

MOVE
ABLE
TYPE

VOLUME TEN - 2017/2018
PERIPHERIES

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FOREWORD

PERIPHERIES

“despite all our desperate, eternal attempts to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak.”

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*.¹

What does it mean to speak or act from the periphery? To what extent is the periphery a site of marginalisation or the arena for creative destruction? Is the periphery a space in which, as Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests, rigid and ‘eternal’ categories submit to leakage? Or is the very notion of a periphery itself a leaky category, constantly defying our attempts to definitively locate it? Such questions pursue with determined insistence the articles contained within the tenth volume of *Moveable Type*. Traversing through topics such as decolonisation, identity, the poetics of affect, the politics of borders and the recuperation of side-lined canons—the following interventions bring into focus the sheer polyvalence of what the idea of a periphery means for us today.

The word ‘periphery’ literally means ‘to carry’, ‘about’ or ‘around.’ It is this hidden verb that helpfully conjures to mind the experience of peripheral vision: from the corner of one’s eye, a flash appears—a spark so intriguing that it *carries the perceiver away* from what they were doing or the place to which they were going. In this sense, the agency of the periphery lies in its capacity to pick us up and spirit us off: it is not a static point which occupies the edge of a frame—rather, it is the very motor of our on-going self-dislocation; it is that which takes us away from our centre. This notion of the periphery as an active concept underpins this volume’s first article, ‘Siting Language.’ A record of visual artist Dana Ariel’s journeys across the contested border zones between Palestine and Israel, the piece reflects upon her own family history within the region, and the ways in which such history reverberates across the region’s fraught contemporary *topos*. Working her way through the homophonous deferrals of ‘site’ into ‘cite’ and ‘sight,’ Ariel probes what it means to document the periphery through visual, aural and written media,

¹ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana UP, 1989, p.94.

and the ways in which peripheral zones as spaces of confrontation themselves complicate notions of representation, testimony and personal identity.

Of course, ‘periphery’ is a quintessentially relational concept. A periphery cannot be defined outside of its relationship to a centre, and for a great deal of contemporary writers, the negotiation of centre/periphery relations is of vital importance amid shifting national and international fault lines. Chelsea Haith’s contribution on ‘Language and Decolonial Justice in Koleka Putuma’s *Collective Amnesia*’ situates itself squarely in the middle of these negotiations, writing within the context of South Africa’s Rhodes Must Fall movement. Starting from Barbara Boswell’s conception of the ‘restorative ethic’ of South African black women’s poetry, Haith argues for a periphery that intervenes upon and radically reformulates an erstwhile centre, rather than said centre spreading out and appropriating peripheral voices. Combining detailed literary criticism with an ethnographical approach to the publication history of Koleka Putuma’s ground-breaking debut poetry collection, Haith offers an optimistic (albeit necessarily qualified) account of the prospects for the on-going decolonisation movement.

If the overriding theme of Haith’s article is a belief in language’s capacity to mediate the interventions of the periphery upon the centre, this theme is taken up with equal vigour in Joseph Hankinson’s account of the Ghanaian poet B. Kojo Laing’s poem ‘No needle in the sky.’ Situating his argument within exciting new currents of World Systems Theory, Hankinson argues that Laing’s poetry attempts to linguistically overcome the combined and uneven development of a global system defined by neo-colonialism and repressive international policy. Through his meticulous account of the intertextuality between Laing and Gerard Manley Hopkins, Hankinson offers fresh insights into the ways in which linguistic feedback loops between colonising centre and colonised periphery work to dismantle hegemonic power relations.

Often, the optical connotation of the term periphery can bring to mind something that is *unseen*—or, at the very least, something which can only be viewed partially. At the edges of one’s gaze, the world slips out of focus, and operates in this sense as a potential site for buried trauma. In Hana Teraie-Wood’s path-breaking essay on Jez Butterworth’s recent play *The Ferryman*, this question of buried trauma is explored in detail. Chiming with all three of the contributions that precede it, here the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is not and can never be a mere line drawn upon a map. Such a peripheral zone is saturated by memory, injustice and open wounds: in the play, the border county of Armagh bleeds ghosts, and Teraie-Wood perceptively takes us

through Butterworth's theatrical re-enactment of history-as-trauma, emphasizing throughout the need to confront buried histories that are all too often pushed out of view.

In multiple senses, history is overflowing with half-heard echoes and momentary flashes of insight. Methodologically speaking, it can be very difficult for the literary historian to look directly at the ways in which a historical subject laughs or cries. Our discipline is, after all, anchored to the written record—what to do then with affective and emotional expressions that definitionally operate on the outskirts of language? How to respond when confronted with a mouth that does not speak, rather one that moans, laughs, splutters and cries? The final two articles in this volume are grouped loosely around questions such as these. First, Daniel Norman takes us through the polemical speeches of eighteenth-century orator John Thelwall, and the way in which he harnesses humour as a mode of critique. In this essay, Norman bridges the commonly acknowledged gap between laughter and speech by suggesting that humour lays the foundation for moral judgement. A laugh can register an imbalance or a discord latent within the political climate—and it is from this moment of discord that Norman traces the ways in which Thelwall extends and stretches the presuppositions of politically contextualised jokes, using laughter as an entry-point to 'enlighten the marginalised.'

Such a linear model may seem at odds with our final contributor, Harvey Wiltshire, whose essay on John Donne's treatment of tears and acts of weeping gives a more unsettled account of the relationship between language and emotion. Tracing the conflicted and often contradictory ways in which the metaphysical poet judges the act of weeping throughout his sermons and poetry, Wiltshire warns us away from interpretations that seek to pin down Donne's theological and aesthetic positions one way or another. The gap between 'talking tears' and 'false spectacles' (tears that at once communicate something to us yet frustrate our capacity to see clearly) is precisely the point: Donne sees the act of weeping as that which actualises a crisis in representation, wherein paradox and contradiction point to a form of expression that inevitably leaks out of the categories we use to describe it.

Finally, it would be wise to acknowledge the pluralist spirit of this volume's theme. As we have noticed in this summative introduction, the protean connotations of the term underline the fact that there is more than one way to locate a periphery. Perhaps this collection will appeal most to those who seek to make connections between variously distributed subjects—subjects that do not speak to each other through the mediation of some privileged centre, but rather those that communicate by brushing up against each other in the on going process of being 'carried away'. It is to this end that this volume

makes room for Dawn M Gaietto's artistic intervention, while also housing a broad array of reviews, ranging in theme from postcolonial poetry to contemporary popular cinema; the medical humanities and domestic life in Early Modern England to experimental geography and queer fictions. Unexpected connections and surprising echoes abound, and it is in the spirit of interdisciplinarity and dialogue that this issue combines so many distinct voices.

The following is thus a timely intervention into our contemporary moment. Ongoing geopolitical uncertainty has predictable and resolute consequences for those occupying border-zones and other spaces of contestation. The tendency of borders to erase and to marginalise calls for an attendant politics of decolonisation. From the peripheries of the academy, such a politics is already sending tremors, although it is arguably much too early to predict whether these will end up crumbling any edifices. Nonetheless, borders built on top of buried trauma and historical injustice are looking far less stable than they did in the past. Where crisis emerges, so too does opportunity, and the voices contained within this volume look towards the peripheries as the locus from which a much-needed political agency might emerge.



JOURNAL

SITING LANGUAGE

DANA ARIEL

The following words and images form part of my research project entitled *Sites of Unlearning: Encountering Perforated Ground* undertaken at the Slade School of Fine Art. In this essay I revisit sites in Israel and Palestine, where I have been photographing for the past four years. My encounters with these sites include the visits to the sites with a camera, a visit informed by the political and historical narratives and the performative act of photography, and revisits to the sites through the printing process and their belated reflections offered in words. My works seek to *perforate*: in the literal sense, I aim to pierce through the multiple layers held tightly in the photographic image and its making, and metaphorically, to perforate an already perforated ground found in the landscape and language.

