 11.
[45] Minhinnick, interviewed by Sam Adams.
[46] Dai Smith, 'The Valleys: Landscape and Mindscape', in *Glamorgan County History*, ed. by Prys Morgan, 6 vols (Cardiff: Glamorgan History Trust, 1988), VI, pp. 129-149 (p. 129).

years. A socialist who touched his cap / And knew the way things worked.'[47] The potential radicalness implied by 'socialist' is undercut by its placing within a context of polite deference from the Welsh labourer to his employer, the boy going so far as to accept 'unpaid' overtime (p. 16).

Even the momentary escape of a rugby game (another traditional and potent symbol of Welsh working class life, of which the poem describes the rugby ball as a 'leech') is curtailed by the brutality of Reverend Protheroe, who administers 'a street thrashing' to the young boy (p. 17). The poem ends in the present, depicting the lights going 'on in Protheroe Avenue' (p. 18), aligning the brutal Reverend with a sense of ownership and suggesting modern Wales has inherited the oppressive relationship of boy and priest, echoing the territorial apprehension present in 'J.P.'

For Minhinnick, this judgement of cultural wasting in 'On the Sands' finds itself embodied by the rubbish washed up on the beach. This waste is shown to be inseparable from the terrain it occupies: 'sea holly holds the strewn plastics / In a green pincer' while, inversely, natural life is depicted as so much junk, 'jellyfish like crystal bowls in which / A dark life rots' (p. 29). Minhinnick figures Welsh culture not simply as a kind of pollution or decay, but as a relationship of place and rubbish which suggests that each is part of the other. That this territory will produce, and is itself reproduced by, such wasting.

The historical context of 'The Resort' emphasises how this sense of waste and rubbish carries a particularly Welsh resonance. *The Dinosaur Park* was published in 1985, the same year the Miners' Strike ended. While Porthcawl was not a core part of coal producing South Wales it was chosen to host the annual Miners' Eisteddfod (eisteddfod being a festival celebrating Welsh culture). Ben Curtis illustrates the importance of the

---

[47] Robert Minhinnick, 'Natural History', *The Dinosaur Park* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), pp. 13-19, (p. 15).

eisteddfod, describing it as 'a unique cultural event and a source of pride for many miners'.[48] The presence of the eisteddfod ties Porthcawl into the landscape of classic south Walian industrial identity, allowing it an understanding of the struggles the industrial valleys would face in the 84-85 strike.

Curtis is also clear about the effects of pit closures in South Wales following the strike, stating that '[t]he closure of Oakdale, for example, led the local council to speak of the "social and economic devastation" caused by the overnight jump in the unemployment rate from 15 to 25 per cent' (p. 251). While *The Dinosaur Park* was published too soon to incorporate the longer term effects of the strike into the poems, 'The Resort' nonetheless includes traces of industrial decline impinging on the South Wales landscape which would become more prevalent in the aftermath of the strike. 'Surfers' depicts people emerging 'from the last wave' with '[a]n industrial sunset oiling the sea' (p. 25), while 'On the Sands' echoes this image, presenting the village of Cynffig sliding towards the water as '[s]lowly as oil' (p. 29). These oily images (something hinted at in the collection's title with the connections between dinosaurs, fossils and fossil fuel), as well as the 'steelmill's broken plot' (p. 29), emphasise the region's crumbling industries but (as with the strewn plastics and the feeling the 'shell-sound is the motorway', p. 29) also raise questions about the sustainability of a way of life which is dependent on the exploitation and destruction of the environment.

Minhinnick's rubbishing of culture is not just concerned with the social and economic decline of Wales in the mid-80s; it also reflects his fraught relationship to another inheritance: Anglo-Welsh literary culture. As a poet Minhinnick is responding to the so-called 'second flowering' of

---

[48] Ben Curtis, *Studies in Welsh History: South Wales Miners, 1964-1985* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 48.

Anglo-Welsh poetry in the 1960s (the first flowering being the generation of Dylan Thomas). While any broad statement about a literary generation is likely to elide the real differences between its members, the image of the generation Minhinnick is reacting against is best summed up by Meic Stephens, himself a member of this 'second flowering'. In an article of the same name, Stephens states that the Anglo-Welsh writer needs to 'justify his position' by writing 'about Welsh scenes, Welsh people, the Welsh past, life in contemporary Wales [...] or attempt to demonstrate [the] style and feeling which are generally regarded as belonging to Welsh poetry.'[49]

Stephens's notion of Anglo-Welsh writing suggests a very supplicant literary culture. It is a literature which recognises that the full authenticity of Welsh cultural identity lies with Welsh-language writers so all effort must be made by those Welsh writers writing in English to hew to identifiably Welsh subject matter to compensate. Part of the anxiety and disdain around inheritance in the earlier poems comes from a resistance towards this idea of Anglo-Welsh literary culture. As Hooker says, Minhinnick can be understood as one of a younger generation of English-language Welsh poets who 'defend their homegrounds […] not only against the deprivations of a market economy and Anglocentric attitudes, but also against the nationalism that identifies Welshness with the Welsh language'.[50]

Porthcawl as a place takes on an added charge in this context. It is clear that among the poets grouped together as the 'second flowering', R.S. Thomas, for example, does not share with Stephens or Glyn Davies an incorporation of the industrial southern valleys into his imagination of Welsh scenes. Thomas instead locates Welsh identity in the rural north and

---

[49] Meic Stephens, 'Second Flowering', *Poetry Wales* quoted in Tony Conran, '*Poetry Wales* and the Second Flowering', in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 222-254 (p. 252).
[50] Hooker, *Imagining Wales*, p. 48.

west, which has historically been the preserve of Welsh-language speakers in contrast to the anglicized south. The industrial south and rural west have been described by M. Wynn Thomas as 'the rival symbolic geographies of Wales'.[51] In the binaries between rural and industrial, between Welsh and English speakers, Minhinnick's poetic representation of Porthcawl introduces a third landscape from within which to consider questions of national identity. In this, Porthcawl recalls a more general propensity for the shore to be viewed as a space for 'thirding' (in Christopher Singer's term), as a terrain which break downs and elides cultural and conceptual binaries.

Yet Porthcawl is not a distinct national topography, rather, within its littoral terrain, there is a mix of the industrial and rural images of Wales. Through the Miners' Eisteddfod Porthcawl is connected to the cultural and economic networks of the south, while the continued evocation of the natural fecundity of the coastline gives the town elements of the non-industrial west. The interlocked images of rubbish and beach, given the deep connections between landscape and ideas of Welsh cultural identity, reinforce that, for Minhinnick, culture as a product of an exclusionary conception of territory is unsustainable. At the same the shore also provides a space to look beyond these traditional forms of Welsh identity. In 'On the Sands', the speaker describes the beach as a place where 'there is no context', a site freed from questions of inheritance and the past, the figures on the beach being urged to 'embrace our time' (p. 29).

Here, the locating of 'our' culture in a midden is a potentially positive gesture, a refuting of two formulations of national identity and literary culture Minhinnick could have inherited, the poem instead gesturing towards a demand for a culture which is responsive to the conditions of the

---

[51] M. Wynn Thomas, *Internal Difference* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. xiii.

present moment and not dependent on glorifications of the past. This interest in the past as a kind of inheritance clearly echoes Mulford, Hampson and Simpson, and the use of coastal space as a way of resolving these issues adds to the sense in which these poets respond to the shore as a site which engages with scales of temporal experience, in terms of witnessing the past but also as a terrain in which to process and alter understandings of history and inheritance.

Minhinnick finds this new sense of identity predicated on a recognition of hybridity and multiplicity, the beach providing a space where 'death and beauty find a fusion' in the strange image of a dune which 'halts like a burning glacier' (p.29). The landscape of Porthcawl across Minhinnick's poetry reflects Dai Smith's judgment that Wales is a singular noun but a plural experience.[52] Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts define edgelands as 'a complex landscape, a debateable zone, constantly reinventing themselves as economic and social tides come in and out'.[53] While Farley and Symmons Roberts mainly discuss landfills, business parks and overgrown wasteland among other sites, the littoral metaphor is telling. In 'On the Sands' there is something of the flux and unpredictability of these edgelands in the way the poem begins to tentatively gesture towards what comes after consigning your culture to refuse, the poem shifting in its appraisal of the shore from a site of final judgement, informed by the coast as limit of the nation, to a space of mixing and possible renewal.

Linden Peach observes of Minhinnick's early writing that '[m]any of the most successful poems [...] focus upon the boundary between displacement and reterritorialization, combining a sense of displacement

---

[52] Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 1.
[53] Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p.7.

with a developing awareness of the past and of belonging.'[54] 'On the Sands' hints towards a different relation between these ideas, exploiting the ambivalent quality of the coast (where nothing is ever quite fixed) to suggest the shoreline as a site where culture is disposed of and people might begin to gather 'each with a question' (p. 29). That the questions are unformed and kept private, unable to be articulated socially, in the arena in which any kind of collective identity must be forged, shows how tentative the process of producing a different communal image, away from the unsustainable identities of the past, is.

The Vagabond Surf and the Later Poems

If early poems like 'The Resort' end with a sense that a different form of culture and history are needed, tied to a dynamic and hybrid sense of belonging, yet are unable to articulate what forms this might take, this chapter argues that Minhinnick's later poetry, and its handlings of ideas of waste and rubbish, begin to articulate a language and shape for a global sense of being in the world, untethered to earlier anxieties of Welsh national identity.

When *After the Hurricane* was published in 2002 it had been eight years since Minhinnick's last full poetry collection (1994's *Hey Fatman*). Minhinnick had not been silent in the meantime, embarking on a variety of fiction and travel writing. Work like *Badlands*, a 1996 collection of travel essays, evidences an increasingly planetary context for the earlier poems' territorial anxieties, one marked by a voice which ebbs away from the more

[54] Linden Peach, 'Wales and the Cultural Politics of Identity: Gillian Clarke, Robert Minhinnick and Jeremy Hooker', in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by James Acheson and Romana Huk (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 373-396 (p. 382).

empirical tone of the early work and begins incorporating surreal juxtapositions of time and space.

For example, 'Letters from Illyria' includes a section where Minhinnick is following an Albanian child scrambling through an abandoned factory. This is interrupted by a memory of the industrial pollution of the Welsh Valleys:

> I am standing in the yard of a school called Cap Coch on a hillside in the Cynon Valley [...] From the playground I gaze into the glacial gouge of the Cynon and see Dante's Inferno [...] Here is the place where the most noxious constituents of coal - sulphur, chlorine, dinosaur turds - are extracted before it is burnt elsewhere.[55]

This section is a useful encapsulation of the style and technique which emerges in the later poetry. Firstly the experience of rubbish and waste, '[w]e follow Agim through the eviscerated plant, passing vats where contents have solidified to a chemical concrete', leads out from the particular to a reflection on transnational (and transhistorical) processes of industry: '[i]t smokes […] like the Rhondda and the mills of Pennsylvania smoked'. Secondly, imaginative digression on the image of smoke links to both other forms of pollution but also seemingly unconnected activities: '[i]t smokes like a Prague tram and a cafe of Greek lorry drivers. It smokes like the lane behind my house […] It smokes like Chernobyl' (pp. 28-29). This passage creates a global sense of environmental degradation, in which all scale of events, from trams to nuclear power, are implicated in untenable human practices of dwelling.

---

[55] Robert Minhinnick, *Badlands* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), p. 28.

The authorial voice is also experiential and associative rather than following clear logical development of ideas or argument:

> [t]here are three hundred miles of oleander blossom in the central reservation, all the way from Turin to Bari. In Ecuador there is an oleander shrub with such a strong narcotic in its perfume that anyone who falls asleep under its flowers never wakes up (p. 7)

This technique illustrates a kind of excess or overflow, that environmental experiences cannot be contained in a singular notion of place or territory.

It is not that Minhinnick was parochial in the early poetry, rather that the poetry that emerges after this eight year absence seems newly alive to the realities of a globalized world. This is what Jarvis has identified as Minhinnick's 'strikingly trans-cultural poetic vision',[56] in part reflecting a change in the historical context of Minhinnick's writing which demands a more internationalist response (*After the Hurricane* opens with a poem titled 'Twenty-Five Laments for Iraq'). It also reflects the way in which key ideas in the earlier poetry have been expanded, echoing more general developments in theoretical ideas about space and place. For instance, recent thinking about the relationship of culture and history to investigations of oceanic spaces have emphasised a need for 'a different kind of perspective, one ideally not fixed in any one location.'[57] A demand Minhinnick's more recent poetry productively responds to.

To trace how Minhinnick's later work expands its sense of place, the next section will focus on poems from *King Driftwood* and *After the Hurricane* to demonstrate how the material presence of waste and rubbish

---

[56] Jarvis, *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry*, p. 87.
[57] Alison Games, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *American Historical Review*, 111.3 (2006), 741–757 (p. 750).

is handled differently to earlier poems. Following this, the chapter will argue that not only is rubbish used differently in the later poems but that the symbolic and metaphorical associations of waste have become generalized, informing a broader sense of space, time and self in the texts. The section will end by considering the wider social and historical context which helps explain this shift away from the national to a more global sense of place in Minhinnick's work.

In the poems that make up *After the Hurricane* and *King Driftwood* there is a shift in how the representation of physical waste is handled, from bland evidence of a decaying national culture to the specific demonstration of an interconnected and planetary environmental perspective. The clearest example of this change can be seen in the poem 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf'. Like 'The Midden', this poem suggests a sense of rubbish as synecdoche for modern life, being both a product of modern consumer cultures and in a sense the sum of that culture itself. The character of the Vagabond Surf packs all his junk into 'that supermarket trolley of his', after all.[58]

Yet, where 'The Midden' or 'The Resort' describes rubbish in generic terms, 'scraps of plastic' or 'black earth', 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' is a poem full of almost overwhelming phantasmagoric specificity:

> Tampons, tempests, a turbot's tumours. A dogfish gutted by gulls on Gwter y Cŵm. High tide jellyfish from the night club steps. Sea lace, whipweed, bladderwrack fat as figs. Chitons like quillets in the karst. The terrible tributyls. Then pantyliners, gas cylinders,

[58] Robert Minhinnick, 'King Driftwood meets the Vagabond Surf', *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 58-59 (p. 58). Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.

> Japanese aerosols. Polystyrene, a submarine, a brigantine.
> Cadmium, copper, Ambre Solaire factor forty. (p. 58)

This is not the generic waste of 'The Resort' which is easily subsumed into a discourse of national decay (lacking a brand name or other identification it more easily slips from the material to symbolic). Rather, in its insistence on the specificity of each item ('Japanese aerosols' and 'a lifebelt from Miami Beach', p. 58), the poem delineates a global context of waste that is gathered up on the South Wales beach.

This exploits the experience of the coast as a terrain constantly imbricated in global networks not just of production and consumption but also of weather patterns and climate change. As Rachel Carson says, '[a]s the waves roll toward Lands End on the westernmost tip of England they bring the feel of the distant places of the Atlantic.'[59] The coast is a place where the local and familiar is constantly being informed and changed by the distant and global.

The specificity of this material is suggestive of the kind of half-identity Mary Douglas finds so terrifying about waste. For Douglas this stage of identity is when such particles are at their most dangerous, as 'the clarity of the scene in which they obtrude is impaired by their presence.'[60] That such matter is still recognisable in some sense as what it was but is, at the same time, free from the expectations of the everyday is suggestive of a potentially transgressive and destabilising capacity, especially when such matter is deemed 'out of place'.[61] Hence Douglas's violent description of a 'process of pulverizing, dissolving and rotting' that results in the

---

[59] Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (London: Staples Press Limited, 1952), p. 113.
[60] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 161.
[61] This is an echo of William James's remark that dirt is simply so much 'matter out of place.' See *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 97.

removal of this partial identity and the reduction of these particles to 'the mass of common rubbish.'[62]

Being washed up on the shore, such rubbish reflects what John Mack has called the 'liminal characters' of '[t]hose who arrive from sea'. The disruptiveness which is a source of anxiety for Douglas is also located in these liminal characters (of which the Vagabond Surf is one as well) who have 'become disconnected from the set of rules which sustained them in the world they have left behind' and are 'not of the world on whose fringes they have been washed up'.[63] There is, therefore, something unsettling about Minhinnick's use of such recognisable objects. As partially identifiable matter these things at once gesture towards banal, everyday life, while also suggesting that such life is inseparable from decay and waste, providing an almost gothic sensibility to the unsettling nature of rubbish in the poem.