My approach to writing emerged from a practice of making. Through the medium of photography, I use the negative as the ground for experimentation with *edges of sights and sites*. Methods used in the printing process, such as the stretching of what can be made visible on paper, is used to stretch the various meanings offered by words and their repeated translation into other languages. Here, misunderstanding and misreading of both images and words aim to offer generative ways of seeing.



⌘ to x (aleph), gelatin silver print, 2017

Urgency

דחיפות

דחפ

urge, compulsion, impulse, desire

استعجل

pressing, compelling

Dringlichkeit

drängen

ungeduldig schieben und drücken

or impatiently push and press



Split Road, lambda c-print, 2016



שרטוט, gelatin silver print, 2016

In the pages that follow, words and images are driven by compulsion. Urge, impulse and desire are urgently and equally gathered to the task of writing; the task of making with words and images, pushing and pressing against each other to leave an imprint. The play with translation paves the way through the urgency for this making process, the desire for another form of seeing, the impulse to make and to encounter, and, finally, to consider what is impatiently pushing and pressing in the photographic trace and the printing process.

My essay asks to be imagined as the forked paths and detours offered by languages and sites alike. One might imagine sketching a map of this essay as the act of redrawing circles. Or, an analogy might be an apparatus that can draw a perfect circle time and again, in an endless movement of a needle or a pencil: I anticipate the exhaustion of the paper, or any other surface for that matter. I patiently wait for an injury that will pierce through the worn-out surface. This will provide the necessary outcome in the form of a hole

caused by a repeated (violent) action of drawing, but will falsely promise a conclusion in the form of rupture, which might lead, mistakenly, to a sense of relief, a solution, an answer, or even worse, an outcome.



שרטוט, gelatin silver print, 2016

In another analogy for this text, the circle is drawn by hand, passively retracing the shadow-line of a circle over and over again, actively re-marking a circle that only follows the guideline made by the previous marks of retracing. In this way, the circle is never a perfect circle, it is guided by the shaky hand, the force and attention invested in the movement, the weight of the pencil, the uneven surface, and possibly even the resistance of the fibres of the paper.



שרטוט, gelatin silver print, 2017

In the final analogy for this essay, the gesture of drawing becomes an action of piercing: that of sewing through layers. The hand holding the needle pierces through each layer at a time in a repetitive movement, slowly fastening them together. With each complete gesture of piercing, the bond between the layers becomes stronger, tighter. The resulting seam perforates the edges of the layers, whilst trying to keep them held together. To return to the written text, it might be that we end up with a book, which brings us all the way back to the beginning, the site of the inherent conflict, the inability to escape the predetermined linearity that is the domain of the author. I would like to focus on the possibility of threading and unthreading, the act of perforating, and the act of holding together.



Crash Site no. 1,2,3, photo etching, 2014

What is threading and unthreading in language? I began thinking of *siting language* as a practice that draws its methodology from the making process of images. The misspelling of the word *sightseeing* has been a major factor in developing my methods of thinking and making. Even when writing this word just now, I had to return to the dictionary to double-check my spelling, remembering there was a mistake, but not recalling which was the correct one. I try to remember the spelling by means of negation, that it is not *seeing site* as I understand it, and that it is the *sights*, which the dictionary tells me is ‘the faculty or power of seeing,’ ‘the act or fact of seeing,’ or what ‘can be seen’ that one desires to see.¹ The double use of seeing in sightseeing causes me to consider what *governs* seeing, what could be seen or what one actually seeks to see when visiting sites.

¹ The New Oxford Dictionary of English, ed. Judy Pearsall and others. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), s.v. “sight.”



Crater, c-print, 2016

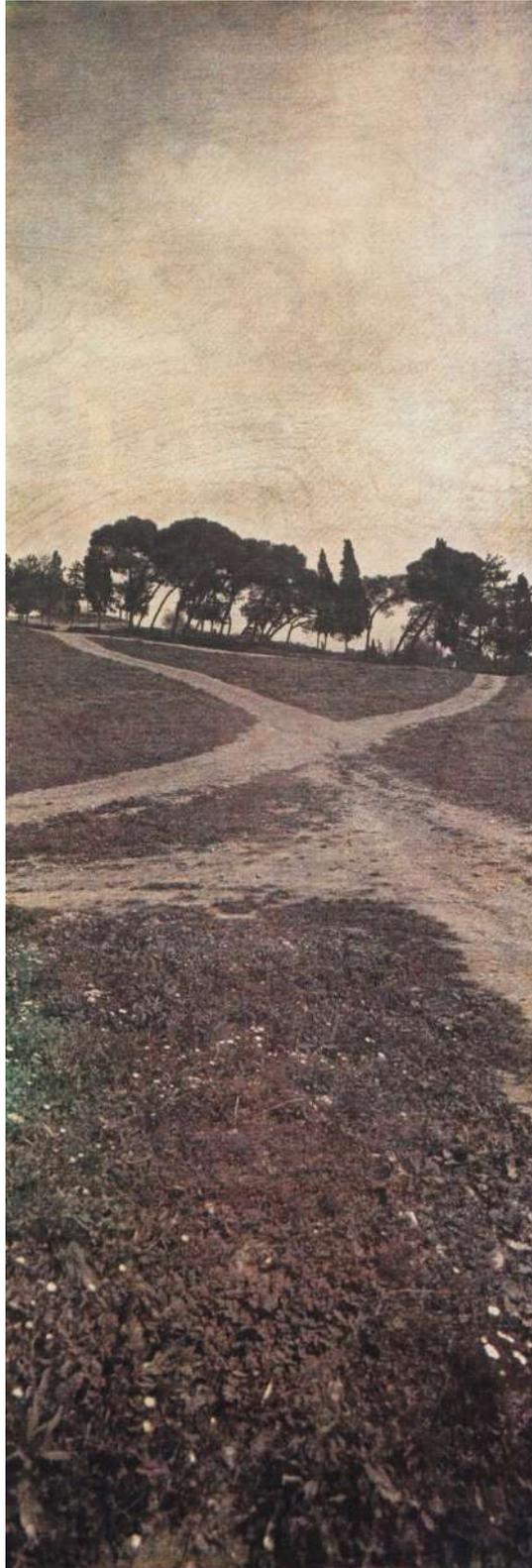
Sightseeing points towards a crisis of seeing, where seeing is governed by prior sights, knowledge and desires. What lies in the desire to see sights? I would like to imagine this act as a desire to *see again* or simply to see with one's own eyes. But there is also a disturbing translation hiding beneath these words, and that is in the notion of seeing the sight through what has already been framed as the *sight* of the site. In other words, it is what has already been framed by those governing the site: the nature reserve, the owner of the land, those guiding the way through the landscape, or even the visitors themselves, who search the site for the best views they have seen in prior images. In practice and on the ground I refer here to the placement of a viewpoint, that spot that often gives the visitors the *best* view, an overview of the site and probably some historical information on a *need-to-know* basis, as if framed in a postcard. Even in the desert for example, rocks will be marked with different painted stripes of colour to mark the path, even when the valley only flows in one direction and there are no forked paths to choose from.



Amud, c-print, 2015

The path is already mapped for various reasons of safety or simply for reasons of convenience, promising *the most scenic* route. To lose one's path is not an easy task, neither is the decision to go off track.