This quality has a deeply ecological bent for Minhinnick, damaged and brutalised things from the natural world showing up in the poem among the rubbish of contemporary society: 'a turbot's tumours', a 'gutted' dogfish (p. 58). In an interview discussing humanity's treatment of the environment he says '[w]hat we are doing with it is a vast tragedy. Man's pursuit of a life of ease, because that's what it's all about, is at a terrible cost, most of which we don't even realise.'[64] This sense of ease recalls Kennedy's notion that carelessness, typified by the polystyrene cup, is the endpoint of consumer capitalism. Minhinnick links such disposability with a damage that 'we don't even realise', suggesting a repression of the ecological, what Slavoj Žižek has described as 'our unwillingness to take

---

[62] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, p. 161.
[63] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2011), p. 165.
[64] Minhinnick, interviewed by Sam Adams.

the ecological crisis completely seriously'.[65] The objects on the beach are material modern society wishes to dispose of, in part because they are products of a way of life which is ecologically harmful, and whose return on the shoreline of South Wales haunts, if not the Vagabond Surf, then the speaker of the poem who urges the reader '[n]o, don't look' (p. 58). The poem, in its fantastical listing of waste, is a constant reminder of the things society does not want to acknowledge.

There are also more unusual objects that appear among the fish and old tights washed up on the beach, things which suggests this concern for sustainability and wasting extends out beyond the environmental. One such object is a 'Venetian astrolabe' which, while cultural detritus, is of a different order to the 'Ambre Solaire factor forty' it is placed beside (p.58). An astrolabe is a device that helps make certain astronomical measurements concerning the relation of time and the position of the sun. That it is among the trash might suggest something about the unsustainability of certain mathematical conceptions of temporal experience and a capacity to measure how the world functions.

The figure of the Vagabond Surf is himself adorned with grotesque and almost hallucinatory objects such as 'Shelley's septum', 'the cabin notebooks of Hart Crane' and 'Alfonsina Storni's left slipper'. While the mention of these particular writers reaffirms the poem's global dimensions (Shelley spending periods of his life in Italy, Hart Crane an American poet, and Alfonsina Storni a prominent Argentinian poet in the early twentieth century) it doesn't really suggest anything like the triumph of art over the rubbish of contemporary life. Rather, their presence in the poem might be suggestive of a certain levelling off of high and low culture, that in the end these prominent poetic figures end up in the same place, or in the same

---

[65] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 35.

category, as aerosol cans and dead fish. It is also noticeable that, apart from the cabin notebooks of Hart Crane, the other two poets leave traces of their bodies, their physical selves, rather than of their literary output.

Furthermore, all three poets suffered death by water. Shelley drowned in a storm, Hart Crane committed suicide by jumping off a steamship in the Gulf of Mexico, and Alfonsina Storni's body was found washed up on a beach. The fleshy traces of these poets and their unsettling liquid deaths emphasises the gothic and grotesque as an element of wasting. Yet, in including the leftovers of these literary figures, Minhinnick is also suggesting something about the fragility of poetic material itself. It too may end up, to echo Douglas's word, in the general mass of rubbish. A reformulation (and externalization), then, of Yeats's declaration that poetic inspiration is also the site of creative impotence: 'Now that my ladder's gone, / I must lie down where all the ladders start / In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart'.[66]

The figure of the Vagabond Surf is himself part of this anxiety of literary representation. In collating his shopping list, or 'inventory' of scrap, he is depicted as 'writing, copying into his book of tides' (p. 58). While we are told that 'what he finds he never forgets', the 'book of tides' (as well as potentially referring to a literal book which predicts the time of low and high tide) cannot help but be suggestive of a kind of writing that, like the waves, fluctuates and alters from moment to moment. This recalls Singer's more general characterisation of the shore as a spatial setting of 'betwixt-and-between', where the poles of discourse and narrative identity, as well as language, are constantly broken and reformulated.[67]

---

[66] W. B. Yeats, 'The Circus Animals' Desertion', *Yeats's Poems*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: PAPERMAC, 1989), pp. 471-472 (p. 472).
[67] Christopher Singer, *Sea Change: The Shore from Shakespeare to Banville* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 19.

The phrase 'book of tides' alludes to another Minhinnick poem, 'Questions of The Woman Who Fell' from *After the Hurricane*. Built around the event of a woman jumping to her death along the same Welsh coastline, this poem shares some of the concerns of 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf'. There is the local coastline of Porthcawl acting as a site on which evidence of larger global processes wash up:

> You would have seen that log
> Of mahogany
> Months out of Maranhao
> Or the Ihla de Marajo[68]

There is also the apprehension about representation as the sea becomes a cinema, '[a] multiscreen Alahambra'. Here the anxiety is less about 'cryptic inscription' as Alexander suggests,[69] and more over a proliferation of images as refracted through the tides (an excess of spectacle which itself blurs the distinction between nature and technology) and a resulting slippage of subjectivity in which '[w]e're still working on our parts' (p. 28).

At the end of the poem this disquiet is marked on the very littoral terrain of the poem:

> Instead I choose the wave's verdict
> That everything will be returned
> Though it comes unrecognised.
> But the ocean laughs;
> It splits its sides

[68] Robert Minhinnick, 'Questions of The Woman Who Fell', *After the Hurricane* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), pp. 26-29 (p. 28).
[69] Alexander, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', p. 81.

Your name's rubbed smooth

Within the book of tides. (p. 29)

The last four lines of the poem break away from the solidity of the left hand margin, both echoing the shape of the waves but also suggesting something has become unmoored. Here the notion of 'the book of tides' is clearly associated with an erasure of presence and comprehension, an open defiance of the poet's explicit trust in the waves to return some kind of interpretable verdict.

'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf', in its fantastical and surreal heaps of garbage, is not just a re-articulation of earlier poems. Instead, the kaleidoscope of rubbish present in the poem is more troubling because it suggests the generalisation of notions of waste. It is not just one particular territory and inheritance that is deemed unsustainable, it is a whole cornucopia of modern experience. Within this, the coastal terrain of South Wales is shown to be no longer the defining edge of the country as it was in 'The Resort'. Instead it becomes a place of transmission and of porousness, a familiar locale in which the individual can come across the unsettling excess and waste of a global modern culture.

Half-life and the Generalisation of Waste

If 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' begins to indicate a generalisation of notions of waste and sustainability (the variety of things washed up on the beach stretching from everyday items to 'an isthmus' and 'silence', pp. 58-59), then 'An Isotope Dreaming' shows how fully the later poetry finds the disruptive qualities of waste and rubbish spreading into multiple areas of experience. This section will argue that, despite the general absence of the coast from the poem itself, 'An Isotope Dreaming' is

nonetheless deeply tied to the littoral experiences that shape 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' and other poems across Minhinnick's career.

Isotopes may be stable but can also be unstable, prone to radioactive decay, and through this tend to be associated with notions of instability and nuclear power. The link to nuclear energy (and by extension nuclear waste and its disposal) ties the isotope more explicitly into material ideas of rubbish and waste, albeit in a specialized manner. At the same time the isotope in 'An Isotope Dreaming' is not acknowledged as a type of waste in and of itself, rather it becomes symbolic of the disruptiveness of waste, a sense of decay the poem shows moving across the world, from Iraq to Belarus. Despite this global scope, the poem begins among the familiar South Wales coastline as the speaker seeks redemption 'in the ray / as sunset swarms over Gower'.[70] Redemption is also found 'in the reactor. / It's the atom that's reborn', and this merger of the spiritual and the scientific seeks to destabilize any simple associations the reader might find in the nuclear isotope. The idea that light is swarming over the landscape alerting the reader to the more than human agency of matter in the poem.

This grounding in the recognisable shoreline is suddenly ruptured by catastrophe: '[n]ow Swansea is burning again', recalling the bombing of the city during the Second World War (p. 9). This apocalypse (which given the presence of the isotope seems likely to be nuclear in tone) takes on a decidedly Blakean form: 'the football crowd becomes one man / and the prisoners run from the burning jail / every cell a sun' (pp. 9-10). The merging of the crowd bears an echo of the culmination of Blake's *Milton*,

[70] Robert Minhinnick, 'An Isotope Dreaming', *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 9-18 (p. 9). Subsequent references are given parenthetically by page number.

where '[w]ith one accord the starry eight became / One man'.[71] Similarly, 'every cell a sun' suggests the Blake of 'Auguries of Innocence', where the infinite is found in the particular and discrete: '[t]o see a world in a grain of sand […] And eternity in an hour'.[72] This imbues the poem with a visionary quality, linking the transnational spaces present in Chapter Three with Riley's interest in the sacred and transcendent from Chapter One

Minhinnick plays on the double meaning of cell to suggest both a prisoner's cell and the biological cell that underpins life. This is a productive contrary in the Blakean sense, not just in terms of size (cell and sun) but also the contrary of nuclear fusion: it produces the bomb which destroys life and the sun which sustains it. The grim irony of 'the paradise particle' (p. 9) therefore enacts the disruption outlined earlier in relation to waste's role in symbolic systems of value, of order and disorder, muddying the boundaries between life and death.

After this brief apocalypse the poem adopts the perspective of the isotope itself: '[y]et out of the terrible core I sprang […] Now I am the isotope dreaming' (p. 10). Like rubbish, the poem depicts the isotope as a kind of dirt or stain, a residue which gets 'on your boots […] In your hair […] on the map […] in the earth under my nails and the fillings in my teeth' (p. 11). In searching for 'the meaning of the half life' (p. 11) the poem visits three distinct geographies. The first is a Native American landscape, the poem mentions a 'hogan' (p. 12), a type of Navajo hut, and a 'mesa' (p. 11), suggestive of a certain type of western American terrain. After this, the poem moves to a hospital in Basra, where two children are being treated by a doctor.

---

[71] William Blake, 'Milton', *William Blake*, ed. by Michael Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 331-380 (p. 379).
[72] William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence', *William Blake*, ed. by Michael Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 27-31 (p. 27).

These two passages disclose the poem's interest in ideas of colonialism, imperialism and war. The Navajo girl's horizon is described as 'a black circle / on grey paper' (p. 12), suggestive of enclosure, while the section on the children of Basra is replete with destructive and war-themed images: '[t]he light's shrapnel lay between those hemispheres', 'the other's / nerves the ruins of Nineveh' (p. 13). The territorial anxiety of occupation which was distinctly Anglo-Welsh in flavour in the earlier poems has expanded in scope.

The third journey takes the poem to post-Soviet Belarus and, with its mentions of 'Uncle Joe' and 'Chernobyl Mushrooms' (p. 15), is suggestive of interconnections between politics, nuclear disaster and the environment. There is also some sense of recovery with 'Uncle Joe rousted out of the city square / to a grave under the trees' (p. 16). The presence of Chernobyl Mushrooms adds to this potential for recovery, at least for the nonhuman, these mushrooms originally found growing inside and around Chernobyl nuclear power plant and flourishing off of the radiation which was so harmful in other instances, recalling the troubling of life and death from the poem's Blakean opening. Despite the seemingly political quality of the action the isotope observes, the particle 'passes quickly' (p. 15). It might bear witness to these injustices, and in its journey suggest an awareness of how the treatment of Native Americans and Iraqi civilians by the American government is interlinked, but nevertheless the isotope continues to move and to disperse itself.

This idea of dispersal, and how it relates to sustainability, is crucial to understanding the poetics of Minhinnick's later work. Dispersal has immediate associations with ideas of radioactive energy, decay and half-life. If the *OED* describes radioactive decay as 'to diminish in radioactive intensity', 'to disintegrate into a different substance' than we could consider this a form of dispersal. In more general terms dispersal is,

according to the *OED*, the process of being 'scattered abroad', of 'scattering, dispersion, circulation'. In both 'An Isotope Dreaming' and 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' there is a sense of dispersion (whether the isotope itself dispersing out into the world or Porthcawl as an encounter with what happens when rubbish and discarded matter is dispersed) that creates instability within the poems.

As Nerys Williams says, 'An Isotope Dreaming' performs 'a lyric subjectivity that enacts dispersal, not unlike the radioactivity dominating the poem.'[73] Such dispersion is how the imaginative energies of the poem are put out into the world, through tracing the lines of flight, and the encounters such dispersion creates, but they also engage with the other side of this notion of dispersal: entropy and decay. Williams sees the varied encounters across temporal and spatial distance and transitions of the isotope in the poem as a way to sustain the 'momentum of the long poem' (p. 196). While there is the sense of the isotope ignoring barriers of distance and separation, there are nevertheless points where a certain line of thinking or cluster of images run out and the poem has to restart itself. The poem even marks this out, dividing the text into several movements: '[o]n the first journey', '[o]n the second journey', '[o]n the third journey', as evidence of this rupture (pp. 11, 12, 15).

These journeys aid the isotope in searching for the meaning of the half-life (although the poem is resistant to answering this, instead rephrasing the question multiple times). The notion of 'half life' has specific and technical meaning to the function of a radioactive isotope. According to the *OED*, it is '[t]he time in which the quantity of a substance […] decreases by half.' Questions of half-life in the poem open on to reflections

---

[73] Nerys Williams, 'Lyric Encounters with Other Places: Juliana Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* and Robert Minhinnick's "An Isotope Dreaming"', in *Placing Poetry*, ed. by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 183-199 (p. 185).

about time, history, duration, sustainability and decay. The poem destabilises fixed, linear experiences of temporality, the isotope identifying itself as matter which 'will wait out the moon' but also possessing speed like 'the chariot racing through' (p. 17). Again this recalls the disruptiveness of waste and rubbish, which itself is temporally ambivalent, William Viney noting waste is not just matter which has decayed but is also matter which 'lingers and remains'.[74]

Both rubbish and the isotope are shown to act at what Timothy Morton has called 'very large finitude[s]' in Minhinnick's poetry, decentring human experience of the world.[75] Not only is the poem voiced by the isotope, but the sense of time and space it employs is alien to human existence: 'I have waited in my cave / for a billion years' and '[t]here will rise different cliffs / with new fossils / before they set me free' (p. 10). If earlier chapters have shown the shoreline open to temporal disjuncture at the level of human history (both social and personal), Minhinnick pushes at these associations, suggesting that there are scales of time and being in the world which far exceed human understanding.

'An Isotope Dreaming', like 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' and 'Questions of The Woman Who Fell', raises questions about the sustainability of writing and representation, Minhinnick enacting his own form of dispersal at the material level of language:

> The gamma is the game we play at the gateway
> the gam the ga the g in the gateway,
> the atoms speaking in new tenses;

---

[74] William Viney, *Waste: A Philosophy of Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 4.
[75] Timothy Morton, interviewed by Peter Gratton, *Philosophy in a Time of Error* (2010) <https://philosophyinatimeoferror.com/2010/05/10/tim-morton-the-interview/>

the word buds bearing different fruits.

The half life of the half life. (p. 15)

Here ‘gamma’ is sequentially decayed until only the first letter of the word remains (gamma, gam, ga, g), at the same time these linguistic atoms (gam and ga particularly) are dispersed across the first two lines of the stanza in ‘game’ and ‘gateway’.

This inscriptional decay and dispersal, one that occurs on the page and in the ear, to the ‘g’ and ‘ga’ sound, is pushed further in a later stanza:

The g

the gg

the ga

the gamma

the game

the gamma

ghosting towards

the cell’s gateway. (p. 17)

In the previous example only on reading the second line do you retroactively notice the dispersal of ‘gam’ and ‘ga’ in the opening of the stanza; in this case the act of dispersal is instantly visually realised (the shape of the lines also recalling the littoral in their wave like appearance).

These lines invert the movement of the earlier example, going from dispersal to something more concrete (from ‘The g / the gg’ to whole words: ‘the game’, ‘the gamma’), again, like the presence of the Chernobyl mushrooms, troubling a reading of the poem as concerned only with waste and half-lives, the text also presenting a counter impulse towards a sense of renewal and reconstruction (which recalls the generative chaos of

Mulford's 'Samphire, Thrift, Sea-Aster'). The mention of a 'gateway' in both stanzas is suggestive of this, implying that the decay of gamma leads to something else, a threshold of reinvention and transmission. This is clearer in the earlier stanza where, after the line about the gateway, the third line, 'the atoms speaking in new tenses', suggests not just sustainability of language but also its proliferation (even if this in a form which seems to distance and bypass humanity).