It is not my intention here to undermine the work of nature reserve bodies, or protest against actions of preserving and mapping nature. Rather, I want to focus on the propositions offered by misspelling words and the way that desire can unfold into ways of seeing or encountering sites and sights. Every time I write the word, I return to this conversation in my mind, not to find a resolution other than by correctly spelling the word, but rather to rethink or reconsider what I wish to see and whether I can see beyond these wishes. This place that I have just marked out in words is where this text begins.



Mount X, laser engraved wood print in CMYK, 2015



Mount X, laser engraved wood plates, 2015

Mount X is the name I gave to the project on the site that had failed to be settled throughout history. My works made in response to this site include hybrid and photographic prints. Using four CMYK laser engraved panels I developed a hybrid printing technique to explore the notion of colour as a trace. The process aims to *exhaust* the image by stretching the process through the different printing methods (analogue and digital). Each print is made of the four panels layered on a single sheet of paper, causing the image to appear in a changing monochromatic tone.

The process draws on many different printing processes such as photography (digital and analogue) screen-printing, laser-cut, relief print and, lastly, printed by hand via the application of pressure with a wooden spoon. Every single failure left marks on the print, from the negative to the digital scan, the mechanical marks, the order of panels, inking, registering, environmental influences, impatience and hand signatures all appear on the final prints. The colours emerge here through the process that began with a single image taken in black and white. The prints vary due to the ink building up on the wooden plates; the changing order of print in cyan, magenta and yellow, and the marks made by the manual process. Although, theoretically, the colours should have overlaid each other to make a monochrome image, the colour emerged through the failures of the process where the lines fail to overlay, the ink weakened, and the human hand left its mark.

In *Mount X*, the X stands for the intersection of the roads, of the site and the name, of the image and the word. The X letter, which could mean an intersection, gesture of erasure, the unknown or absent figure, or even a marker of a desired destination, also resembles the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet – א.

At this site I encountered remnants of a Ma'abara – a transit camp – as I made my way to visit my paternal grandparents with the intention of hearing them tell the story of their immigration from Kurdistan to Israel and the reasons for changing our family name.



Mount X, c-print, 2017

On December 2014, I drove with my father to visit my grandparents, who live in the north of Israel. On our way we passed by their village intentionally, a deliberate and mutual decision to stall our visit. My father pointed at a hill in front of us, a nostalgic move on his behalf, and said that he and his friends called it 'Mount of love' (I chose not to ask further). He continued with a brief history of the place, the hill was called after some king... I lost him when I noticed the mount is covered with platforms made of concrete. While contemplating the narratives told to me by my father, I walked towards the concrete platforms and measured eleven steps on the long side of one of them. I noticed that they also had a single lower concrete step placed in the centre; what might have been the entrance to a temporary structure that once occupied the platform. A process of identification began forming in my mind; the first thoughts suspected the erasure of a Palestinian village or the remains of a dislocated military base, but these were immediately rejected due to the location. To my astonishment my father didn't know either. He, who grew up in the near settlement, who gave it a name, and who knows the country and its tales by heart didn't know that these were the remains of a 'Ma'abara' – in Hebrew, a passage way, a temporary camp for Jewish immigrants from Arab countries.

Moments later, my Grandfather proudly tells the story of his Aliya (a Hebrew word that means ascent, rise, and the 'return' of the Jews to Israel), how he made his way as an illegal immigrant [said with a smile] from Kurdistan, through Syria, and why he changed his name much later because he had an identical double in the village who kept receiving his pay cheques each month. The name change, he claims still, was to prevent confusion of identities. My repeated question as to why he didn't choose a Kurdish name was dismissed and conveniently forgotten.

Reflecting on the stories I heard that day, I sketched a few notes on the action of name changing. People who came to Israel like my Grandparents received their family names upon registering in Israel by a random official asking questions of origin. In some cases, traces of misspelling or mistranslation into the Hebrew language appear in the newly given name. The name was given according to stories people brought with them such as

nicknames, or after the place they came from. Here, name and site merge, for example. For my grandfather, who still claims in front of strangers he was born in Israel, in the hope to be considered a ‘Sabra’ (the Hebrew term **צבר**, which means prickly pear cactus and a native Israeli), changing a name is inherently blurring and wishing to forget the past and place of origin by inventing or *bending* the details. In the many times I heard him tell the story, the details are always slightly misregistered: arriving on a donkey sometimes changes to arriving in a brand new cab, the tent that becomes their first home in Israel, which was then Mandatory Palestine, is sometimes also a shed. Dates have little importance, which is why I am still unclear as to when exactly my grandparents arrived in Israel and how old they were.

Two significant notes were made from this visit: the first drawn by the inability of my father to see and recognize the remains of the Ma’abara – demonstrating ways in which shame and broken narratives manifest in blindness and erasure. The second observation came much later, when sharing this story with friends in Israel, which revealed similar narratives and actions that resulted in name-change, undertaken by Jews who immigrated from Arab countries to Israel – also called Mizrahim, like my grandfather. To change one’s name is the rejection or abandonment of a given gift, a confrontation with the inherited past that is given with the name. ‘To inherit,’ writes Jacques Derrida, ‘means both to give the name and to receive it. [Naming] risks to bind, to enslave or to engage the other, to link the called, to call him/her to respond even before any decision or any deliberation, even before any freedom. An assigned passion, a prescribed alliance as much as a promise.’² According to Derrida the name already demands a response, the gift of the name, of heritage, can bind the one who gives and the one who receives.

² Jacques Derrida, *On The Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood and others. (California: Stanford University, 1995), 82.



Mount X, gelatin silver print, 2015

Reflecting upon actions of name-change and its relation to a given identity, I ask in my work what is being requested and promised with a name or the act of naming and what is being refused? What marks are left when attempting to be emancipated from one name or identity while requesting to assume another? What happens to the bond between the one who gives and the one who receives when the name is created by migration, translation or misspelling? These questions are relevant for the process of unlearning that my practice seeks to encourage, which is inherently concerned with how the past is seen in the present, how it contaminates seeing, and how it shapes future desires to see. Most importantly, I am interested in the traces left by acts of erasure, be it the name or the place and what is *bound* by these actions. The visits to Mount X are shaped by the desire to find out about my Kurdish heritage; a heritage that struggles with its identity in Israeli society. Feelings of cultural shame and desires to reconstruct a new identity, result in erasure and the inability to see.



Mount X, c-print, 2015

While my grandfather tells me the story of his immigration to Israel, I came across a photograph in the family album, which is actually a plastic bag filled with random photographs in colour and in black and white. I pulled out a photograph of my grandfather sitting at a table next to four other men with an awkwardly cut paper patch stuck on the photograph itself, concealing one man's face and upper body – his identity manually erased from memory and stored in a plastic bag.

My efforts to understand or uncover my identity, yields many undocumented stories and incredibly awkward attempts to forget. These stories do not directly appear in my works nor will I insist on forcing them into an exhibition space. They do however filter in, influence and motivate my making process, my treatment of the photographic trace, the printing process and the visits to sites. The interest in the changing of names that led to the project of Mount X, appears once more in the following site.



Trees (west, east), c-print, 2015



Trees (south, north), c-print, 2017

فسايل وفسايل

פצאל ופסאיל

Peza'el and Fasa'il

In the Arab village of Fasa'il and the Jewish settlement of Peza'el the doubling begins in the spoken and written name. Road signs in Israel are written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. In Arabic Fasa'il and Peza'el are identical, while English offers various options. The written word kept changing in my text, until deciding to return to the road sign version Peza'el. In speaking the English word as if it was German, and translating it back into Hebrew, Peza'el would be pronounced as Petza'el. In Hebrew, peza means wound, and el means god.