The shoreline in later Minhinnick is now a site of transmission, not just open to the global processes whose remnants wash up on the shore but a space in which the local and global interact and are sent back out into the world. Here the isotope can reflect on what meaning, if any, its journeys signify: 'And here on my peninsula I ask / where is the half moon and who is the half man / and what is the half life of the half life of the half life?'[76]

If 'An Isotope Dreaming' sees Minhinnick give agency to an isotope, 'The Hourglass' (also from *King Driftwood*) imbues sand with life, linking the activity of the isotope with littoral material. We are told it 'gloats', may have a 'guilty conscience' and may desire: 'But so far, said sand, / everything has been displacement activity. / There are great things to which I aspire'. Like 'An Isotope Dreaming', sand engages in spatial and temporal disruption: 'On Olympus we passed / the poets weeping / into their websites' and 'Remember, I was in Eden too, said sand'. Also present is the concern with representation and language which has emerged across 'Questions of The Woman Who Fell', 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf' and 'An Isotope Dreaming', sand saying how it blew away and 'they

[76] Minhinnick, 'An Isotope Dreaming', (p. 18)

discovered the Iliad on a thousand papyri. / Not all the words, you understand, / that was a poem I needed to rewrite'.[77]

The character that Minhinnick gives matter in these poems pushes Morton's notion of the ecological as a sense of intimacy with all life forms to its extreme. This is something Val Plumwood suggests in her essay 'Journey to the Heart of Stone'. For Plumwood, the task of critical ecological writing includes 'challenging the experiential framework of dead and silent matter'. This is deemed important because Plumwood sees modern, rational, scientific discourses make of their 'objects of attention a terra nullius, a prior vacancy, the better to inscribe its own ends.' In other words, contemporary capitalist culture sees objects only in terms of what use can be made of them. For Plumwood the response to this is to encourage writing that gives us 'other ways of seeing' by the 're-enchantment […] of the realm designated material (which includes reclaiming agency and intentionality for matter).'[78]

These poems revel in the realisation that what 'we normally think of as empty space is in fact continually crisscrossed by an incessant traffic of messenger particles'.[79] Part of this is refusing to see the natural world as either a resource for human habitation or something to provide emotional and psychic sustenance (a role it has played in much western culture). As Minhinnick says: 'I've looked at it [the environment] closely and learned to love it and to fear it, to be disgusted by it and to be inspired by it.'[80]

---

[77] Robert Minhinnick, 'The Hourglass', *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 39-47 (pp. 41, 40, 43, 42, 46).
[78] Val Plumwood, 'Journey to the Heart of Stone', in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, ed. by Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 17-36 (pp. 17-18).
[79] Paul Davies and John Gribbin, *The Matter Myth: Dramatic Discoveries That Challenge Our Understanding of Physical Reality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 239.
[80] Minhinnick, interviewed by Sam Adams.

'An Isotope Dreaming' establishes the poetics of dispersal and decay which informs much of the later poetry and which arises from a generalisation of rubbish and waste. The concern in Minhinnick is no longer rubbish as metonym for an untenable national culture, as it was predominantly articulated in the earlier poetry, but rather what happens when more general questions of decay and sustainability are asked about human relation to the world they find themselves inhabiting. If earlier chapters have argued for the way modern British poetry responds to questions of scale and place at the shoreline, Minhinnick's later work begins to question some of the assumptions in these sections about how such experiences are linked to human scales of perception and dwelling. Poems like 'An Isotope Dreaming' or 'The Hourglass' demonstrate how attention to the smallest level of biological activity can challenge human understandings of space, time and place. Here notions of the archipelagic and coastal as linking local and planetary are pushed to their extremes.

Globalizing Territorial Anxieties

Ideas of waste and territory at the coastline have become reconstituted in the later poems in a global context. Ian Gregson remarks that some of Minhinnick's poems 'could be read as the globalizing of an Anglo-Welsh theme' of borders and frontiers.[81] An important context for this expansion, given this thesis's interest in the way the coastline mediates the relationship of local, national and global senses of place in contemporary British poetry, is the changing nature of the Welsh state in the years between the publication of *The Dinosaur Park* and *King Driftwood*.

[81] Ian Gregson, *The New Poetry In Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 43.

Not only was a poem like 'The Resort' published at a time of economic decline, it was also published six years after Wales voted against devolution. The failure of the 1979 referendum was, for Gwyn Williams, the sign that the Welsh had 'finally disappeared into Britain'.[82] As suggested above, Minhinnick was as contemptuous of a romanticised Welsh-language version of Welsh national identity as he was aware of the fraught relationship between Wales and England. This means it would have been unlikely for Minhinnick to have cheered a successful devolution vote in 1979, especially if had been couched in the pageantry of Plaid Cymru and Welsh-language nationalism. The significance of the devolution referendum was in highlighting the widespread territorial angst about Wales's relation to England, devolution asking the Welsh people to consider if Wales was a distinct country in its own right or if it was simply a region of England.

Conversely, by the time *King Driftwood* is published in 2008, Wales is over a decade into being a devolved, European-orientated country. After the traumatic experience of deindustrialization this seems to suggest new vigour for Wales and ideas of Welshness, D. Densil Morgan writing that the 1997 devolution victory marked a stunning change in opinion and general support for self-determination and, with the establishment of the Welsh Assembly, Cardiff 'is set to relish its status as a major European city.'[83] The encouragement offered by devolution can be traced in a wider cultural rethinking of the relationship of the British shoreline to ideas of the nation, John Brannigan noting that '[i]n devolutionary politics, the sea is imagined

---

[82] Gwyn Williams, *When Was Wales?: A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 305.
[83] D. Densil Morgan, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000* (Cardiff: University of Cardiff Press, 2011), pp. 274-275.

as connective and inclusive' and open to reworking in post-devolution poetry.[84]

Morgan's confidence about Cardiff emerges in a European and international context rather than in any relation to the prosperity or otherwise of the British state. At the same time, this distinction between Cardiff and the rest of the country hints at the ructions within Wales which emerged more recently in the EU referendum, where the majority of Wales outside the capital voted for Brexit, potentially signalling the end to this more outward looking sense of Welsh identity.[85]

It is not that Wales has ceased to be a concern, or that the local is no longer important to Minhinnick; the persistence of Porthcawl as a site for poetry should counter that notion. Rather the relationship of devolution to the more international outlook of the later poetry is that the conditions which produced the regional anxieties of *Native Ground* or *The Dinosaur Park* have been superseded by anxieties with more global causes and relations. Minhinnick's openly transnational poetry mirrors a more globalist outlook in Welsh life in the aftermath of the 1997 devolution referendum but also reflects that the problems Wales faces (its involvement in American warmongering, the threat of ecological disaster) requires a planetary awareness.

As suggested earlier, this changing sense of territorial concerns also emerges from the altering sense of the South Wales coastline Minhinnick is writing from. No longer the ambivalent edge of a country whose self-image Minhinnick is sceptical about, in the later poems the coast is present as a

---

[84] John Brannigan, '"Dreaming of the Islands": The Poetry of the Shipping Forecast', *Reconceiving the British Isles: The Literature of the Archipelago* UCDscholarcast, Series 4 (Spring, 2010) <http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/transcripts/shipping_forecast.pdf> [Accessed 7 June 2017]

[85] 'EU referendum: Welsh voters back Brexit', *BBC* (24 June 2016) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36612308> [Accessed 23 May 2017]

dynamic, shifting, porous zone of exchange. It becomes as much a destination to leave and return to as the earlier poems implied it was a barrier, loaded with anxieties over history and inheritance.

In doing this Minhinnick is reflecting recent reconceptualisations of the shore as a place of multiplicity and flux which disturbs attempts to fix experiences of time and space. Yvonne Rydin writes that on the beach, '[e]very part of us is bombarded with information telling us that we are somewhere very different from our normal landside existence.'[86] This oversaturation of experience attributed to the shore reflects the imaginative excess of poems like 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf'.

Similarly, Antonis Balasopoulos writes that 'the sea remains unassimilable to the mainstream historiographical topography of nation and state […] just as it persists in defying striations of border and boundaries,'.[87] As an intertidal zone which defies attempts at categorisation, '[b]ah to borders […] Borders are dreams' sand says in 'The Hourglass' (p. 45), the coast functions to invigorate a more generic sense of space-time (fluid, porous, sites of exchange and interconnection) which informs Minhinnick's poetry in *King Driftwood and After the Hurricane*.

Conclusion

The transition in Minhinnick's handling of rubbish and waste between the earlier and later poems has to be seen as part of a wider development of the spatial scope of his writing. These changing scales, through which Minhinnick's territorial anxieties are reshaped, see the presence of rubbish

---

[86] Yvonne Rydin, 'Beaches', in *Patterned Ground*, ed. by Stephan Harrison, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), pp. 151-153 (p. 152).
[87] Antonis Balasopoulos, '"Suffer a Sea Change" Spatial Crisis, Maritime Modernity, and the Politics of Utopia', *Cultural Critique*, 63 (Spring, 2006), 122-156 (p. 133).

and waste change from the generic material of 'The Midden' to the specific matter of transnational circulation in 'King Driftwood and the Vagabond Surf'. This globalisation of territorial concerns, which in the early poetry are grounded in Minhinnick's immediate experiences of his Anglo-Welsh identity, sees the symbolic pressure on waste shift from a reflection of a sense of decay of national cultural identity to a more generalized sense of waste and disruption.

This raises pressing questions around ideas of sustainability, not just ecologically but in terms of spatial and temporal experience. Such anxiety also extends to questions of representation and human language, the tides able to wash away the marks and traces of human inscription. In doing this Minhinnick is gesturing towards, without ever quite fully embracing it in the form and voice of his poems, wider fears about the sustainability of writing. As Steven Mentz suggests, literary forms can 'strain to comprehend saltwater vastness, and efforts to craft linguistic vessels adequate to this task become explicit meditations on the limits and powers of poetry itself.'[88]

This isn't a suppression of the ecological by other notions of sustainability. Rather it reflects Minhinnick's view of the interrelated domains of nature and culture, that questions of sustainability in terms of temporality or representation are also always ecological questions, tied up with the viability of certain conceptions of what it means to inhabit.

In 'The Resort' Minhinnick does not just condemn the mythic identity of the South Wales valleys but ties its very unsustainability to anxieties around the terrain such a culture is located within. The rubbish and industrial decay produced by this society is shown to be already deeply imbricated in the topography of the South Wales shoreline. At the same

---

[88] Steve Mentz, *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550–1719* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. xix.

time, the coast emerges as a third, hybrid national landscape from which to examine these inheritances of Welsh identity. Here the conception of the coastal terrain of Porthcawl as the tip or edge of Wales, reflects one sense in which the coast is both a figurative and material border, forcing a turning back on oneself, and a reflection on the place one occupies and where one has come from, echoing Riley's desire to 'view the whole story' from 'high on the soft / Edge of Britain'.[89]

Not necessarily shorn of but rather pushed beyond their immediate national and communal contexts, ideas of territory and inheritance in the poems of *After the Hurricane* and *King Driftwood*, by contrast, become enmeshed within a serious and complex ecological understanding of the world. In this newly invigorating environmental framework the coast of South Wales is seen as a site which allows for the interconnection of global spaces, rearticulating a sense of being in the world which is mobile and dynamic. Like Hampson and Simpson, this pulls on notions of transnational space, but, given the post-devolution context of Minhinnick's later writing, question of region and nation are much more easily elided.

In the shift of the Porthcawl coastline from national edge to intertidal zone of transmission and dispersion, this chapter demonstrates Minhinnick's transition from the native ground of the earlier poems to the transnational spaces and imaginary of the later work. This is not a change in scale imposed by Minhinnick; rather it emerges out of changing understandings and experiences of the coast itself. Alan Corbin's observation that the coast has long been viewed as a biological zone of mixing and hybridity amplifies the disruptive connotations of rubbish that washes up the shore.[90] Where such disruptiveness often seemed curtailed

---

[89] Peter Riley, 'Sea Watches', *The Llŷn Writings* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2005), pp. 7-24 (p. 9).
[90] Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The discovery of the seaside 1750-1840*, trans. by Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 97.

by the overdetermined national sense in which such material was employed and interpreted in the early poems, this quality has become the defining feature of Minhinnick's later poetic.

At the same time, lacking the mediation of a national level, there is a sense in the later poetry that place is also on a precipice, what Philip Gross has identified as Minhinnick's ability to make Porthcawl feel like 'the edge of the world'.[91] Unlike Mulford, who was able to find liberation in a sense of loss, Minhinnick's poetry both celebrates the shifting temporal and spatial rhythms of the shore while maintaining this anxiety over the sustainability of place. For example, 'To Those on the Promontory' imagines the terrain as 'the chasm mouth', stating 'the road ends, is ending here'.[92]. Yet, the coast is also a site for connection, both globally and more intimately. In 'Samphire', from *After the Hurricane*, the speaker's fire on the beach sets up a chain of recognition and tentative community: '[a]nd then behind us on the dune / Another light appeared […] And voices if we listened carefully', a more assertive version of the ending of 'The Resort' from *The Dinosaur Park*.[93]

As a result, many of Minhinnick's later poems also display a transcendental urge, echoing Riley at certain points in *Sea Watches*, but one framed in regards to overcoming the limits of human sustainability in regards to planetary questions of ecology and inhabitation. As the figure at the end of 'The Saint of Tusker Rock' says, '[w]e will vanish together / but each must first find his own way out, / must never seek but sense the nerve and sinew of the sea'.[94]

---

[91] Philip Gross, 'Reviews', *Poetry London*, 61 (Autumn, 2008), 25-27 <http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=22608>
[92] Robert Minhinnick, 'To Those on the Promontory', *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 88-96 (p. 96).
[93] Robert Minhinnick, 'Samphire', *After the Hurricane*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), pp. 30-31 (p. 31).
[94] Robert Minhinnick, 'The Saint of Tusker Rock', *King Driftwood*, pp. 115-129 (p. 129).

Conclusion

For Washington Irving the Atlantic Ocean was 'like a blank page in existence.'[1] As this thesis has demonstrated, the shoreline can no longer be viewed as the edge of the white page, the frame which gives definition to the empty sea. The coast is not, and has never really been, the terminal point of land or water, but rather a space shaped and reshaped by the changing spatialities of both the terrestrial and oceanic, as well as its own particular space-time rhythms.

As a zone of geographical and cultural activity the coast does not stand still: it is constantly on the move and open ended in its formulations within, alongside and against human experience. By tracing how certain poetic texts have picked up and reworked the line of the shore this thesis has argued for the importance of the coast as a literary terrain for recent British poetry. It has shown the littoral to be a space in which modern poetry can respond to, explore, and imaginatively refashion experiences of shifting geographic scales and understandings of place.

This concluding section brings together the findings of each chapter in response to the questions outlined at the beginning of the thesis, as well as exploring the limits of this work and where it leads. It will stake out the contribution this work has made to understanding the relationship between poetry and the coastline. More broadly it will show how coastal writing can feed back into wider concerns about the relationship of poetry to geography.

The questions posed in the Introduction were: what is the significance of the coastline for a variety of modern British poets? How

---

[1] Washington Irving, 'The Voyage', *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 14-19 (p. 14).

does the shifting terrain of the coastline relate to wider critical readings of the relationship of poetry and place? And how does the relationship of place and poetry at the coastline respond to changing scales of geographic experience, complicating notions of the archipelagic in the process? To show how this thesis has responded to these questions the conclusion will be split into three sections, addressing the areas of poetry and the coastline, poetry and place, and poetry and scale.

Poetry and the Coast

In his contribution to *Architectures of Poetry*, Jed Rasula extolls the 'poetic legacy of the vertical axis', a perception that poetry's spatial infatuation has often been with the vertiginous, from the peaks of British Romantic poets to Pablo Neruda's encounter with Andean ruins and Petrarch's claim to be the first person to scale Mont Ventoux.[2] This thesis has made an argument for the importance of the horizontal in contemporary British poetry, charting how several poets who have paid prominent attention to the coast have worked the lateral sweep of the shore into the rhythms and language of the modern poetic line.

This isn't to say that such terrain has been flattened out. These texts have often yoked the distant line of the horizon and the fraying edge of the shore to an embodied traversal across cliffs and beach fronts, as in Peter Riley's *Sea Watches*, or to a sense of historical and textual depth, which has been traced in Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence* and Robert Hampson's *Seaport*. The shore in these texts has not simply been

[2] Jed Rasula, "When the mind is like a hall": Places of a Possible Poetics', in *Architectures of Poetry*, ed. by Maria Eugenia Diaz Sanchez and Craig Dworkin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 13-26 (p. 13).

an imposition of the horizontal over the vertical, rather it has exposed the coastline as a meeting point for these seemingly antagonistic geometries.