Peza'el, c-print, 2015

My visits to the Jordan Valley began out of the need to *see*: to retrace with my own eyes and by walking the lines of the occupied territories of the West Bank; where it borders with Jordan and mostly, to experience and encounter the complexity of these border lines. These lines, which are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are for many Israelis a merely imaginary vision of perforated ground.

As I drive from Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea on my way to the West Bank, the car's navigation system alerts me not to use it. It is quite an odd thing to encounter a machine that admits to its shortcomings and inaccuracy. Nonetheless, this is a political matter, attesting to the instability of borders and access to the area. I translate here the alert as it appeared on my screen on the morning of one of my visits to the West Bank:

Drive Safely.

To prevent entering dangerous areas in ישי׳ (Yesha), we advise you to refrain from using the navigation system at your disposal in ישי׳ areas. You are advised to ensure that the roads listed in your destination calculation settings do not include the following options “Yehuda and Shomron” [Judea and Samaria], “Permit Required” and “Special Road”... In any case, this navigation programme should not be used whilst driving, and one should not rely merely on the information provided here, but rather, use it for guidance only, in addition to traffic regulations, road signs, the state of the road and its condition in reality, and common sense.



Zeichen, gelatin silver print, 2017

With this message in mind, I think of what a *special road* and *common sense* might be? I assume the intention was for restricted roads and the latter, to mean *common sense* for a Hebrew reader? An Israeli Hebrew reader? Or possibly, one who spent his life in the Israeli education system? This most likely could not be answered in simple terms, but the fractures begin to show in the common sense of *we*, and in *we all know what this means*, or dangerous phrases such as *no need to state the obvious*. *Special Road* is an interesting choice of words. It attests here to roads that are inaccessible to civilians, or worse, some civilians over others. Therefore, under the word *special* we actually can begin to see the regimes' concealment of state violence. I choose to look at the term metaphorically, as I search for signs of erasure and signs of blurred borders – special signs that could pierce through this silent layer of violence seen in the landscape.

My photographic interest in the Jordan Valley, the West Bank, began in 2013 with the visit to what I call in my work the *Hollow Mountain*. An encounter with an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officer and a young man from the Palestinian village made it violently clear

to me that I am trapped between gazes, that my presence there is always watched, and that, in this way, I am always performing to an invisible audience. It explained the cars I have seen slowing down to check on my suspicious activity, cars that do not always stop to inquire for my identity or intentions, just observing and recording.

Hollow Mountain הר הלוּל, has not yet developed into a work. However, it exists as a narrative, perhaps waiting to be written as a text work. It informs my thinking process with the proposition of a hollow gaze. I first visited this place in April 2013. Climbing the mountain by foot in search for a viewpoint. The mountain revealed itself as punctured from all sides. Observation posts, tunnels, and remnants of military presence littered the place. It looked abandoned, ruins of past wars. The direction of the tunnels indicated the direction of the surveying and watchful gaze. They pointed at the border with Jordan. Shortly after my arrival, a military vehicle appeared and an IDF officer stepped out to observe the Palestinian village beneath the mountain. The remnants of the observation posts, and the binoculars of the officer are pointing at opposite directions. He was looking inwards, towards the West Bank. I was standing there too with my camera and tripod, observing him observing the landscape. He wasn't bothered by my presence, and like the clocking of an observer's assignment he remained there briefly and drove off. In the background were sounds of barking dogs, drawing closer and closer until a young man appeared accompanied by two dogs. I paused and waited, concerned by what might follow. I smiled as he approached despite the fear that overwhelmed me. We didn't have a shared language, but it was clear what needed to be said. I waved and smiled and he did the same. He came closer, and I offered him to view the landscape from the viewfinder of my camera. The camera stood for my words. More than words, it offered to show how I saw what he was observing from a distance. In the attempt to break apart the different directions of the gaze; to make it hollow again. He escorted me down to my car – out of hospitality.



חלול, photo etching, 2013

I returned from this visit with images of the observation post, the military vehicle approaching and departing the scene, and a video of a tree entirely covered by spider webs, which I thought was remarkably unusual to the area. However, that is *not yet* the work I named *Hollow Mountain*. Currently a single print entitled חלול – ‘hollow’ in Hebrew – was made into a photo etching and with it my fascination with the process emerged. It depicts a line on a rock, as if cutting through it. I wanted to emphasise the gap, the *hollow ground* I saw opening beneath my feet when standing on the mountain and observing the many different historical and contemporary observation posts. Pointing at different destinations, they bear witness to Israel’s various wars with its neighbours and to the inversion of the gaze inwards, a conflict within, or perhaps, Israel’s war with itself, if the metaphor can stretch that far.



Holes, gelatin silver print, 2014

The photo etching process reduced the photographic details of the image and transformed the grains into tiny holes, slits, or punctures on the surface of the copper plate. What was a line in the photograph is now a cut, metaphorically cutting open the ground, the image, and the gaze. In search of a title for the print, I returned to this mountain, and the search for its name, while falsely remembering its location. During my visits I frequently leave the main road into dead ends, *special roads*, and *bad roads*, which makes me often lose sight of a concrete and clear map of the area. This is not simply down to a fuzzy feeling of disorientation. A map of the region, of *שׂע*, is not a map I have clearly visible in my mind's eye. Even though I grew up in Israel and have extensively traveled in the country, this area is filled with blind spots, unmarked roads, and restricted areas. In this state of losing both sight and site, my eyes landed on the double naming of the village of Fasa'il and the illegal settlement of Peza'el; the place in which, I assumed at the time, I was standing. This mistake in identification was revealed and corrected. But the interest in the double names, which I was so eager to believe was the right location remained and led to future visits and encounters.

'I QUESTION WHY I UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE HAS SAID':

DECOLONIAL JUSTICE IN KOLEKA PUTUMA'S *COLLECTIVE AMNESIA*

CHELSEA HAITH

The publication of Koleka Putuma's debut collection *Collective Amnesia* (2017) by uHlanga Press in April 2017 was one of the biggest events in the South African publishing industry in that year and was unmatched in the poetry scene. Poetry collections published in South Africa seldom make two print runs, let alone six. "Tradition teaches us that the mix of experimental poetry collection and small press with a petit budget is not the recipe for a bestseller,"¹ *Brittle Paper's* Ainehi Egoro reminds us. Yet, *Collective Amnesia*, an experimental collection, published by the small uHlanga Press, with a very small budget, climbed to the top of the bestseller lists across South Africa, surpassing both Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Rupi Kaur's *The Sun and Her Flowers* for a week respectively. Putuma's reputation as a performer, playwright, artist and poet, coupled with uHlanga Press' founder Nick Mulgrew's astute sales strategy², contributed to the success of a collection that resonated with the political and social zeitgeist of disillusionment and frustration in post-transitional South Africa.

This paper functions as part review, part ethnographic account of the collection's publication and the conditions in the society that facilitated its success. I seek to articulate the intervention that *Collective Amnesia* has made into the South African mainstream literary

¹ Ainehi Egoro, "Koleka Putuma Could Change How We Sell African Books" *Brittle Paper*, <https://brittlepaper.com/2017/08/koleka-putuma-change-sell-african-books/>, 8 August 2017.

² For those unfamiliar with South African currency, an R100.00 note, which equates to about £5.75, is one of the most common notes used as wages are often paid in this denomination. It is also considered a small enough sum to part with without splitting another note, which makes it a clever price at which to sell the collection because it immediately made the collection more accessible than those ordinarily priced at R140.00.

consciousness, a collection which reflects the complex experience of being in, and of, post-transitional South Africa, and reaches back into the long histories in the country's complicated racial and gender politics. I will explore questions of decolonial justice in relation to *Collective Amnesia*, particularly with regard to South Africa's canon and the collection's position as a cultural text or object in South African popular culture.

In 2017 I worked at uHlanga Press as one of only two employees who produced, publicised, and marketed *Collective Amnesia*. I watched its meteoric rise from a privileged vantage point, and will draw on some of my experiences and observations in my discussion of this collection as a cultural phenomenon. I hope that the duality of my approach, from both cultural and publishing perspectives, speaks to the concerns of the production, study and teaching of "literatures in English" in the post-transitional milieu of South Africa which concerns so many of my colleagues in both industries.

Restorative Ethic in Decolonial Poetry

Barbara Boswell's article 'Conjuring up her wholeness: Post-transitional black South African women's poetry and its restorative ethic' (December 2016), looks forward and back in its characterisation of black South African women's poetry, coming just five months before the publication of Putuma's *Collective Amnesia*. Boswell argues that black women's poetry in this post-transitional period engages four literary modes to produce a "restorative ethic": "gender justice, embodiment, diaspora, and re-memorying history"³. The potential for restoration that Boswell signals is complicated by the uncertainty of the post-transitional discursive space, in which meaning itself is "fluid, incomplete and provisional"⁴, much like

³ Barbara Boswell, "Conjuring up her wholeness": Post-transitional black South African women's poetry and its restorative ethic.' *Scrutiny* 21.2 (2016), pp. 8-26 (p.9).

⁴ Boswell, p.9.

South Africa's social and political transitions. Following the initial Rhodes Must Fall protests in 2015, Achille Mbembe described that transitional moment as a "new cultural temperament", arguing that decolonisation is "in truth a psychic state more than a political project in the strict sense of the term"⁵. While I am sure that many Fallists⁶ and political theorists would challenge Mbembe on this point, if we read decolonisation as, perhaps among other things, a psychic state, this new cultural temperament of revising and critiquing history and knowledge systems offers some explication for the restorative ethic of black South African women's poetry.

The protests, which began three years ago in Cape Town, created "a crucial moment in the redefinition of what counts as 'political' in this country"⁷, South Africa. Leon de Kock uses Mbembe's notion of decolonisation as a psychic state in his argument for the valence of stories. He argues that when we hear the emerging narratives by spoken word poets (and he includes Putuma in this category) in what he calls post-post-apartheid, they are the "voices of self, of affirmative self-making in full flow, talking back sharply, and with verve, against earlier histories of denigration and dehumanisation"⁸. This reads as a South African revision of Bill Ashcroft's earlier assertion that "History has effected its regulatory function in all forms of colonial control, and the post-colonial response to history remains

⁵ Achille Mbembe, 'Is Radicalism the same as Nihilism?' *Facebook*, public post 3 September 2015. Reproduced at <http://witspress.booksalive.co.za/blog/2015/09/08/read-achille-mbembes-thoughts-on-decolonisation-is-radicalism-the-same-as-nihilism/> Accessed on 21 October 2017. Web.

⁶ The disillusioned post-transitional zeitgeist in South Africa is characterised by intense criticism of Rainbowism and its perceived consequences, which include limited land reform and colonial education systems. The frustration characterising the post-transitional period is exhibited in service delivery protests and the recent radical politicisation of South African university campuses in the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) and Fees Must Fall (FMF) movements from 2015 to the present. Fallism refers to the ideologies of the RMF and FMF protestors, collectively known and self-identifying as Fallists. These ideologies are founded in Fallist interpretations of theories of violence and liberation by Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko and Robert Sobukwe (see Works Cited).

⁷ Mbembe, n.pg.

⁸ Leon de Kock, "'There is the Black Man's Story and the White Man's Story': Narratives of Self and the Valence of 'Stories' in Postapartheid Culture." *Journal of Literary Studies* 32.3 (2016), pp.36–58 (p. 51).

one of the most complex projects of transformation”⁹. History, memory and transformation are irrevocably intertwined in these various theorists’ conceptions of literatures and cultural moments in post-colonial, post-transitional spaces and places. *Collective Amnesia* is the perfect example of the coming together of these concerns in a text that reflects South Africa’s contemporary moment so articulately.

Memory

Memory, in *Collective Amnesia*, is subject to revision, and it is important to recognise the ambivalence of whose amnesia, and indeed whose memory, the collection refers to. The titles of each section in the volume are *Inherited Memory*, *Buried Memory*, and *Postmemory*, and these section distinctions stress the disjuncture between different subjective iterations of the past. The collection does so by signalling the unreliability of memory: it manipulates and can be manipulated. Boswell applies Toni Morrison’s notion of re-memorying, as it appears in *Beloved*, to the South African context, arguing that “re-memorying is itself a commentary on the disjunctures between memory and dominant narratives of history”¹⁰. Putuma explores this notion of re-memorying in order to point up the dominant narratives of the past and to introduce alternative narratives of childhood under apartheid. For example, in “Black Joy”, Putuma ‘re-memories’ her childhood:

But isn’t it funny? That when they ask about black childhood, all they are interested in is our pain, as if the joy parts were accidental. I write love poems too, but you only want to see my mouth torn open in protest, as if my mouth were a wound with pus and gangrene for joy¹¹.

⁹ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-colonial transformation*. (London, Psychology Press, 2001), (p. 5).

¹⁰ Boswell, p.10; Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1987).

¹¹ Koleka Putuma, *Collective Amnesia*, (Cape Town, uHlanga Press, 2017), p.13.

Here Putuma evokes the cultural production of poverty porn alongside the images of protesting black students that have represented various Fallist movements in the last three years of student protest in South Africa's tertiary education industry.

Collective Amnesia melds English, experimental poetic style and Fallist discourses to draw attention to the oppressions that these ideologies, among many other targets of the text, are guilty of perpetuating. Ronit Frenkel and Craig McKenzie suggest that post-transitional discourse rejects notions of unity in nation-building, otherwise known as Rainbowism¹². In poems such as "1994: A Love Poem", Putuma notes the unconditional and uncritical "love" that white South Africans have for Nelson Mandela, thereby shrewdly rejecting the notion of the nation as a cohesive rainbow, using humour to note the continued lack of economic redistribution and redress in the post-post-apartheid period.

Frenkel and McKenzie argue that post-transitional texts engage in excavation: "History is often interrogated in the literature of the transitional years in the form of buried histories being excavated from a variety of perspectives to add to the growing body of new South African stories"¹³. In her collection, Putuma mines the buried histories in the collective consciousness, though who is included and excluded in the collective to which the title refers, remains, perhaps necessarily, uncertain. This uncertainty demands that the reader consider whose memory is being explored in the collection, and to and for whom the poet is speaking. Each section indicates the myriad ways in which memory is manipulated and manipulates, and Putuma critiques imperialism through religion, patriarchal family structures, violence against women and queer erasure. She also engages with the land question and white fragility in the post-transitional period. For example, in "Mountain", she describes a hike in Namaqualand, during which she 'trespasses' on so-called 'private property':

¹² Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie, 'Conceptualizing 'post-transitional' South African literature in English.' *English Studies in Africa* 53.1 (2010), pp.1-10.

¹³ Frenkel and MacKenzie, p.1.