Chapter One demonstrates how Peter Riley identifies the coastline of the Llŷn peninsula as a potential sacred space. In doing this Riley draws on archipelagic notions of the coast as distinct from land-based cores, the search for transcendence in *Sea Watches* seemingly only viable at the geographical edge of Britain. At the same time, elements of global processes of economic extraction and exploitation are never far away, undercutting the sense of the peninsula as a ground for spiritual revelation. Where much archipelagic thinking emphasises the littoral as a zone of spatial connections, Riley's poetry, like all the texts in this thesis, emphasises that the coastline is also a site for temporal disjuncture and the bringing of the past into contact with both the present and an implied sense of the future, through a consideration of coastal geographies of hinterland and horizon and how this shapes the poetry's sense of comings and goings.

Chapter Two places Wendy Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence* in the context of other evocations of poetic communities at the coast, particularly George Crabbe's *The Borough*, and within a wider lineage of female poets, typified by Charlotte Smith, who find the coast as a fugitive geography from within which to write. Mulford builds a historically broad and textually varied sense of the East Anglian coastline. In doing this she also marks the ways in which this landscape is under threat, both from coastal erosion and a history of female expropriation. This chapter shows potential limits to archipelagic thinking as Mulford's attempts at spatial interconnection are unsettled by the historic, and continuing, oppression of women as active agents in the landscape.

Chapter Three focuses on how Robert Hampson and Matt Simpson approach remembering Liverpool through its particular estuarine

geography. Attention to this estuarine character means thinking of the landscape here as more explicitly a portal, a place of exchange and transaction, making use of more traditional cultural associations of archipelagic and coastal spaces as sites of interaction between the local and global. The chapter develops this archipelagic spatial imaginary, tracing how the interchanges between intimate and transnational spatial experience plays out at various scales of memory and history. The chapter also demonstrates, building off of Riley and Mulford, how notions of the archipelagic and coastal can become strained by encounters with power, ideology and the remnants of imperial projects. In Britain, the archipelago as a cultural and political imaginary not only signals a potentially radical sense of interconnection (one drawn from the material geography of the British archipelago itself) but also carries links to a past in which the United Kingdom used oceanic and maritime spaces to extend its dominance across the world.

The final chapter develops the transnational sense of the coastline present in Hampson and Simpson, tracing how the shore has evolved as a space in which Robert Minhinnick can explore a changing sense of Wales. Chapter Four argues that not only does Minhinnick examine (following in Urusula Heise's footsteps) a sense of place and a sense of planet, he also extends the scales of agency at which such activity can be seen to occur. Minhinnick's later poetry displaces human observation as the active agent in poetic composition, instead empowering sand and isotopes with a vibrant and distinct energy. In doing this, he inverts the spatial expansion of local to global, which can sometimes overtake ideas of the archipelagic, showing how essential it is to consider the presence of the smallest particles of matter.

By bringing these poets together, this thesis has demonstrated the varied cultural and spatial character of Britain's coastline, arguing for a

more refined sense of the littoral and archipelagic which does not just emphasise connection but also disjuncture and blockage. In doing this, there is a sense that questions of the cultural and imaginary impact of the archipelagic in British literary studies has to extend beyond the question of devolution to embrace the manifold spatialities of the shoreline, that it is no longer a question of land-based cores and littoral peripheries. These texts also display a sense of the shore in particular, but also the wider geographic trope of the coast itself, as temporally disruptive, this thesis demonstrating that a more complex sense of the archipelagic as a site of connection and separation addresses not just the multiple spatialities of the shore but, crucially, the dynamic space-time of coastal landscapes.

It is important to reinforce that this is a not a sense of one continuous coastline which changes form depending on perspective. This would be a disservice to texts which have been consistently sceptical of claims of national or regional integrity. Rather than reinforcing specific points of interest on a map of the British shoreline, the loco-specific quality of these poems gestures towards the diverse and distinct qualities of Britain's littoral spaces in such a way that they struggle to be reconciled under the formulation of a national coastline. Mulford and Hampson, for example, are not read as responding to different sites of a shared English shoreline but writing within littoral zones which open up on distinct maritime regions, each with their own idiosyncratic spatialities and histories of human use. This is in contrast to the understanding of the unity of the coast demonstrated in, for instance, government plans to complete the England Coast Path, a long distance trail which aims to be 2,795 miles in length and link up existing coastal paths into an unbroken line.[3]

---

[3] See 'England Coast Path' < http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/england-coast-path> and 'England Coast Path: improving public access to the coast' <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast> [Accessed 7 August 2017]

One way to conceptualise these different and distinct coastal zones can be drawn from John Mackinder's 1902 work *Britain and the British Seas*. Here, Mackinder tries to provide a taxonomy of the different littoral waters of the nation, making a distinction between those maritime zones laying to the south and east, towards Europe, and north and west, those facing the Atlantic. Mackinder also identifies several sub-zones: the 'marine antechamber' from Brittany to south west Ireland, the British 'Mediterranean' of the Irish Sea, and 'seas of the oceanic border', comprising the north and west coast of Britain, from south west Ireland to the Orkneys.[4]

While Mackinder characterises the sea more as a barrier than a relational space of interconnection, these distinctions are useful for suggesting ways of categorising the varied literary geographies of this thesis. Minhinnick, Hampson and Simpson all write from and about places on the Atlantic coast of Britain so unsurprisingly they are most attuned to oceanic feelings, images and spatialities. In contrast, Mulford and Riley confront the more enclosed maritime zones of the North Sea and Irish Sea respectively.

Though the North Sea has historically and culturally linked England to Northern Europe and Scandinavia, it is relatively enclosed and circumscribed, at least compared to the Atlantic, hence Mulford's interest in questions of national and regional belonging. Fittingly, like the more prominent Mediterranean, the littoral character of Riley's poetry is predicated on an awareness of the deep historical uses of the peninsula, one which, like the ruins on Greek islands, bears physical remains of earlier forms of thinking and feeling.

---

[4] H. J. Mackinder, *Britain and the British Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), pp. 14-24.

In drawing out how these texts respond intimately to material coastal landscapes at all levels of poetic meaning (aural, visual, semantic), this thesis is intervening in notions of the archipelagic in literary and cultural studies as primarily a site of liberation from land-based cores and spatial connection. This is not to deny that such elements are present in the texts explored here, but that, just as archipelagic and oceanic thinking more generally can break down traditional spatial orders, so to can it encode new blockages and restrictions, or find new formulations for persistent oppressions of gender, race and class.

The Martiniquan poet and theorist Édouard Glissant makes a distinction between the archipelago of Caribbean islands, 'a place of encounter and connivance', and the fixed 'inner sea' of the Mediterranean. While there are questions about how accurate Glissant's characterisation of the Mediterranean as a 'sea that concentrates' is, this distinction provides a sense in which the archipelagic quality of the British Isles can be thought of. Neither 'a sea that explodes' nor imposing and unified, this north Atlantic archipelago displays elements of both interconnection and isolation.[5] The devolutionary character of post-97 Britain, which has been the focus of recent literary critical attention, opens up consideration of the relationship of Britain and Ireland to wider planetary forces in a manner which links regional experiences of Wales, Scotland and England with global economic, social and political processes. Yet, at the same time, the historic formation of the British state (despite, or perhaps in a way because of, its oceanic imperialism), as well as modern phenomena such as Brexit, emphasise the ways in which the archipelagic terrain of the British Isles is also worked into ideas of security and partition.

---

[5] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 33-34.

Through the texts explored here, this thesis has also registered the physical reality of the shore not simply as a porous zone of transmission but as 'a space of demarcation', and how this has impacted cultural responses to the coastline.[6] As Susan Friedman says more generally, '[b]orders have a way of insisting on separation at the same time as they acknowledge connection'.[7] These ruptures in archipelagic thinking around exchange and transmission, as they emerge from poets' engagement with the material geography of the shore, can be seen in how Mulford's sense of belonging and implacement are shaped by the physical deterioration of the East Anglia coast. Similarly, the material presence of waste and rubbish in Minhinnick's littoral writing marks out the coast as a place to think seriously about the sustainability of human relations with the environment, and how human agency and being in the world can negatively affect ideas of inhabitation and belonging.

Poetry and Place

Attention to a more complex and refined sense of the archipelagic in modern British poetry emerges, this thesis has argued, by the way these poets also attend to the questions of place and the sustainability of implacement, both in the specific terrain of the shore but also in relation to wider experiences of global modernity and critical debates about the future of human dwelling.

---

[6] 'Introduction "Twixt Land and Sea: Approaches to Littoral Studies', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 1-20 (p. 11).
[7] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 3.

For Rasula, '[t]he face of the shore is under ceaseless erasure by overinscription'.[8] This anxiety can be found in other critical work on literature and the coast by Amy Cutler, and Christopher Singer's assertion that there is 'no such thing as *the* beach'.[9] Similarly, in distinguishing between beach and shore, Alex Lockwood writes that the shore 'hints towards what has been extinguished'.[10] These readings of littoral spaces echo Falci's more general apprehension that the spaces and places of modern poetry are full of 'dissolving landscapes'.[11] This untenable sense of overinscription could relate to several different concerns. One is that, if read alongside a spatialisation of the sea as a blank space to be criss-crossed by flows of global capital (which has resonances with the non-spaces of Augé), the line of the coast becomes illegible, undone by an overwhelming series of velocities, escapes and returns. The coast is then nothing more than a transition zone between land and sea, between different national communities and economic blocs. It ceases to exist as a definable topography in its own right.

The second sense is by thinking in terms of textural and cultural overdetermination. As Monmonier says in relation to the history of coastal mapping, exact measurements of intertidal zones have always been difficult, and what has resulted is an 'interpreted shoreline', one mediated

---

[8] Jed Rasula, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2002), p. 64.
[9] Amy Cutler, 'Language Disembarked: The Coast and The Forest in Modern British Poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway, 2014), p. 115, and Christopher Singer, *Sea Change: The Shore from Shakespeare to Banville* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), p. 30.
[10] Alex Lockwood, 'The Shore is Not a Beach', in *Land and Identity: Theory, Memory, and Practice*, ed. by Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 259-281 (p. 266).
[11] Eric Falci, 'Place, Space and Landscape', in *Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by C.D. Blanton and Nigel Alderman (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 200-220 (p. 201).

by a variety of different cartographic techniques and indicators.[12] Similarly, the coast has long been a site of cultural interest, at least in the West, from the ancient Greeks onwards. Experiences of the coastline therefore make a variety of different cultural and social codings available simultaneously, often bringing the contemporary and ancient into charged contact with each other. From this position the wealth of material concerning the coast, from poems to environmental reports, bureaucratic management bodies and popular travel literature, suggests the difficulty of direct engagement with the shore. The coast itself, it is revealed, does not really exist except in the writing about it and is itself a kind of absence which allows for a variety of antagonistic and contradictory readings of littoral spaces.

This thesis takes a different view. Even though it acknowledges the abundant ambivalence of the shore, the poets that have been explored here suggest poetic strategies for registering both the fluidity and potential dissolution of the coast and, at the same time, pushing for new formulations of inhabitation at the shore. This perspective is only made clear once the work of radical geographers and spatial theorists such as Lefebvre and Massey have been considered, as well as the role poetry can play in rethinking the production and proliferation of notions of place. While Singer is quite clear that his work focuses on 'the shore as imaginary rather than real', this thesis has argued for the necessity of paying attention to how poetry interacts with the geography and topography of the shoreline and how this physicality is always informing, shaping and challenging cultural and literary responses to the coast.[13]

---

[12] Mark S. Monmonier, *Coast Lines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 23.
[13] Singer, *Sea Change*, p. 27.

By demonstrating the ways *Sea Watches* is framed within the remnants of a Christian pilgrimage (even if this pilgrimage is full of deviations, stops, and retreats), Chapter One shows how Riley constructs a sense of place which must be strived for, one that is the product of both sustained attention but also movement and journey. Llŷn is not fixed and isolated, already defined by ruined coastal chapels, but the continual product of decades of physical, social and cultural engagement.

Chapter Two is the closest this thesis gets to a view of the coastline as a space of dissolution, the sequence suggesting Salthouse will follow the example of Dunwich and be swept under the waves. Yet, rather than finding the erosive pressures of the East Anglian coastline solely as a source of anxiety, this chapter demonstrates how Mulford uses a sense of loss as a potentially liberatory approach to place for those excluded from belonging to both local and national communities. In exploiting the cracks and fractures of geography, discourses of place and poetic writing, Mulford begins to clear the ground for the emergence of a specifically female sense of articulation.

Matt Simpson's account of Bootle troubles sentimental renderings of home, neighbourhood streets acting as sites for acute self-examination and experiences of alienation. The sense of place in these poems is one, Chapter Three demonstrates, that is constantly shifting around notions of belonging and exile, what Simpson calls the simultaneous 'centripetal spin' and 'centrifugal jerk' of the docks.[14] By accounting for the way Liverpool's prominent role in the Atlantic slave trade is worked into Robert Hampson's *Seaport*, this chapter also demonstrates how the spaces of the city can register, obscure and enact a history of racial oppression. By reading these two poets together, Chapter Three draws attention to the way inclusion of

---

[14] Matt Simpson, 'Directions', *An Elegy for the Galosherman: New and Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p. 12.

the estuarine spaces of Liverpool into the cultural remembering of the city help to fray notions of home and place at both individual and communal levels.

In Chapter Four, Minhinnick's shift towards a more dispersed poetics in his later poetry, which is transgressive both in its spatial and temporal rhythms, is shown to pose questions about the relationship of the local to the global. Porthcawl has been almost ever present in Minhinnick's poetry and, in 'To Those on the Promontory', is characterised as the place where '[t]he road ends, is ending here'.[15] This reflects the poetry's own territorial anxieties and questioning of the sustainability of human dwelling in relation to wider ecological crises. Yet, while being aware of this potential precipice for the future of place, the poetry demonstrates other ways of thinking about Porthcawl, presenting the beach as a site of encounter with the residue of a global world and as a point of departure and return, the local maintained as a zone in which transnational journeys can be reflected on and processed.

Each chapter of this thesis has demonstrated how these poets refashion place in a way which is multiple, potentially hybrid, and always receptive to ideas of contingency, fraying and becoming. Place in these texts is never a finished product, rather it shifts and reforms alongside tidal rhythms and littoral patterns of circulation and accumulation. This reflects the understanding of location developed by Doreen Massey, in which place is the product of multiple, ongoing, embodied and historical rhythms and experiences.[16] The contingent and unbounded sense of implacement in operation here allows the relationships between poetic explorations of belonging and these littoral sites to have wider critical resonances.

---

[15] Robert Minhinnick, 'To Those on the Promontory', *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 88-96 (p. 95).
[16] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 152-153.

In asking for a more expansive sense of the ecological, Timothy Morton criticises an environmental sensibility which, drawn from the work of Heidegger, is all about 'location, location, location'. This thesis's exploration of how littoral poetry reconceptualises ideas of place and belonging begins to dismantle this bounded quality Morton critiques. At the same time, these poets do not accept the sudden inversion of this spatial dynamic, away from location to something vast and planetary, which Morton seems to suggest is the corrective to this 'stunted' intellectual and cultural legacy.[17]

Rather, the poets explored in this thesis, register a sense of place that reflects 'an almost/not quite' sense of the world without ever being reduced to a sense of location Nigel Thrift has characterised as 'stages of intensity, traces of movement, speed and circulation'.[18] In this capacity they reflect the kind of thinking John Tomaney encourages, who notes that 'recent research on local belonging emphasizes that, far from being effaced, it continues to matter to most people'.[19] Even though the poets here use the coastline, with its ambiguous relationship to ideas of the environment as that thing which encompasses and surrounds us, to interrogate notions of location and belonging, this thesis has shown how they all re-emphasise a sense of place as important to human understanding of the world.

---

[17] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 27.
[18] Nigel Thrift, 'Inhuman Geographies: Landscapes of Speed, Light and Power', in *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies*, ed. by Paul Coke and Nigel Thrift (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1994), pp. 191-242 (pp. 192, 222-223).
[19] John Tomaney, 'Insideness in an Age of Mobilities', in *Place and Placelessness Revisited*, ed. by Robert Freestone and Edgar Lu (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 95-107 (p. 101).