When the old white lady in her pyjamas turns my back with her Afrikaans
 And says, “You are on private property...
 I question why I understand what she has said
 And the mountain she calls private.¹⁴

The language question thus becomes a question of land and ownership. Land is central to the Fallist movements’ demands for justice, drawing as the Fallist discourse does so heavily from Frantz Fanon’s critical race theory. Within the South African academy these demands for land extend, I would suggest, to the knowledge economy. Land, in the current political discourse of South Africa, does not simply represent soil and agriculture, though these are certainly encompassed in the term. Land also represents ownership, representation and the dignity afforded rights-bearing citizens. Fanon argues that the possession of land confers dignity. If we extrapolate land to its more abstract but no less real meaning in the South African imaginary of land as representation and land as economic visibility, then the acquisition of dignity comes to entail representation and inclusion, and this inclusion makes possible the valorisation of one’s humanity. In the above poem, when Putuma is told, in Afrikaans, to leave a private property, she evokes South Africa’s history of land dispossession, the imposition of education in Afrikaans by apartheid governments, and the continued land redistribution debates. By asking “I question why I understand what she has said”, Putuma articulates her experience, and an historic legacy of land dispossession and linguistic imperialism, through a decolonial deconstructionist framework.

In the introduction of their 2017 collection, *Postcolonial Justice*, Anke Bartels Lars Eckstein, Nicole Waller and Dirk Wiemann argue that:

[T]he project of postcolonial justice will have to engage in dialogue on visions of planetary justice from other parts of the globe. As such, it will need not only to take seriously visions of justice beyond Eurocentric confines but will need to investigate critically the material, political, and epistemological mechanisms that have led to their disavowal in the global marketplace of ideas.¹⁵

¹⁴ Putuma, p.102.

¹⁵ Anke Bartels et al., eds. *Postcolonial Justice*. Boston, Brill, 2017. (pp.xi-xii)

Elleke Boehmer's introduction in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* positions postcolonial literatures in the service of the decolonial project: "As well as a change in power, decolonisation demanded – and still demands – symbolic overhaul, a reshaping of dominant meanings. Postcolonial literature forms part of that overhaul."¹⁶ If postcolonial literature "critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship"¹⁷ then perhaps post-transitional literature critiques and subverts the narratives of the transition. Post-transitional literature that engages in the South African decolonisation movements of 2015 onwards takes the imperatives of postcolonial literature a step further, pointing out the moments in which, as Ashcroft writes "sovereignty has been transferred but not transformed".¹⁸

Putuma engages Boswell's literary modes of gender justice, embodiment, diaspora and re-memorying in her poem "On Black Solidarity". In it, she highlights a contemporary example of a situation in which sovereignty remains untransformed, even in a potentially liberatory movement. In the poem she takes her male comrades to task for their patriarchal, misogynist leadership of the Fallist movements, refuting the notion of a unified collective and critiquing a movement of identity politics that subordinates gender to race:

Your solidarity, it seems, is anchored by undermining black womxn's struggles...
 You want black womxn's bodies on the line.
 Not the front line.
 You endorse intersectionality.
 But not at the expense of your praise and visibility.¹⁹

Here Putuma highlights the role of privilege in maintaining systems of power, even within protest movements that ostensibly seek to liberate. Such a criticism may well have been met with hostility, but instead the collection has been widely embraced, becoming an object that symbolises a moment in South Africa's post-transitional period.

¹⁶ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and postcolonial literature: migrant metaphors*. Oxford, Oxford University Press on Demand, 2005 (p.3).

¹⁷ Boehmer, p.3.

¹⁸ Ashcroft, p.116.

¹⁹ Putuma, p.81.

Cultural Theory and Book History

Considering the above-mentioned cultural impact, it is worth considering *Collective Amnesia* as both a text and a cultural object. In *Print, Text and Books in South Africa* (2012), Andrew van der Vlies brings the apparently adversarial fields of literary scholarship and book history into conversation with one another, arguing that Derrida's notion that "il n'y a pas dehors texte" hangs on "the understanding that the text always already implies – and requires attention to – its implicatedness in material instantiation"²⁰. Van der Vlies argues that:

[W]hile literary criticism has always been concerned with the meanings of texts, book history is concerned with how these meanings are influenced by factors often beyond the control of the authors themselves.²¹

Drawing on van der Vlies's argument, it seems worthwhile and indeed important to examine the processes of production alongside the literary scholarship of the text, keeping in mind Bourdieu's notion of the field of cultural production here when describing the text as a cultural object as well as a collection of poetry.²²

Collective Amnesia situates itself squarely within South Africa's contemporary social, political and intellectual zeitgeist that is at present preoccupied with the intersections of history and memory, and how these inform and complicate one another. More than one reviewer noted that in terms of the content the collection has been a long time coming, and many readers have expressed gratitude for the text, and relief. The collection received glowing reviews in the *Johannesburg Review of Books*, *OkayAfrica*, *Between 10 and 5*, the *Mail & Guardian*, *AfriPOP*, *Johannesburg LIVE* and *HuffingtonPost SA*, features in at least two postgraduate dissertations to date and has received overwhelming acclaim on social media. The collection has also been included in curricula at the University of Cape Town,

²⁰ Andrew van der Vlies, *Print, text and books in South Africa*, Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2012, (p.13).

²¹ Van der Vlies, p.11.

²² Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature*, ed. Randal Johnson, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

Stellenbosch University and Rhodes University. *Collective Amnesia* has successfully infiltrated the mainstream from the periphery and in doing so has reframed the dominant narrative of what constitutes the mainstream.

In the review for *Afripop!* Luso Mnthali calls the book a collection of “survival poetry”²³, while Sabelo Mkhabela for *OkayAfrica* writes: “It’s surreal to hold an anthology of someone who speaks the way I do... The South African publishing industry has its own types of books that it favours, and *Collective Amnesia* just wouldn’t normally make the cut. Which is why Putuma’s book is a special moment”²⁴. Given these receptions on widely-read South African media platforms, the popularity of the poems on social media and the collection’s sales figures, *Collective Amnesia* has entered South African popular culture, intervening in the mainstream and bringing concerns of the periphery, those of language, land dispossession and race into the wider literary and political consciousness.

Reading *Collective Amnesia* as a cultural text through Sarah Nuttall’s theory of culture in her 2009 book *Entanglement*, this small collection of poetry becomes more than a literary text: it is an object, subject to cultural production, of South Africa’s post-transitional period. Forms of popular culture are involved in what Sarah Nuttall terms “circulation and transfiguration” and should be interpreted accordingly, rather than as amenable to “methods of reading derived from the tradition of the book, a tradition that stipulates that a cultural text be meaningful”²⁵. The ideological hope signalled by the terms ‘decolonise’ and ‘decolonial’ carries with it the concerns captured in the gap Nuttall identifies between “what is” and “what could be”. This is why *Collective Amnesia*, a book-as-object, has become a cultural text as much as it is a collection of poetry.

²³ Luso Mnthali, ‘Book Review: Collective Amnesia by Koleka Putuma’, *Afripop!* 2017 <<http://afripopmag.com/2017/05/08/book-review-collective-amnesia-by-koleka-putuma/>> 8 August 2017.

²⁴ Sabelo Mkhabela, ‘Koleka Putuma Is the Groundbreaking New Voice of South African Poetry’, *OkayAfrica*, <http://www.okayafrica.com/koleka-putuma-collective-amnesia/>, 8 August 2017.

²⁵ Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009, (pp.123-124).

Through the collection, Putuma engages the discourse of decolonisation and what Mbembe calls the “psychic bonds: in particular bonds of pain and suffering” that have become “the privileged mode of identification”²⁶. This is a mode of identification that has been central to unifying movements for decolonisation in tertiary institutions. Representing the fluidity and instability of the post-transitional space, Putuma critiques the fissures in the Fallist movements, and uses the discourse of those same movements to create a solidarity that has resulted in the spectacular sale of over three and half thousand copies of her debut collection.

Entering the Mainstream

Boswell argues that black women’s poetry does the “imaginative work of remembering the injustices of history, while reconfiguring current, gendered nation-building discourses through expanding definitions of what counts as political”²⁷, echoing Mbembe’s earlier words almost identically. Boswell seems to suggest therefore that poets like Putuma are doing the work of reconfiguring the nation through their poetry. In *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (2009), Boehmer is concerned with how “‘small’ familial and domestic realities impinge on the large questions of the nation-state”²⁸ as articulated in postcolonial women’s writing. Putuma engages with the ‘larger’ concerns of the nation, and specifically the South African nation, through language and sarcasm – “Mountain” and “1994: A Love Poem” are examples of these head-on attacks of the post-post-apartheid era, but the political does not end with land, language and Madiba’s love.

²⁶ Mbembe, n.pg.

²⁷ Boswell, p.9.

²⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation State*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.208.

The political becomes a birthday “celebrated/ with a bucket of KFC, a simple cake and Coca-Cola”²⁹. The political is an oversized school uniform described as “a savings account in fabric”³⁰. Political is: “The gospel / is how whiteness breaks into our homes / and brings us to our knees”³¹. Political is “a pastor’s daughter loving a Muslim woman.”³² The political complexity of contemporary South African society is evident in the everyday moments Putuma captures. By referring to hand-me-down clothes, the colonial legacy of religion and an inter-racial, inter-religious lesbian relationship, Putuma infuses personal, intimate moments with political intention, producing a reconfiguration of what counts as political in her post-transitional poetry.

Through its inclusion in curricula and therefore in the broader postcolonial mainstream reading lists, Putuma’s re-memorying, reconfiguration and renegotiation of the post-transitional nation state in *Collective Amnesia* engages in the project for decolonial justice. This project is enabled and complicated by English and the politics of production and distribution. Exploring new and revised narratives of post-post-apartheid South Africa, *Collective Amnesia* as a post-transitional text, and here I mean both text as cultural text and text as literary text, has the potential to actuate Boswell’s “restorative ethic”. It can thereby put English to the task of renarrativising the past and present, revitalising an exhausted movement and both relieving and reinvigorating tensions between what is and what could be in South African tertiary education and the South African publishing industry today.

²⁹ Putuma, ‘Hand-Me-Downs’, p.14.

³⁰ Putuma, ‘Hand-Me-Downs’, p.14.

³¹ Putuma, ‘Growing up Black & Christian’, p.23.

³² Putuma, ‘No Easter Sunday for Queers’, p.25.

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'GREAT WORDS CARRYING THE WORLD'

INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION IN

B. KOJO LAING'S '*NO NEEDLE IN THE SKY*'

JOSEPH HANKINSON

three Ghanaians plus three equals / three Ghanaians still

B. Kojo Laing. 'More hope More dust'¹

First published in 1989, B. Kojo Laing's *Godhorse* collects together poetry written over a period of nearly twenty years. The volume is preoccupied with the developing state of Ghana: a Ghana, as Laing suggests in 'One hundred lines for the coast', 'grown old without wisdom by generations of dire disconnection.'² This sense of 'disconnection', of a nation neglected both by its political leaders and the pace of global development around it, pervades the thirty-one poems of the collection. In 'The same corpse', a poem concerned with international conceptions of Ghana and its culture, such uneven development is lamented explicitly: 'in an interdependent world, the / inter does not belong to Ghana.'³

This concern – with the 'disconnection' experienced by nations often considered 'peripheral', and with the relationship between centres and peripheries in general – is a persistent theme of Laing's published work. Laing's final novel, *Big Bishop Roko and the Altar Gangsters* (2006), recounts the efforts of Gold Coast city's Bishop Roko Yam to forestall the global north's experiments to make interaction between rich and poor countries almost impossible; whilst Laing's second novel, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (1988), centres on the mutual benefits of a cultural exchange between the immortal residents of Tukwan, a town in Ghana's Asante region, and Levensvale, a town in the 'non-mango country' of Scotland.⁴

¹ B. Kojo Laing, *Godhorse* (Oxford: Heinemann International, 1989), p. 38.

² *Godhorse*, p. 50.

³ *Godhorse*, p. 36.

⁴ B. Kojo Laing, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (London: Picador, 1988), p. 72.

His novels (all of which were written after the poems that comprise *Godhorse*), posit explicit solutions to the problems of disconnection the poems attest to, frequently imagining a global system of intercultural communication in which ‘the / inter’ belongs to every country. The exchange of ideas between Scotland and Tukwan in *Woman of the Aeroplanes* serves to demonstrate the ‘blast of freedom from freely-mixed bodies and worlds’ – a claim reiterated in *Big Bishop Roko*, whose narrator proposes that the ‘thing was to free all the truths locked up in the different cultures’.⁵ This emphasis on the importance of equal cultural communication influences Laing’s language use. In his ‘Author’s Note’ to his third novel, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* (1992), Laing identifies language itself as one of the sites in which cultural communication can take place. Referring to his inclusion of diverse words from a selection of Ghanaian languages in his writing, he explains that

The motive behind them is to internationalise the English. I believe that more parochial areas of the world need a broadening of vocabulary – hence many of the words are repeated in my novels and poetry. Some are invented, most are direct translations from Akan and Ga and sometimes Hausa. It is usual in Ghana (with such a cosmopolitan mix of cultures) to intersperse one language with words from another. This ought to be done universally for the idea is to create one gigantic language.⁶

This call for a ‘broadening of vocabulary’ capable of creating ‘one gigantic language’ aligns Laing’s writing with what Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in his recent study, *Epistemologies of the South* (2014), has called ‘intercultural translation’.⁷ For Santos, ‘intercultural translation’ represents ‘the alternative both to the abstract universalism that grounds Western-centric general theories and to the idea of incommensurability between cultures’, and consists of

⁵ *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, p. 86; B. Kojo Laing, *Big Bishop Roko and the Altar Gangsters* (Accra: Woeli, 2006), p. 365.

⁶ B. Kojo Laing, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1992), p. vi.

⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder & London: Paradigm, 2014), p. 212.

searching for isomorphic concerns and underlying assumptions among cultures, identifying differences and similarities, and developing, whenever appropriate, new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication.⁸

Laing's writing consistently posits that the development of 'new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication' can serve to repair the damaging consequences of peripheral isolation, and inaugurate the 'new humanity of a new cosmology': one in which a collective, global subject could emerge.⁹

This article will analyse the role of intercultural translation in one of the poems collected in *Godhorse*, 'No needle in the sky'. It will show how Laing's engagement with influence – particularly the poem's use of Gerald Manley Hopkins's 'The Windhover' as a model – prefigures the emphasis on intercultural exchange which characterises his later works. By returning to the poetry, I hope to draw attention to the ways in which the concerns of Laing's later works are also the concerns of his earliest writings, and to suggest ways in which recent criticism could reposition its arguments in light of this. Ultimately, it will be proposed that Laing's uses of intertextuality in *Godhorse* can act as a template for what Fredric Jameson has called an 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping', or a 'pedagogical culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system' – an aesthetic which Jameson suggests might be used as a corrective to the stagnating and isolating tendencies of much of late capitalism.¹⁰



Whilst the poems of *Godhorse* often lament the 'disconnection' Ghana experiences as a consequence of its peripheral place in the global system, it is important to note that many of

⁸ Santos, p. 212.

⁹ *Big Bishop Roko*, p. 323.