Poetry and Scale

When arguing for the sustained importance of place, Tomaney factors in that attention to what is close at hand must work alongside an awareness of the local as 'an aperture onto the global.'[20] A reformulation and rethinking of the archipelagic and implacement in modern littoral poetry both produces, and is a product of, increasing attention to the way scales of experience are mediated and represented in such writing.

The critical lineage outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, which links Augé and Casey with Jameson and Falci, emerges from an anxiety over the dissolution of the particulars of place and it's overtaking by a global standardisation of spatial experience. In relation to the coast this manifests as another concern about the disintegration of the shoreline, that there is now little for the coast to be a defining border to. The nation state is deemed increasingly unhelpful as a mechanism for understanding people's relation to the world. However, in contrast to an assumption that the ever increasing interconnections of the planet would lead to the withering away of place, recent developments seem to suggest the opposite. Whether Brexit and the rise of nationalist parties across Europe, or Trump's call to make America great again, questions about the relationship of the local, national, and transnational have been newly invigorated at the centre of popular political discourse.[21]

---

[20] Tomaney, 'Insideness in an Age of Mobilities', pp. 104.
[21] For example see: R. R. Reno, 'The Republicans Are Now the "America First" Party', *The New York Times* (18 April 2017) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/28/opinion/sunday/republicans-are-now-the-america-first-party.html>
Gideon Rachman, 'Brexit and the slide into nationalism', *Financial Times* (1 May 2017) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/28/opinion/sunday/republicans-are-now-the-america-first-party.html>
Anoosh Chakelian, 'Rise of the nationalists: a guide to Europe's far-right parties', *The New Statesman* (8 March 2017)

In Britain, where Scottish independence looked increasingly likely at one point, this new political context forces a rethinking of the devolutionary impulses which power literary archipelagic redrawings of the British Isles. As a result, this thesis's desire to examine ideas of the archipelagic as a way of engaging with people's new sense of the interaction of local, national and global spatialities responds not only to theoretical issues but becomes relevant to the current political moment more broadly. A moment in which David Goodhart can see contemporary tensions not as the product of a disparity in economic and political power but as the result of a culture war between supposedly rootless globalists and 'rooted Somewhere[s]', figures whose deep, unchanging sense of belonging is seen as crucial to the survival of liberal democratic states.[22] This antagonism is also present in mainstream British politics, where Theresa May has explicitly criticized 'citizens of nowhere' as disruptive to a specific British way of life.[23] Arguing for attention towards cultural understandings of dynamic, unbounded and multiple experiences of place and landscape therefore remains crucial to undermining the intellectual basis for exclusionary formations of community and nation built on an often false dichotomy between fixed and cosmopolitan approaches to place.

Literature has always had an important role in conceptions not just of place but of variations in scales of belonging, from the regional to the national. Franco Moretti writes that 'the nation-state […] found the novel. And vice versa: the novel found the nation-state.'[24] Poetry too has been

---

<http://www.newstatesman.com/world/europe/2017/03/rise-nationalists-guide-europe-s-far-right-parties>

[22] David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: Hurst, 2017), p.36.

[23] Theresa May, speech to the Conservative Party Conference, *Telegraph* (5 October 2016) < http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/05/theresa-mays-conference-speech-in-full/> [Accessed 25 September 2017]

[24] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 17.

deeply imbricated in the nation, T. S. Eliot remarking that no art 'is more stubbornly national than poetry'.[25] Poetry, therefore, seems a useful site for tracing contemporary responses to changing scales of geographic experience. As Jahan Ramazani asks in a more explicit postcolonial context, '[h]ow does poetry leave home and return? What makes possible poetry's differently centered [*sic*] cosmopolitanisms?'[26] For British poetry at the coastline, how do such texts respond to both the specificity of the locale and the instantaneous global everywhere of modernity? How do remnants of the national (both politically and culturally) interact with this spatial scope? What happens to poetry when such scales of space and time are applied to it?

One answer in the texts featured in this thesis has been a movement towards either poetic sequences or sustained poetic attention to a particular location. While Riley, Minhinnick and Simpson predominantly employ a singular, poetic voice, in which the deployment of self and subjectivity bear a passing resemblance to earlier lyrical traditions, these poets also prod and pull at the capacity of the lyric self to act as a signifier and receptacle for a totality of human experience. *Sea Watches* disrupts the temporal unity of this lyric perspective, the sequence drawing over a decade of annual family trips to the peninsula into poems which suggest one self-contained journey. Here the moment of poetic revelation is delayed and elongated, disrupted by the business of family activities and Riley's occupation as a bookseller.

In Minhinnick, the broadly empirical voice of the earlier poems (with its tinge of early Auden and Larkins's social pose in its distaste towards the Welsh working class) gives way to a fantastic, surreal voice which has

---

[25] T. S. Eliot, 'The Social Function of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 15-25 (p. 19).
[26] Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 52.

moments of young Dylan Thomas and William Blake. It enjoys filling texts with the rhythms of speech and song, as well as peppering the poems with non-human perspectives. This opens the 'I' of many of these poems up to sudden shifts in time and space, from Porthcawl to Italy, the Neolithic to late twentieth century.

Compared to Minhinnick and Riley, Matt Simpson's poetry can look formally conservative. In its deeply personal account of Bootle it echoes the work of another North West poet, Norman Nicholson (who Simpson acknowledges had a profound impact on him) and could strike one as an almost confessional mode of place-writing, given its familial scope. Nonetheless like Nicholson, who unsettles as much as he conforms to ideas of 'the regional poet', and W. S. Graham (who provides an epigraph to *An Elegy for the Galosherman*), Simpson prods at the poetic self's capacity for recollection and reconciliation, questioning the capacity of poetry as a way of understanding the dynamic between individual and community.

Place, for Simpson, becomes psychologically charged and almost tortuously entangled with self and language. 'Making Arrangements', for instance, measures the distance to come home (which is also a coming 'home to myself') as a 'yardstick of my flesh'.[27] As long as Simpson's sense of deracination is so intimately linked to self-image, no single poem can provide a sense of reconciliation. Hence, Simpson's poetic involvement with Bootle extends to multiple poems and collections over decades of writing. To match the spatial scales of the coast requires, it seems, the extension of poetic attention over entire careers, providing a continual delay of lyric resolution. The relation of self and poem in this context is not one of ephemerality but becomes rather part of an attritional and accretive

---

[27] Matt Simpson, 'Making Arrangements', *An Elegy for the Galosherman: New and Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p. 23.

process by individual poets to gain some measure of implacement within a shifting and unstable terrain (which is at once material, perceptual and psychological).

In contrast, Hampson and Mulford decentre the prominence of the lyric subject, relegating their respective 'I's to just one of a series of historically and socially diverse voices the texts use to create sustained evocations of specific locations. While Riley uses Brenda Chamberlain's writing on the peninsula in his poems, an intertextual aesthetic is much more thoroughgoing in both Hampson and Mulford. Mulford draws on historical documents, scientific accounts of coastal erosion, Virginia Woolf, and Benjamin Britten. Hampson is perhaps even more diverse in the range of his materials, reusing text from Quentin Hughes's architectural work on Liverpool, Terry Coleman's history of emigration and the slave trade, Melville's semi-biographical account of his experience of the city in *Redburn*, a biography of the Beatles and newspaper reports of the 1981 riots among other sources.

Questions of scale, therefore, become less about personal response to the relation of local, national and global in these texts and more about language's own capacity to represent a sense of inhabitation. This sense that language itself is being put under pressure by the scalar effects of modern life is noted in Timothy Clark's observation that '[o]ne symptom of a now widespread crisis of scale is a derangement of linguistic and intellectual proportion in the way people often talk about the environment'. For Clark, this is a breakdown in decorum in which contemporary discourse about saving the planet is not matched by linguistic imperatives to undertake household recycling.[28] In *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, Clark examines how inadequate contemporary critical strategies seem for

[28] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 37.

reading texts in relation to these tensions in scales, seeing both creative literary strategies and critical readings involved in a 'kind of scalar entrapment in the immediate'.[29] This is in contrast to what Clark views as the benefits of finding methods of reading and writing which are amenable to the ways that, '[v]iewed on very long time scales, human history and culture can take on unfamiliar shapes'.[30]

However, Clark focuses predominantly on recent narrative fiction to draw his conclusions about the ineffectuality of literary critical practice.[31] This means he has overlooked the potential for other ways of writing, particularly the poetic, to address these concerns. The capacity for certain types of poetic form to activate these different spatial and temporal frames, particularly in relation to conceptions of self and the individual, is something that has been observed by Richard Kerridge. In several critical essays, Kerridge has drawn attention to what he calls 'Late Modernist, neo-objectivist poetics' and poetry executed in the cut-up, modernist, 'open field' tradition as ways of writing which 'depart from familiar subjectivity in order to represent the decentred, continuous and unbounded flow in which creatures and things continually produce each other.'[32]

While not directly addressing Clark's criticisms, the texts studied in this thesis can be seen as similarly presenting a variety of poetic strategies which acknowledge the continually shifting dimensions of modern life. For Clark, '[t]he scale at which one speak of oneself as a person-with-a-world may be constitutively opaque to understanding beyond a now dangerously narrow spatial-temporal window.'[33] By reworking ideas of lyric completion

---

[29] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 99.
[30] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 101.
[31] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, pp. 77-79.
[32] Richard Kerridge, 'Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre: Urgency, Depth, Provisionality, Temporality', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. by Greg Garrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 361-376 (p. 372).
[33] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 36.

and finality through embedding prolonged sequences of poetic attention into shifting landscapes, or by expanding the referents of the 'I' beyond a singular dramatic persona, the poems explored in this research begin to suggest ways of thinking about being in the world which can start to be articulated beyond the narrow spatial-temporal frame Clark identifies.

At the same time, as Simpson's entangling of childhood memories of alienation and the dockland geography of Bootle suggests, attention to the way modern British poetry responds to questions of place and belonging at the coast requires more than just an awareness of the shifting spatial and temporal scales of the shore. It also demands knowledge of the different ways ideas of scale, vastness and extent emerge in these texts' consideration of a variety of emotional and intellectual experiences. Ranging from notions of the transcendent in Peter Riley, to scales of belonging in Wendy Mulford, familial and social expanses of memory in Hampson and Simpson, and ideas of waste, agency and sustainability in Minhinnick. To think of the interrelation of local and global in these poems is to be aware of scale as far more than a question of spatial disruption.

Crossing the Bar

The texts explored in this thesis suggest that there is no such thing as a singular British coastline, a unified path to trace out on maps or be traversed by heritage organisations. Instead, there are a multiplicity of coastal worlds whose character and cultural representations are a product not just of changing theorisations of space and place, or poetic style, but also the particular histories, cultures and geographies of these littoral zones.

Given this, future work could be carried out by more thoroughly tracing the connections, influences and appropriation of Anglo-Caribbean poets and thinkers into the littoral and archipelagic poetries of the British Isles. In doing this, notions of scale and the interrelation of local and global can begin to emerge at the level not just of textual analysis but also critical activity, as well as in relation to ideas of literary production and consumption. Another direction may be in paying further attention to how contemporary poets explore embodied and material experiences of the shore. Both Barry Cunliffe and Anna Ryan identify the importance not just of sea and sky in helping to give coastal experiences their particular quality but also the role of wind and air.[34] Given Alexandra Harris's 2015 book *Weatherland* on the relationship of the atmosphere to English literature, such attention to a poetry of littoral air and winds seems relevant and rewarding.

Rasula writes that 'poets specialize in bringing out the excess of systems.'[35] Part of the appeal of the coastline to the poets featured in this thesis has been that of the coast as a site of literary and social abundance, the shoreline presenting itself simultaneously to a wide arrange of experience and interpretations. In this ambivalence, poets are able to respond to an array of concerns, from the spiritual to ecological, at a variety of scales, from the intimate and domestic to the transnational and global.

The fundamental tension of land and sea, and its offer of different temporalities and spatial experiences, also allows the poets featured in this thesis to explore the possibility of saying in relation to the geographic

---

[34] Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC-AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.36, and Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p.1.
[35] Rasula, 'When the mind is like a hall', p. 14.

experiences of the shore. From the new buds of language in Minhinnick, ones which seemingly lie outside human experience, to the graphical fragmentation of Mulford's *The East Anglia Sequence*, and Peter Riley's use of a musical form as the basis for *Sea Watches*, these poets have marked and reworked language as it crosses, erodes and breaks at the shoreline, becoming entangled in attempts to make sense of the shifting geographic relations of contemporary life.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ammons, A. R., 'The Art of Poetry No. 73', *The Paris Review*, 139 (Summer, 1996) <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1394/a-r-ammons-the-art-of-poetry-no-73-a-r-ammons>

Aristotle, *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, trans. by W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

Auden, W. H., *The Enchafèd Flood: or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).
—— *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1933*, ed. by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber, 1977).

Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by William Watts, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912).

Barnie, John, *Sea Lilies: Selected Poems, 1984-2003* (Bridgend: Seren, 2006).

Bergvall, Caroline, *Drift* (Brooklyn and Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2014).

Blake, William, *William Blake*, ed. by Michael Mason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Britten, Benjamin, 'England and the Folk Art Problem (1941)', in *On Music*, ed. by Paul Kildea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 31-35.

Brown, George Mackay, *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown*, ed. by Archie Bevan and Brian Murray (London: John Murray, 2005).

Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

Bunting, Basil, *Briggflatts* (Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2009).

Burnside, John, *The Asylum Dance* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009).
—— 'A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology', in *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science*, ed. by Robert Crawford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 91-106.
—— *Selected Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

Byron, Lord, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Chamberlain, Brenda, *Tide-race* (Bridgend: Seren Books, 1987).

Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Classics, 2007).
—— *The Mirror of the Sea* (London: John Grant, 1925).

Cowper, William *The Poetical Works of William Cowper*, ed. by H. S. Milford (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

Crozier, Andrew, *An Andrew Crozier Reader*, ed. by Ian Brinton (Manchester, Carcanet, 2012)

Cunningham, Valentine, and Duncan Wu, ed., *Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

Dabydeen, David, *Turner: New and Selected poems* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2010).

Davie, Donald, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

Deakin, Roger, *Waterlog* (London: Vintage Books, 2000).

Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, abridged and ed. by Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

DeLillo, Don, *Underworld* (London: Picador, 1997).

Dickinson, Mark, *Littoral* (Kenilworth: Prest Roots Press, 2007).

Drayton, Michael, *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. by J. William Hebel, 5 vols (Oxford: Shakespeare Press, 1933).

Eliot, T. S., *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004).
—— 'Religion and Literature', *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), pp. 388-401.
—— 'The Social Function of Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 15-25.

Farley, Paul, *The Atlantic Tunnel* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).
—— *Field Recordings* (London: Donut Press, 2009).
—— *The Ice Age* (London: Picador, 2002).
—— *Tramp in Flames* (London: Picador, 2006).
—— and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011).

Finch, Peter, *Selected Later Poems* (Bridgend: Seren, 2007).

Fisher, Allen, *Place* (Hastings: Reality Street Editions, 2005).

Fisher, Roy, *The Long and Short of It: Poems 1955-2010* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2012).

Gardner, Helen, ed., *The Faber Book of Religious Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

Goodwin, Mark, *Back of A Vast* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2010).
—— *Else* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008).
—— *Layers of Un* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2012).

Graham, W. S., *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005).

Gregson, Ian, and Carol Rumens, ed., *Old City, New Rumours: A Hull Anthology* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2010).

Gross, Philip, 'Reviews', *Poetry London*, 61 (Autumn, 2008), 25-27 <http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=22608>
—— *The Water Table* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2009).

Hampson, Robert, interviewed by Lidia Vianu, *The Argotist Online* <http://www.argotistonline.co.uk/Hampson%20interview.htm>
—— 'Producing the unknown: language and ideology in contemporary poetry', in *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible*, ed. by Robert Hampson and Peter Barry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 134-155.
—— *Seaport* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008).
—— 'Spatial Stories: Joseph Conrad and James Joyce', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 54-64.

Harwood, Lee, *Boston-Brighton* (London: Oasis Books, 1977).
—— *Collected Poems* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2004).

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The English Notebooks*, ed. by Thomas Woodson and Bill Wllis, 2 vols (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1997), II.

H. D., *Sea Garden* (London: Constable and Company, 1916).

Heaney, Seamus, *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).
—— '"Place and Displacement": Recent Poetry from Northern Ireland (1985)', *Wordsworth Circle*, 37.3 (Summer, 2006), 148-156.
—— *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984)

Hesiod, 'Theogony', *Theogony, Works And Days, Testimonia*, ed. and trans. by Glenn W. Most (London: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 2-85.

Hill, Geoffrey, *King Log* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1968).
—— *The Orchards of Syon* (London: Penguin, 2002).
—— *Tenebrae* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978).

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by E. V. Rieu (London: The Folio Society, 1974).

Hopkins, Gerald Manley, *The Major Poems*, ed. by Walford Davies (London: J. M. Bent and Sons, 1979).

Howe, Susan, *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).
—— interviewed by Edward Foster, *Postmodern Poetry: The Talisman Interviews* (Hoboken, NJ: Talisman House, 1994), pp. 48-68.
—— *The Nonconformist's Memorial: Poems by Susan Howe* (New York: New Directions Book, 1993).

Hughes, Ted, *New Selected Poems 1957-1994* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995).

Irving, Washington, *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Routledge, 2008).

Jamie, Kathleen, 'A Lone Enraptured Male', *London Review of Books*, 30.5 (6 March 2008), 25-27.
—— *Findings* (London: Sort Of Books, 2005).
—— *The Tree House* (London: Picador, 2004).

Jay, Peter, ed., *The Sea, The Sea: An Anthology of Poems* (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2005).

Jones, David, *The Anathemata* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952).
—— 'Art and Sacrament (1955)', *Epoch and Artist* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), pp. 143-179.

Joyce, James, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, rev. 2nd edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Keats, John, *Keats: Selected Poems and Letters,* ed. Roger Sharrock (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Kipling, Rudyard, *The Cambridge Edition of the Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by Thomas Pinney, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Larkin, Philip, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003).

Lawrence, D. H., 'The Man who Loved Islands', *Love Among the Haystacks and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 97-124.
—— *Selected Poems*, ed. by Mara Kalnins (London: Everyman Library, 1992).
—— 'Studies in Classic American Literature (viii)', *English Review* (June, 1919), 477-489.

Locke, John, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Penguin, 1997).

MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Complete Poems 1920-1976*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aitken, 2 vols (London: Martin Brian and O'Keeffe, 1978).

Markham, E. A., ed., *Hinterland: Caribbean Poetry from the West Indies and Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1989).

Masefield, John, *Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

McClatchy, J. D., ed., *Poems of the Sea* (London: Everyman's Library, 2001).

Melville, Herman, *Redburn* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963).

Milton, John, *John Milton*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Minhinnick, Robert, *After the Hurricane* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002).
—— 'An Essay by Robert Minhinnick', in *Common Ground: Poets in a Welsh Landscape*, ed. by Susan Butler (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985), pp. 186-188.
—— *Badlands* (Bridgend: Seren, 1996).
—— *The Dinosaur Park* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1985).
—— interviewed by Sam Adams (Carcanet Press, 1997) <http://www.carcanet.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?showdoc=14;doctype=interview>
—— *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008).
—— *Life Sentences* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1983).
—— *The Looters* (Bridgend: Seren, 1989).
—— *Native Ground* (Swansea: Triskele Books, 1979).

Mulford, Wendy, 'After. Word', *Out of Everywhere: Linguistically Innovative Poetry by Women in North America and the UK*, ed. by Maggie O'Sullivan (Hastings: Reality Street Editions, 2006), pp. 239-242.
—— *and suddenly, supposing* (Buckfastleigh: Etruscan Books, 2002).
——'Curved, Odd … Irregular: A Vision of Contemporary Poetry by Women', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 1.3 (1990), pp. 261–274.
—— *The East Anglia Sequence* (Peterborough: Spectacular Diseases, 1998).
—— 'Notes on Writing: A Marxist/Feminist Viewpoint', in *On Gender and Writing*, ed. by Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora Press, 1983), pp. 31-41.
—— 'Susan Howe: A Reading of the Evidence', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 4.1 (1993), 60-62.

Newbolt, Henry, *Collected Poems 1897-1907* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1910).

Nicholson, Norman, *The Pot Geranium* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954).
—— *Sea to the West* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981).
—— *Selected Poems 1940-1982* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).

Olson, Charles, *Call me Ishmael: A Study of Melville* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967).
—— *Collected Prose*, ed. by Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
—— *The Maximus Poems*, ed. by George F. Butterick (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).
—— *Selected Poems*, ed. by Robert Creeley (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

Oswald, Alice, *Dart* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).
—— *A Sleepwalk On The Severn* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

Pickard, Ormonde G., ed., .*Dunwich: Time, Wind, And Sea, Poems 1173-1981* (Ipswich: Penny Press, 1983).

Plato, *Theaetetus and Sophist*, ed. by Christopher Rowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Ponge, Francis, *The Voice of Things*, trans. by Beth Archer (New York: McGraw-Hill Paperback, 1974).

Pound, Ezra, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).
—— *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938).

Powys, John Cowper, *Weymouth Sands* (London: Picador, 1963).

Presley, Frances, 'Common pink metaphor: from The Landscape Room to Somerset Letters', *How2*, 3, 2
<http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_2/ecopoetics/essays/presley.html>
—— interviewed by Edmund Hardy, *Intercapillary Space* (2006)
<http://intercapillaryspace.blogspot.co.uk/2006/10/interview-with-frances-presley.html>
—— *Myne* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2006).

Raban, Jonathan, *Coasting* (London: Collins Harvill, 1986)

Rees-Jones, Deryn, *Consorting with Angels* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2005).
—— *Quiver* (Bridgend: Seren, 2004).

Riley, Denise, *Selected Poems* (Hastings: Reality Street Editions, 2000).

Riley, Peter, *Alstonefield* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003).
—— 'The Books: Retrospective and texts', *April Eye*
<http://www.aprileye.co.uk/books.html>
—— 'Commentary on *Ospita*', *April Eye*
<http://www.aprileye.co.uk/ospitanotes.html>

—— 'The Creative Moment of the Poem', in *Poets on Writing: Britain, 1970-1991*, ed. by Denise Riley (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 92-113.
—— *The Derbyshire Poems* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2010)
—— interviewed by Keith Tuma, *Jacket*, 11 (2000) <http://jacketmagazine.com/11/riley-iv-by-tuma.html>
—— interviewed by Todd Nathan Thorpe, *Jacket*, 35 (2008) <http://jacketmagazine.com/35/iv-peter-riley-ivb-thorpe.shtml>
—— *The Llŷn Writings* (Exeter: Shearsman, 2005).
—— *Passing Measures* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000).

Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Selected Letters 1902-1926,* trans. by. R.C.F. Hull (London: Quartet, 1987), pp. 334-337.

Robinson, Peter, ed., *Liverpool Accents: Seven Poets and a City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

Semmens, Aidan, 'Introduction', *By the North Sea: An anthology of Suffolk Poetry*, ed. by Aidan Semmens (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), pp. 8-11.

Shapcott, Jo, 'Confounding Geography', in *Contemporary Women's Poetry: Reading/Writing/Practice*, ed. by Alison Mark and Deryn Rees-Jones, pp. 40-46.
—— *Tender Taxes* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

Shakespeare, William, *King John*, ed. by L. A. Beaurline (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
—— *King Richard II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002).
—— *The Tempest*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
—— *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. by Jay L. Halio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Simpson, Matt, *An Elegy for the Galosherman: New and Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990).
—— *Collected Poems* (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2011).
—— *Hugging the Shore* (Beeston: Shoestring Press, 2003), pp. 184-191.
—— 'Voices, Accents, Histories: "The place a memory, the memory a place."', in *Liverpool Accents: Seven Poets and a City*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp. 165-169.

Smith, Charlotte, *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Sprackland, Jean, *Hard Water* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003).
—— *Strands: A Year of Discoveries on the Beach* (London: Vintage, 2013).
—— *Tilt* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007).

Swinburne, Algernon Charles, *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 6 vols (London, Chatto and Windus, 1904).

Tarlo, Harriet, ed., *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2011).
—— 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *Jacket*, 32 (April, 2007) <http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml>

Tennyson, Alfred Lord, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995).

Thomas, Dylan, *Collected Poems 1934-1953* (London: Phoenix, 2000).

Thomas, R. S., 'A Frame for Poetry (1966)', in *Selected Prose*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Bridgend: Seren, 1995), pp. 68-73.
—— *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Phoenix, 2000).
—— *Letters to Raymond Garlick: 1951– 1999*, ed. by Jason Walford Davies (Llandysul: Gomer, 2009).

Thoreau, Henry David, *Cape Cod*, ed. by Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Walcott, Derek, *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).
—— *Omeros* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990).

Watts, Carol, *Wrack* (Hastings: Reality Street, 2007).

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967).

Woolf, Virginia, *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007).

Wordsworth, William, *Poems,* ed. by John O. Hayden, 2 vols (London: Penguin Books, 1977).

Yeats, W. B., *Yeats's Poems*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: PAPERMAC, 1989).

Secondary Sources

Ackroyd, Peter *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2002).

Alaimo, Stacy, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press , 2010).
—— 'Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism and New Materialism at Sea', in *Material Ecocriticsm*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 186-203.

Alexander, Catherine, and Joshua Reno, 'Introduction', in *Economies of Recycling: The Global Transformation of Materials, Values and Social Relations*, ed. by Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno (London: Zed Books, 2012), pp. 1-32.

Alexander, Neal, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 71-85.
—— '"Where lives converge": Peter Riley and the Poetics of Place', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 134-147.
—— and David Cooper, 'Introduction', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 1-18.

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

Anderson, John M., '"Beachy Head": The Romantic Fragment Poem As Mosaic', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63, 4 (2000), 547-574.

Anderson, Jon, and Kimberley Peters, '"A perfect and absolute blank": Human Geographies of Water Worlds', in *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 3-19.

Anderson, Jon, 'Relational places: the surfed wave as assemblage and convergence', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30.4 (2012), 570-587.

Armitage, David, and Michael J. Braddick, 'Introduction', in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-12.

Armstrong, Charles I., 'City of Change and Challenge: Liverpool in Paul Farley's Poetry', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neil Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 21-32.

—— *Figures of Memory: Poetry, Space, and the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Augé, Marc, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 2008).

Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1958).
—— *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. by Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: Pegasus Foundation, 1983).

Balasopoulos, Antonis, '"Suffer a Sea Change": Spatial Crisis, Maritime Modernity, and the Politics of Utopia', *Cultural Critique*, 63 (Spring, 2006), 122-156.

Barry, Peter, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
—— '"Out of Transformation": Liverpool Poetry in the Twenty-first Century', in *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 265-288.

Bate, Jonathan, 'Poetry and biodiversity', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 53-70.
—— *The Song of the Earth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Bear, Christopher 'Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery', *Cultural Geographies*, 20.1 (2012), 21-41.

Becherer, Richard, *Science plus Sentiment: César Daly's Formula for Modern Architecture* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1975).

Beckerson, John and John K. Walton, 'Selling Air: Marketing the Intangible at British Resorts', in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, ed. by John K. Walton (Clevedon: Channel View, 2005), pp. 55-68.

Beckett, Fiona, and Terry Gifford, 'Introduction', in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, ed. by Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 7-15.

Belchem, John, 'Introduction: the Peculiarities of Liverpool', in *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Essays in Liverpool History 1790-1940*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), pp. 1-20.
—— *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool Irish, 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

Bell, Daniel, 'The Return of the Sacred: The Argument about the Future of Religion', *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 31.6 (March, 1978), 29-55.

Benjamin, Walter, *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, trans. by Howard Eiland (London: Belknap Press, 2006).
—— *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 2007).

Berger, John, 'The Changing View of Man in the Portrait', *Selected Essays and Articles*, ed. by Nikos Stangos (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 35-41.

Bergson, Henri, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
—— *Time and Free Will*, trans. by F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950).

Berry, Thomas, 'The Viable Human', *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. by George Sessions (London: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 8-18.

Bertram, Vicki, 'Postfeminist Poetry?: "one more word for balls"', in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by James Acheson and Romana Huk (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 269-292.

Biello, David, 'The Art of Life in the Anthropocene', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (13 April 2013) < https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-art-of-life-in-the-anthropocene/>

Blackburne, Neville, *The Restless Ocean* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Limited, 1972).

Blacksell, Mark, 'A Walk on the South West Coast Path: A View from the Other Side', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30, 4 (December, 2005), 518-520.

Bloomfield, Mandy, 'A sea that diffracts', *Foma* 1.1 (2011), 1–10.

Blythe, Ronald, 'Foreword', *By the North Sea: An anthology of Suffolk Poetry*, ed. by Aidan Semmens (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013).

Boelhower, William, 'The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix', *American Literary History*, 20.1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008), pp. 83-101.

Boland, Eavan, *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (Vintage, 1996).

Bornstein, Hilda, 'Afterword: Spun Yarn', *Seaport* (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2008).

Boxall, Peter, '"There's No Lack of Void": Waste and Abundance in Beckett and DeLillo' *SubStance*, 37.2 (2008), 56-70.

Boyer, M. Christine, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (London: The MIT Press, 1996).

Bracewell, Michael, and Linder Sterling, *I Know Where I'm Going: A Guide to Morecambe and Heysham* (London: Book Works, 2003).

Bradford, Richard, *Graphic Poetics* (London: Continuum, 2011).

Brady, Andrea, 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Poet', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 707-726.

Brannigan, John, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p.6.
—— '"Dreaming of the Islands": The Poetry of the Shipping Forecast', *Reconceiving the British Isles: The Literature of the Archipelago* UCD scholarcast, Series 4 (Spring, 2010) <http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/transcripts/shipping_forecast.pdf>

Braudel, Fernand, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. by Siân Reynolds, 2 vols (London: Collins, 1972).

Brett, Philip, *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Brinton, Ian, *Contemporary Poetry: Poets and Poetry since 1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Broom, Sarah, *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Brown, Jacqueline Nassy, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Buck, Claire, 'Poetry and the Women's Movement in Postwar Britain', in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by James Acheson and Romana Huk (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 81-112.

Buell, Lawrence, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 1995).
—— *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
—— *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U. S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

Buttimer, Anne, 'Humboldt, Granö and Geo-poetics of the Altai', *Fennia*, 188.1 (2010) 11–36.

Byatt, A. S., 'Introduction', in *Memory: An Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. xii-xx.

Caddel, Richard, and Peter Quartermain, 'Introduction'*, Other: British and Irish Poetry since 1970*, ed. by Richard Caddel and Peter Quatermain (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), pp. xv-xxix.

Cahill, Susan, Emma Hegarty and Emilie Morin, 'Foreword: Waste and Abundance: The Measure of Consumption', *SubStance*, 37.2 (2008), 3-7.

Cambers, G., 'Temporal Scales in Coastal Erosion Systems', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 1.2 (1976), 246-256.

Campbell, SueEllen, 'The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structural Meet', in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 124-136.

Carson, Rachel *The Edge of the Sea* (London: Panther Books, 1965).
—— *The Sea Around Us* (London: Staples Press Limited, 1952).

Carter, Paul, 'Dark with Excess of Bright: Mapping the Coastlines of Knowledge', in *Mappings*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 125-147.

Casanova, José, 'Are We Still Secular? Explorations on the Secular and the Post-Secular', in *Post-Secular Society*, ed. by Peter Nynäs, Mika Lassander and Terhi Utriainen, (London: Transaction Publishers, 2012), pp. 27-46.

Casey, Edward S., 'Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91.4 (2001), 683-693.
—— *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).
—— *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
—— *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
—— *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

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

Christianson, Aileen, 'Gender and nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries', in *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 67-82.

Clark, Timothy, *Ecocriticism On The Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)
—— *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
—— 'Nature, Post Nature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. by Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 75-89.
—— 'Scale', in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change*, ed. by Tom Cohen (London: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 148-166.

Cohen, Margaret, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 657-662.

Coleman, Simon, 'Do You Believe in Pilgrimage?', *Anthropological Theory*, 2.3 (2002), 355-368.
—— 'Pilgrimage and the Blessings of Place-making: Reflections on and beyond the Anthropology of Pilgrimage', in *Pilgrims and Travellers in Search of the Holy*, ed. by René Gothóni (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 31-51.

Coleman, Terry, *Passage to America: A History of Emigrants from Great Britain and Ireland to America in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London: Hutchins, 1972).

Connery, Christopher L., 'The Oceanic Feeling and The Regional Imaginary', in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (London: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 284-311.

Conran, Tony, '*Poetry Wales* and the Second Flowering', in *Welsh Writing in English*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 222-254.

Cooney, Gabriel, 'Introduction: Seeing Land from the Sea', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 323-328.

Cooper, Ian, *The Near and Distant God* (London: Legenda, 2008).

Cooper, J. A. G., and J. Mckenna, 'Working with Natural Processes: The Challenge for Coastal Protection Strategies', *The Geographical Journal*, 174.4 (December, 2008), 315-331.

Corbin, Alain, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside 1750-1840*, trans. by Jocelyn Phelps (London: Penguin, 1994).

Corcoran, Neil, *English Poetry since 1940* (London: Longman, 1993).

Cosgrove, Denis E., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

Costa Meyer, Esther da, 'The Place of Place in Memory', *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. by Marc Treib (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 176-193.

Coyle, Michael, 'The Implications of Inclusion: Historical Narrative in Pound's Canto LXXXVIII', *ELH*, 54, 1 (Spring, 1987), 215-230.

Crawford, Robert, *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

Cresswell, Tim, 'Geographies of poetry/poetries of geography', *Cultural Geographies*, 21.1 (2014), 141–146.
—— *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
—— *Place: a short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

Crinson, Mark, 'Urban memory - an introduction', in *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City*, ed. by Mark Crinson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. xi-xxiii.

Cunliffe, Barry, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC-AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Curran, Stuart, 'Charlotte Smith and British Romanticism', *South Central Review*, 11.2 (Summer, 1994), 66-78.
—— 'Introduction', *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. xix-xxix.

Curthoys, Ann, and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?* 2nd edn (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010).

Curtis, Ben, *Studies in Welsh History: South Wales Miners, 1964-1985* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

Cusack, Tricia, 'Introduction: Exploring the Water's Edge', in *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge*, ed. by Tricia Cusack (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 1-17.

Cutler, Amy, 'Language Disembarked: The Coast and The Forest in Modern British Poetry' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway, 2014).
—— '"Whitby is a statement": Littoral Geographies in British Poetry', in *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 120-133

Davidson, Ian, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
—— *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Davies, Glyn, 'The face in the mirror', *Planet*, 90 (1991-1992), 3–6.

Davies, Paul, and John Gribbin, *The Matter Myth: Dramatic Discoveries That Challenge Our Understanding of Physical Reality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004).

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
—— and George Handley, 'Introduction: Towards an Aesthetics of the Earth', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3-39.

Derrida, Jacques, 'Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone', trans. by. Samuel Weber, in *Religion*, ed. by Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-78.
—— 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman, *Yale French Studies*, 48 (1972), 74-117.

Devall, Bill, and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1985).

Dietrich, René, 'Towards a Poetics of Liminality in "This Space Between Spaces": The Shore Lines of Contemporary American Poetry', *Anglia* 125.3 (2007), 448-464.

Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Dowson, Jane, and Alice Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Duncan, Andrew, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

Dworkin, Craig, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: A Harvest Book, 1987).

Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 'Memory', *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols (London: Routledge, 1903), XII, pp. 61-81.
—— 'Nature; Addresses, and Lecture', *Essays and Lectures*, ed. by Joel Porte (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), pp. 1-230.

Elden, Stuart, 'Politics, Philosophy, Geography: Henri Lefebvre in Recent Anglo-American Scholarship', *Antipode*, 33 (2010), 809–825.

Empson, William, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

Entwistle, Alice, *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women Rewriting Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).
—— 'Post-pastoral perspectives on landscape and culture', in *Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*, ed. by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 136-153.
—— 'Taking Place: Deixis, Collaboration and the Gender Politics of the Aesthetic', in *Placing Poetry*, ed. by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 69-92.
—— 'Writing [W]here: Gender and Cultural Positioning in Ireland and Wales', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry,* ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 461-480.

Eshun, Gabriel, and Clare Madge, 'Poetic World-Writing in a Pluriversal World: a provocation to the creative (re)turn in geography', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 17.6 (2016), 778-785.

Esty, Jed, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Falci, Eric, 'Place, Space and Landscape', in *Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by C.D. Blanton and Nigel Alderman (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 200-220.

Feigel, Lara, and Alexandra Harris, ed., *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside*, 2nd edn (Peter Lang, Oxford, 2009).

Ferenczi, Sandor, *Thalassa: A Story of Genitality*, trans. by Henry Alden Bunker (London: Karnac, 2005).

Fiddian, Val, 'The Girdlestone family of Kelling', *Salthouse History* (2005) <http://www.salthousehistory.co.uk/girdlestones.html>

Fjellberg, Anders, 'The Boys Who Could See England', *New Statesman* (16 July 2015) <http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/07/boys-who-could-see-england>

Ford, O. J., 'Charles Olson and Carl Sauer: Towards a Methodology of Knowing', *boundary 2*, 2.1-2 (Autumn, 1973-Winter, 1974), 145-150.

Forrest-Thomson, Veronica, *Poetic Artifice: A Theory of Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

Forster, E. M., 'George Crabbe and Peter Grimes: A Lecture Given at the Aldeburgh Festival of 1948', *Two Cheers for Democracy* (Harvest Books: London, 1977), pp. 171-187.
—— 'George Crabbe: The Poet and the Man', in Philip Brett, *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 3-7.

Foucault, Michel, 'Of Other Spaces' trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring, 1986), 22-27.

Fowler, Chris, and Vicki Cummings, 'Places of Transformation: Building Monuments from Water and Stone in the Neolithic of the Irish Sea', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9.1 (March, 2003), 1-20.

Fraser, Kathleen, *Translating the Unspeakable: Poetry and the Innovative Necessity* (London: The University of Alabama Press, 2000).

French, Peter W., 'The Changing Nature of, and Approaches to, UK Coastal Management at the Start of the Twenty-First Century', *The Geographical Journal*, 170.2 (June, 2004), 116-125.

Freud, Sigmund, 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), XIX, pp. 225-232.

Friedman, Susan Stanford, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Frost, Diane, and Peter North, *Militant Liverpool: A City on the Edge* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
—— and Richard Phillips, *Liverpool '81: Remembering the Riots* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

Gairn, Louisa, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

Games, Alison, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *American Historical Review*, 111.3 (2006), 741–757.

Gardner, Helen, *Religion and Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).

Garrard, Greg, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2012).

Ghosh, Amitav, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Giddens, Anthony, 'Time, Space and Regionalisation', in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. by Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 265-295.

Gifford, Terry, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999).
—— 'Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral, and Post-Pastoral', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, ed. by Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17-30.

Giles, Paul, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (London: Duke University Press, 2002).

Gillis, John R., 'The Blue Humanities', *Humanities*, 34.3 (May-June, 2013) <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/mayjune/feature/the-blue-humanities>
—— 'Island Sojourns', *Geographical Review*, 97.2 (April, 2007), 274-287.

Gilroy, Paul, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

Glissant, Édouard, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Goff, Jacques Le, *History and Memory*, trans. by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Goodby, John, *The Poetry of Dylan Thomas: Under the Spelling Wall* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

Goodbody, Axel, and Kate Rigby, ed., *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

Goodhart, David, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: Hurst, 2017).

Gothóni, René, 'Introduction', in *Pilgrims and Travellers in Search of the Holy*, ed. by René Gothóni (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 1-8.

Graburn, Nelson H. H., 'Tourism: The Sacred Journey', in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. by Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), pp. 21-36.

Grange, Joseph, 'Place, body and situation', in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 71-84.

Gregson, Ian, 'The Baghdad Moon, the Pepsi Globe: Robert Minhinnick', *PN Review*, 31.6 (July-August, 2005), 52-55 <http://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=2516>
—— *The New Poetry In Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).

Griem, Julika, 'John Burnside's Seascapes', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 87-106.

Habermas, Jürgen, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25 (Autumn, 2008), 17-29.

Halbwachs, Maurice, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Hall, John, 'On *Lines on the Liver* and *Tracks and Mineshafts*', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 35-42.

Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
—— *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006).

Harvie, Christopher, *A Floating Commonwealth: Politics, Culture and Technology on Britain's Atlantic Coast, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Hatch, Ronald B., *Crabbe's Arabesque: Social Drama in the Poetry of George Crabbe* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976).

Hatherley, Owen, 'Coastal towns are easily mocked, but we should not brush over their struggle', *The Guardian*, 30 October 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/30/coastal-towns-mocked-not-brush-over-struggle>
—— *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London: Verso, 2010).

Head, Dominic, 'The (im)possibility of ecocriticism', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 27-39.

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).
—— *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 2001).

Heise, Ursula K., *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Herd, David, 'Dislocating Country: Post-War English Poetry and the Politics of Movement', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 497-516.

Herson, John, '"Stirring spectacles of cosmopolitan animation": Liverpool as a diasporic city, 1825-1913', in *The Empire in One City?: Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past*, ed. by Sheryllynne Haggerty, Anthony Webster and Nicholas J. White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 55-77.

Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans. by Simon Lee (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

Hesse, Barnor, 'White Governmentality: Urbanism, nationalism, racism', in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. by Sallie Westwood and John Williams (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 86-103.

Hooker, Jeremy, *Imagining Wales: A View of Modern Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).
—— *Poetry of Place: Essays and Reviews 1970-1981* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1982).
—— *The Presence of the Past: Essays on Modern British and American Poetry* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1987).

hooks, bell, *Yearnings: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (London: Turnaround, 1991).

Huchon, René, *George Crabbe and His Times 1754-1832: A Critical and Biographical Study*, trans. by Frederick Clarke (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

Hughes, Quentin, *Seaport: Architecture and Townscape in Liverpool* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969).

Huk, Romana, 'Poetry and Religion', *Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Nigel Alderman and C.D. Blanton (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 221-242.

Hunter, T. Gerald, 'Poetry 1969-1996', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature c. 1900-1996*, ed. by Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 117-158.

Inge, John, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

Irigaray, Luce, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: Athlone Press, 1993).

Jakobson, Roman, *Selected Writings III: Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, ed. by Stephen Rudy (New York: Mouton, 1981).

Jameson, Fredric, *The Jameson Reader*, ed. by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

Jarvis, Matthew, 'In/human Place: The Poetry of John Barnie', in *Placing Poetry*, ed. by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 149-168.
—— 'Saving The Earth: Wendy Mulford's Salthouse', *ISLE*, 16.3 (Summer, 2009), 469-486.
—— *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008).

Jasanoff, Maya, 'A Passage from Hong Kong', *New York Review of Books* (3 April 2014)
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/apr/03/passage-hong-kong/?insrc=hpss>

Jenkins, Keith, *Re-thinking History* (Routledge: London, 2003).

Joas, Hans, *Do We Need Religion?: On the experience of self-transcendence*, trans. by Alex Skinner (London: Paradigm, 2008).

—— *Faith as an Option: Possible Futures for Christianity*, trans. by Alex Skinner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Johnson, Nuala, and Geraldine Pratt, 'Memory', *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. by Derek Gregory and others, 5th edn (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 453-455.

Jones, David K. C, 'Environments of Concern', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 8.4 (1983), 429-457.

Jones, Glyn, *The Dragon has Two Tongues* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1968).

Jones, Owain, 'Lunar-solar Rhythmpatterns: Towards the Material Cultures of Tides', *Environment and Planning A,* 43.10 (2011), 2285-2303.
—— and Joanne Garde-Hansen, 'Introduction', in *Geography and Memory: Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*, ed. by Owain Jones, Joanne Garde-Hansen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) pp. 1-18.

Kermode, Frank, 'Palaces of Memory', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 3-13.
—— *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Kerridge, Richard, 'Climate Change and Contemporary Modernist Poetry', in *Poetry and Public Language*, ed. by Tony Lopez and Anthony Caleshu (Exeter: Shearsman, 2007), pp. 131-148.
—— 'Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre: Urgency, Depth Provisionality, Temporality', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. by Greg Garrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 361-376.
—— 'Ecocriticism', *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, 21.1 (January, 2013), 345-374.
—— 'Introduction', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 1-9.

Kennedy, David, and Christine Kennedy, *Women's Experimental Poetry in Britain 1970-2010: Body, Times and Locale* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

Kennedy, Greg, *An Ontology of Trash* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

Kent, P. E., 'North Sea Exploration: A Case History', *The Geographical Journal*, 133.3 (September, 1967), 289-301.

Kerrigan, John, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Kierkegaard, Søren, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Kinnahan, Linda A., 'Experimental Poetics and the Lyric in British Women's Poetry: Geraldine Monk, Wendy Mulford, and Denise Riley', *Contemporary Literature*, 37.4 (Winter, 1996), 620-670.
—— 'Feminism's experimental "work at the language-face", in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry*, ed. by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 154-178.
—— *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004).

Kinnard, Jacob N., *Places in Motions: The Fluid Identities of Temples, Images, and Pilgrims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Klaver, Irene J., 'Phenomenology on (the) Rocks', in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. by Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), pp. 155-169.

Knott, Kim, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005).

Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

Larkin, Peter, '*Sea Watches*: Little More Than Arrival', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 115-123.

Last, Angela, 'We Are the World? Anthropocene Cultural Production between Geopoetics and Geopolitics', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 34.2-3, (2017) 147–168.

Latour, Bruno, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. by Catherine Porter (London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Lawton, Richard, 'The Components of Demographic Change in a Rapidly Growing Port-City: The Case of Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century', in *Population and Society in Western European Port-Cities, c. 1650-1939*, ed. by Richard Lawton and Robert Lee (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), pp. 91-123.

Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
—— *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. by Stuart Elden and Neil Brenner, trans. by Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

Lindenlauf, Astrid, 'The Sea as a Place of No Return in Ancient Greece', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 416-433.

Liu, Edgar, and Robert Freestone, 'Revisiting Place and Placelessness', in *Place and Placelessness Revisited*, ed. by Robert Freestone and Edgar Liu (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-19.

Lockwood, Alex, 'The Shore is Not a Beach', in *Land and Identity: Theory, Memory, and Practice*, ed. by Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 259-281.

Löfgren, Orvar, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (London: University of California Press, 1999).

Lowenstein, Tom, 'Excavation and Contemplation: Peter Riley's *Distant Points*', *The Gig*, 4-5 (November 1999-March 2000), 185-195.

Lucas, John, 'Crabbe's Disorderly Nature', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 110-123.

Lyndon, Donlyn, 'The Place of Memory', in *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. by Marc Treib (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 62-85.

Mabey, Richard, *The Unofficial Countryside* (Stanbridge: Little Toller Books, 2010).

Mack, John, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2011).

Mackinder, H. J. *Britain and the British Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915).

Magrane, Eric, 'Situating Geopoetics', *GeoHumanities*, 1.1 (2015), 86-102.

Maleuvre, Didier, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (London: University of California Press, 2011).

Mandelbrot, B. B., 'How long is the coast of Britain?: Statistical self-similarity and fractional dimension', *Science*, 156 (1967), 636-638.

Marston, Sallie A., and Sarah De Leeuw, 'Creativity and geography: Toward a politicized intervention', *Geographical Review*, 103.2 (2013), iii–xxvi.

Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2010).
—— 'New Directions', in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. by Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 9-19.
—— *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
—— *World City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).

May, Simon, *Love: A Secret History* (Yale University Press, 2011).

May, Theresa, speech to the Conservative Party Conference, *Telegraph* (5 October 2016) < http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/05/theresa-mays-conference-speech-in-full/>

McClure, John A., *Partial Faiths: Postsecular Fiction in the Age of Pynchon and Morrison* (University of Georgia, 2007).

McDowell, Linda, 'Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspective', in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Duncan (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 28-44.

McFadden, Loraine, 'Exploring the Challenges of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Reflecting on Contributions to "Integration' from Geographical Thought"', *The Geographical Journal*, 174.4 (December, 2008), 299-314.

McGough, Roger, 'Keep your charity to yourselves - we are proud to be Scousers', *Daily Mail*, 2 October 1998, p. 11.

Meek, James, 'Why are you still here?', *London Review of Books*, 37.8 (23 April 2015), 3-14 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n08/james-meek/why-are-you-still-here>

Mellor, Anne K., 'Romanticism, Difference and the Aesthetic', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 34.2 (1999), 127- 141.

Mengham, Rod, 'The Altered Sublime: Raworth, Crozier, Prynne', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 481-494.

Mentz, Steve, *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550–1719* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Basic Writings*, ed. by Thomas Baldwin (London: Routledge, 2004).
—— *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

Merriman, Emily Taylor, '"Metamorphic power": Geoffrey Hill and Gerard Manley Hopkins', in *Ecstasy and Understanding: Religious Awareness in English Poetry from the Late Victorian to the Modern Period*, ed. by Adrian Grafe (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 145-160.

Middleton, Peter, 'Imagined Readership and Poetic Innovation in U.K. Poetry', in *Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Poetries Transnationally*, ed. by Romana Huk (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), pp. 128-142.
—— and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Miller, J. Hillis, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).
—— *Topographies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

Milne, Graeme J., 'Maritime Liverpool', in *Liverpool 800: Culture, Character and History*, ed. by John Belchem (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 257-309.

Mishra, Pankaj, 'What Is Great about Ourselves', *London Review of Books*, 39.18 (21 September 2017), 3-7.

Mitropoulos, Angela, and Matthew Keim, 'Cross-Border Operations', *The New Inquiry* (18 November 2015) <http://thenewinquiry.com/features/cross-border-operations/>

Monmonier, Mark S., *Coast Lines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Moretti, Franco, *Atlas of the European novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998).

Morgan, D. Densil, *The Span of the Cross: Christian Religion and Society in Wales 1914-2000* (Cardiff: University of Cardiff Press, 2011).

Morgan, Kenneth, 'Liverpool's Dominance in the British Slave Trade, 1740-1807', in *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, ed. by David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 14-42.

Morgan, Kenneth O., *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981).

Morris, Colin, 'Introduction', in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-11.

Morton, Timothy, 'Coexistence and Coexistents: Ecology without a World', in *Ecocritical Theory: New European Approaches*, ed. by. Axel Goodbody and Kate Rigby (London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 169-180.
—— *The Ecological Thought* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010).
—— interviewed by Peter Gratton, *Philosophy in a Time of Error* (2010) <https://philosophyinatimeoferror.com/2010/05/10/tim-morton-the-interview/>

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

Murphy, Michael, and Deryn Rees-Jones, 'Introduction: Sounding Liverpool', in *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Michael

Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 1-28.

Murphy, Peter, *The English Coast: A History and a Prospect* (London: Continuum, 2009).

Naess, Arne, 'The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects', in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. by George Sessions (London: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 64-84.
—— 'Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World', in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. by George Sessions (London: Shambhala, 1995), pp. 225-239.

Naylor, Paul, *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

Neisser, Ulric, 'Memory with a Grain of Salt', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 80-88.

Nicholls, Robert J., and Julia Branson, 'Coastal Resilience and Planning for an Uncertain Future: An Introduction', *The Geographical Journal*, 164.3 (November, 1998), 255-258.

Noel-Todd, Jeremy, '"In Different Voices": Modernism Since The 1960s', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 111-129.

Nora, Pierre, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', in *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, 3 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), I, pp. vii-xxii.

Norman, Philip, *Shout!: The True Story of the Beatles* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1981).

O'Brien, Sean, *The Deregulated Muse* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1998).

Ogborn, Miles, 'Mapping Words', *New Formations*, 57 (Winter, 2005), 145-149.

O'Hara, Glen, '"The Sea Is Swinging into View": Modern British Maritime History in a Globalised World', *The English Historical Review*, 124.510 (October, 2009), 1109-1134.

Olsen, Redell, 'Postmodern Poetry in Britain', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry*, ed. by Neil Corcoran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 42-56.

—— 'Strategies of Critical Practice: Recent Writing on Experimental and Innovative Poetry by Women: A Review Essay', *Signs*, 33.2 (Winter, 2008), 371-387.

Orton, Jason, and Ken Worpole, *The New English Landscape* (London: Field Station, 2013).

O'Sullivan, Aidan, 'Place, Memory and Identity among Estuarine Fishing Communities: Interpreting the Archaeology of Early Medieval Fish Weirs', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 449-468.

Patton, Kimberley, *Sea Can Wash Away All Evils* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

Peach, Linden, 'Paper Margins: the 'outside' in poetry in the 1980s and 1990s', in *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2002), pp. 101-116.
—— 'Wales and the Cultural Politics of Identity: Gillian Clarke, Robert Minhinnick and Jeremy Hooker', in *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by James Acheson and Romana Huk (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 373-396.

Penning-Rowsell, Edmund C., and John W. Handmer, 'Flood Hazard Management in Britain: A Changing Scene', *The Geographical Journal*, 154.2 (July, 1988), 209-220.

Perloff, Marjorie, 'After Free Verse: The New Non-Linear Poetries' (1998) <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/perloff/free.html>
—— *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the poetry of the Pound tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
—— *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
—— 'Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the Nineties', *Diacritics*, 26.3-4 (Autumn-Winter, 1996), 104-123.

Pevsner, Nikolaus and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk I: Norwich and North East* (London: Yale University Press, 2002).

Plumwood, Val, 'Journey to the Heart of Stone', in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, ed. by Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 17-36.

Pollard, Arthur, ed., *Crabbe: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

Poole, Richard, 'Natural Elegies', *PN Review*, 10.3 (January-February, 1984), 78-79.

Pratt, Mary Louise, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

Quartermain, Peter, *Disjunctive Poetics: From Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky to Susan Howe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Ramazani, Jahan, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
—— *A Transnational Poetics* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Rasula, Jed, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2002).
—— "When the mind is like a hall": Places of a Possible Poetics', *Architectures of Poetry*, eds. Maria Eugenia Diaz Sanchez and Craig Douglas Dworkin (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 13-26.

Read, Simon, 'Odd Times', in *New Aldeburgh Anthology*, ed. by Ariane Bankes and Jonathan Reekie (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 44-46.

Relph, Edward, 'The Paradox of Place and the Evolution of Placelessness', in *Place and Placelessness Revisited*, ed. by Robert Freestone and Edgar Lu (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 20-34.
—— *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 2008).

Rennhak, Katharina, 'Dover Beach and the Politics and Poetics of Perspective', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 37-52.

Richards, Shaun, 'Cool Enough for Lou Reed?: The plays of Ed Thomas and the cultural politics of South Wales', in *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 137-153.

Richter, Virginia, and Ursula Kluwick, 'Introduction "Twixt Land and Sea: Approaches to Littoral Studies', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 1-20.

Ricoeur, Paul, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Roberts, Michael Symmons, 'Contemporary Poetry and Belief', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 694-706.

Romm, James, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Rose, Gillian, 'Looking at Landscape: the Uneasy Pleasures of Power', in *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*, ed. by Linda McDowell and Joanne P. Sharp (London: Arnold, 1997) pp. 193-200.

Rose, Steve, 'Memories are Made of This', in *Memory: an Anthology*, ed. by A.S. Byatt and Harriet Harvey Wood (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), pp. 54-67.

Ryan, Anna, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

Rydin, Yvonne, 'Beaches', in *Patterned Ground*, ed. by Stephan Harrison, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), pp. 151-153.

Sack, Robert David, *Conceptions of Space in Social Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

Sagar, Keith, *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes*, 2nd edn (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

Sansom, Ian, 'Cheesespreadology', *London Review of Books*, 18.5 (7 March 1996), 26-27 <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v18/n05/ian-sansom/cheesespreadology>

Saunders, Angharad, 'Literary Geography: Reforging the Connections', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34.4 (2010), 436-452.

Sauer, Carl O., *Land and Life: A Selection of Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, ed. by John Leighly (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1963).

Scanlan, John, *On Garbage* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).

Scarfe, Norman, *The Suffolk Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972).

Schama, Simon, *Landscape and Memory* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

Scott, Jonathan, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500- 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Seamon, David, and Robert Mugerauer, 'Dwelling, Place and Environment: An Introduction', in *Dwelling, Place and Environment*, ed. by David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 1-12.

Sharp, Joanne P., 'Gendering Nationhood: A feminist engagement with national identity', in *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 97-108.

Sheldrake, Philip *Living*, *Between Worlds: Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995).

Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry, 'Places to play, places in play', in *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*, ed. by Mimi Sheller and John Urry (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-10.

Shennan, Ian, 'Sea-Level Changes and the Threat of Coastal Inundation', *The Geographical Journal*, 159.2 (July, 1993), 148-156.

Sheppard, Robert, *Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents, 1950-2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).
—— ed., *The Salt Companion to Lee Harwood* (Cambridge: Salt, 2007).

Shields, Rob, *Places on the Margin* (London: Routledge, 1991).

Sigworth, Oliver F., *Nature's Sternest Painter* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965).

Sinclair, Iain, 'Infamous and Invisible: a Manifesto for Those Who Do not Believe in Such Things', *Conductors of Chaos*, ed. by Iain Sinclair (London: Picador, 1996), pp. xiii-xx.

Sinfield, Alan, 'Varieties of Religion', in *Society and Literature 1945-1970*, ed. by Alan Sinfield (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 87-117.

Singer, Christopher, *Sea Change: The Shore from Shakespeare to Banville* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).

Smith, Dai, 'The Valleys: Landscape and Mindscape', in *Glamorgan County History*, ed. by Prys Morgan, 6 vols (Cardiff: Glamorgan History Trust, 1988), VI, pp. 129-149.
—— *Wales! Wales?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

Smith, Jos, 'An archipelagic literature: re-framing "The New Nature Writing"', *Green Letters*, 17.1 (2013) 5-15.

Smith, Stan, *Poetry and Displacement* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

Smith, Steven D., *The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Sodeman, Melissa, 'Charlotte Smith's Literary Exile', *ELH*, 76.1 (Spring, 2009), 131-152.

Soja, Edward W., *Postmetropolis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).
—— *Thirdspace* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996).

Springer, Simon, 'Earth Writing', *GeoHumanities*, 3.1, (2017) 1-19.

Steers, J. A., 'The East Anglian Coast', *The Geographical Journal*, 69.1 (January, 1927), 24-43.
—— and others , 'The Storm Surge of 11 January 1978 on the East Coast of England', *The Geographical Journal*, 145.2 (July, 1979), 192-205.

Steinberg, Philip E., 'Insularity, Sovereignty and Statehood: The Representation of Islands on Portolan Charts and the Construction of the Territorial State', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B Human Geography*, 87.4 (2005), 253-265.
—— 'The Maritime Mystique: Sustainable Development, Capital mobility, and Nostalgia in the World Ocean', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 17.4 (1999), 403-426.
—— *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Steiner, George, *Language and Silence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
—— *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

Strasser, Susan, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).

Summers, Dorothy, *The East Coast Floods* (London: David and Charles, 1978).

Szabo, Daniel, '"For the failure of language there is no redress": R.S. Thomas, poetry and prayer', in *Ecstasy and Understanding: Religious Awareness in English Poetry from the Late Victorian to the Modern Period*, ed. by Adrian Grafe (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 124-134.

Tally Jr., Robert T., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Taussig, Michael, 'The Beach (A Fantasy)', *Critical Enquiry*, 26.2 (2000), 248-278.

Tennyson, Julian, 'The Suffolk Sea', in *New Aldeburgh Anthology*, ed. by Ariane Bankes and Jonathan Reekie (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 16-17.

Terdiman, Richard, *Present Past: Modernity and Memory Crisis* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Thomas, M. Wynn, *Internal Difference* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).
—— 'Literature in English', in *Glamorgan County History*, ed. by Prys Morgan, 6 vols (Cardiff: Glamorgan History Trust, 1988), VI, pp. 353-366.
—— 'Prints of Wales: Contemporary Welsh poetry in English', in *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*, ed. by Hans-Werner Ludwig and Lothar Fietz (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 97-114.

Thompson, Michael, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Thrift, Nigel, 'Inhuman Geographies: Landscapes of Speed, Light and Power', in *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies*, ed. by Paul Coke and Nigel Thrift (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1994), pp. 191-242.
—— *Spatial Formations* (London: Sage, 1996).

Thurston, Michael and Nigel Alderman, *Reading Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

Tillich, Paul, *Courage to Be* (Yale: Nota Bene, 2000).

Tomaney, John, 'Insideness in an Age of Mobilities', in *Place and Placelessness Revisited*, ed. by Robert Freestone and Edgar Lu (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 95-107.

Topping, Angela, 'Travelling and hopefully getting there: Helen Dunmore, George Szirtes and Matt Simpson', *Orbis*, 121 (Spring, 2002), 21-23.

Trigg, Dylan, *Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Chicago: Ohio University Press, 2012).

Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).
—— *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

Tuma, Keith, *Fishing by Obstinate Isles: Modern and Postmodern British Poetry and American Readers* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

Turner, Victor, and Elizabeth L. B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

Urry, John *Offshoring* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).
—— 'Social Relations, Space and Time', in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. by Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 20-48.

Van de Noort, Robert, 'An Ancient Seascape: The Social Context of Seafaring in the Early Bronze Age', *World Archaeology*, 35.3 (December, 2003), 404-415.

Vannini, Phillip, and Jonathan Taggart, *Off the Grid: Re-Assembling Domestic Life* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Viney, William, *Waste: A Philosophy of Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Virilio, Paul, *Bunker Archaeology*, trans. by George Collins (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994).
—— *City of Panic*, trans. by Juliet Rose (Oxford: Berg, 2005).

Wade, Stephen, 'Introduction', in *Gladsongs and Gatherings: Poetry and its Social Context in Liverpool since the 1960s*, ed. by Stephen Wade (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. ix-xix.

Wainwright, Oliver, '"Pleasure without measure": Margate's Dreamland rises from the ashes', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2015/jun/10/margate-dreamland-seaside-fairground-reopening>

Waldrop, Rosmarie, 'Charles Olson: Process and Relationship', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 23.4 (December, 1977), 467-486.

Wallace, Kathleen R., and Karla Armbruster, 'Introduction: Why Go Beyond Nature Writing, and Where To?', in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, ed. by Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), pp. 1-25.

Ward, Dave, 'Putting Down Roots: An Interview with Levi Tafari', in *Writing Liverpool: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Michael Murphy and Deryn Rees-Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 252-264.

Ward, Stephen V., 'Port Cities and the Global Exchange of Planning Ideas', in *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks*, ed. by Carola Hein (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 70-85.

Warnock, Mary, *Memory* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

Waterman, Rory, *Belonging and Estrangement in the Poetry of Philip Larkin, R.S. Thomas and Charles Causley* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

Watson, Francis, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Port Chester, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Westerdahl, Christer, 'Seal on Land, Elk at Sea: Notes on Applications of the Ritual Landscape at the Seaboard', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 31.1 (2005), 2-23.

Westphal, Bertrand, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. by Robert T. Tally Jr., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Wheale, Nigel, 'Breaking cover: Peter Riley's *Passing Measures*', *Chicago Review*, 47.1 (Spring, 2001), 110-117.
—— 'Uttering Poetry: Small-Press Publication', *Poets on Writing: Britain, 1970-1991*, ed. by Denise Riley (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 9-19.

Wheatley, David, 'Am I Rambling? I Hope So', *PN Review*, 35.1 (September-October, 2008), 39-42 <http://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=3939>.
—— '"Dafter Than We Care To Own": Some Poets of the North of England', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 407-423.

White, Kenneth, *On the Atlantic Edge* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2006).

—— 'What is Geopoetics?' (28 April 1989) <http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/welcome/what-is-geopoetics/>

Wiebe, Heather, *Britten's Unquiet Past: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Williams, Gwyn, *When Was Wales?: A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin, 1985).

Williams, Nerys, 'Lyric Encounters with Other Places: Juliana Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* and Robert Minhinnick's "An Isotope Dreaming"', in *Placing Poetry*, ed. by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 183-199.

Williams, Raymond, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).
—— 'Literature and Sociology', *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 11-30.
—— *The Long Revolution*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

Wolfson, Susan J., 'Charlotte Smith's "Emigrants": Forging Connections at the Borders of a Female Tradition', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63.4 (2000), 509-546.

Wood, David, *The Step Back: Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005).

Woodhouse, A. S. P., *The Poet and His Faith* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

Wylie, John, 'A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30.2 (June, 2005), 234-247.
—— *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007).

Wynn, Mark R., *Faith and Place: An Essay in Embodied Religious Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Yuval-Davis, Nira, *Gender and Nation* (London: SAGE, 1997).

Žižek, Slavoj, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

Zwierlein, Anne-Julia, '"Gripping to a wet rock": Coastal Erosion and the Land-Sea Divide as Existential/Ecocritical Tropes in Contemporary British and Irish Fiction', in *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 53-69.