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1991), p.54.

them are themselves products of the sort of cultural exchange described in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. Some of the poems were first printed in Scotland, such as ‘Funeral in Accra’, published in 1968 (during Laing’s graduate studies at the University of Glasgow) in Robin Fulton’s *Lines Review*. This journal had a predominantly Scottish readership, regularly featuring the work of important native poets such as Iain Crichton Smith. Others were first published with African (or, at least, Africanist) audiences in mind, such as the opening poem of the volume, ‘Festival’, first appearing in the London-based *West Africa* on 19 March 1984. Other poems were published in a solely Ghanaian context. Just after his graduation, in 1972, Laing established himself within Ghanaian literary circles, publishing a long poem, ‘Resurrection’, in the fifth volume of the Ghana Society of Writers’ influential magazine *Okyeame*. The magazine, edited at the time by Efua Sutherland, was responsible for the publication of some of the most celebrated and well-known figures of Ghanaian literature, such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Kofi Awoonor (who was a former editor of the journal), and Mohammed Ibn Abdallah.

Godhorse, therefore, is the product of a period of Laing’s life marked by cultural transitions, and includes poems that were begun in Europe, and completed in Africa.¹¹ These transitions, despite the ‘disconnection’ that represents one of the volume’s dominant themes, find their textual correlative in several of the poems’ attestation to forms of cultural contact, particularly a clear engagement with British poetic traditions. This engagement is most explicit in the volume’s ninth poem, ‘No needle in the sky’, which was written, according to the author, in 1982.¹² The poem, a version of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s ‘The Windhover’, performs ‘intercultural translation’, simultaneously gesturing to points of

¹¹ M. E. Kropp-Dakubu, ‘Kojo Laing’s Poetry and the Struggle for God’, *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, ed. Kofi Anyidoho & James Gibbs (Matatu 21-22; Amsterdam & Atlanta GA: Rodopi, 2000), p. 237.

¹² Kropp-Dakubu, p. 237.

similarity and difference between imaginative responses to natural phenomena in England and Ghana.

Laing's interest in a poetic style characteristic of Hopkins's work can be traced back to one of his earliest printed poems, 'African Storm', published in *Lines Review* in 1968. The poem, not included in *Godhorse*, describes the chaos of a storm utilising various poetic techniques associated with Hopkins, such as internal rhyme, a stress-based rhythm, and the frequent use of alliteration. In the poem, the storm's 'silence grows great layers to protect itself, and bursts / by gusts grabbing roofs, birds close their wings, nestless,' forcing the onlooker to 'bend, pick pennies in dust,' as the 'wind stokes warm storm'.¹³

Despite Laing's employment of these techniques, and the fact that the relationship between 'No needle in the sky' and 'The Windhover' is signalled both typographically and by the use of identical vocabulary and similar syntax, no critic has yet discerned the relationship between Laing and Hopkins. Both 'No needle in the sky' and 'The Windhover' feature the voice of someone watching the flight of a bird (for Laing, a weaver bird, and for Hopkins, a kestrel), both introduce their respective conclusions with a capitalised 'AND', employ similar syntax (Laing's 'up, up in the sky', reflects Hopkins's 'off, off forth on swing'), and both poems utilise a vocabulary characteristic of Hopkins's natural imagery.¹⁴ Laing's use of 'dappling' and 'dap', for example, reflects Hopkins's use of the words 'dapple' and 'dappled' in nine poems ('The Windhover', 'The May Magnificat', 'St. Winefred's Well', 'Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', 'Duns Scotus's Oxford', 'Pied Beauty', 'Morning Middy and Evening Sacrifice', 'Inversnaid', and 'The Wreck of the Deutschland').¹⁵

¹³ B. Kojo Laing, 'African Storm', *Lines Review*, ed. Robin Fulton, No. 27 (November, 1968), p. 22.

¹⁴ Hopkins, p. 144.

¹⁵ Hopkins, pp. 120, 144, 154, 156, 163, 167, 180, 191.

becomes the product of literary creation – a kente cloth woven by perception. The power of perception to change an object is compared to the power of poetic description to reimagine an object or action in new terms. The simple act of kneeling in gravel humorously gives rise to an ‘instant geology’ – the displaced earth is reimaged as the consequence of an act of creation akin to raising mountains.

Aside from sharing vocabulary and typographical techniques, Laing signals the relationship between ‘No needle in the sky’ and ‘The Windhover’ by gently parodying that poem’s conclusion. Hopkins’s poem ends by describing the ‘fire that breaks’ from the falcon in its descent, a fire that enhances its loveliness and beauty:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plod makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.¹⁸

Like the ‘embers’ that ‘fall’ and ‘gash gold-vermilion’, the falcon’s descent dramatically exposes a ‘wonder’ hitherto kept hidden. The bird’s flight path is formally rendered, as the reader’s eye drops from the asyndetic and breathless ‘oh, air, pride, plume, here’ to ‘Buckle!’, the delayed verb that signals the moment of transformation. ‘The Windhover’ concludes with a powerful evocation of the falcon’s intensity and beauty, a beauty that has a strong effect on the observer, whose explanation of the witnessed beauty is interrupted by a further sighing recognition of its effect: ‘ah my dear’.

In ‘No needle in the sky’, Laing parodies the intensity of the falcon’s movement in Hopkins’s poem, concluding with a very different, more gentle descent:

Behold, down from the ironed sky
 with its steam of rain and birds,
 drops the giant kente flagless,

¹⁸ Hopkins, p. 144.

between the external world and the inner self, regarding the external dimension as something to be controlled and manipulated, whereas with the African-Ghanaian way it's an extension of the spirit of man.²¹ This leads Deandrea, reiterating an argument made by Kropp-Dakubu, to argue that Laing's poetry is characterised, above all, by '[t]he finding of a means of communion between [...] two poles', between 'the concrete and the abstract, outer and inner, the object and the thought'.²² This sense of 'two poles', however, makes the same 'mistake' Laing describes: it reinforces the very binaries Laing is interested in collapsing. Rather than pursuing a 'means of communion between [...] two poles', Laing's verse is more characteristically interested in challenging the tendency to separate 'the concrete and the abstract, outer and inner, the object and the thought' in the first place.

If Laing's poem exemplifies an 'African-Ghanaian way' of conceiving the self in relation to the word (not as something isolated from it, but rather as something continuous with it), it finds in Hopkins's poem a conceptual, though not cultural, equivalent. Yet, this sense of equivalence is contested by Laing's uses of parody, and his commitment to repositioning the perceptual arguments of 'The Windhover' in a Ghanaian context. To this extent, the poem appears to demonstrate a version of a relationship that Franco Moretti has described in his essay, 'Evolution, World-Systems, *Weltliteratur*' (2005). For Moretti, postcolonial literature is often characterised by 'a struggle between the story that comes from the core, and the viewpoint that "receives" it in the periphery. That the two are not seamlessly fused is not just an aesthetic given, then, but the crystallization of an underlying *political* tension.'²³ It is, however, important to notice how Laing's poem deviates from the model Moretti delineates here. Rather than being forced by historical circumstances to accept a 'struggle' between 'the story that comes from the core', here Hopkins's poem, and

²¹ cited in Pietro Deandrea, *Fertile Crossings: Metamorphoses of Genre in Anglophone West African Literature* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2002), p. 174.

²² Deandrea, p. 169.

²³ Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London & New York: Verso, 2013), p. 134.

‘the viewpoint that “receives” it in the periphery’, Laing’s poem is less symptomatic of the colonial encounter than it is indicative of an active and creative proposal for a new form of intercultural relationship: one in which Ghana is no longer merely a disconnected, peripheral and passive ‘secondary’ culture, and in which Britain is no longer afforded the primacy of a cultural ‘centre’. In this sense, Laing’s poem is hyperstitional; it attempts to inaugurate the ideal cultural relationships of a fictional future.²⁴ Rather than solely reflecting concrete and contemporary inequalities and struggles, Laing anticipates a future in which such struggles are unnecessary. Furthermore, Moretti’s distinction between ‘story’ and ‘viewpoint’ does not account for Laing’s poem’s use of story elements that are sourced from the ‘periphery’, and a perspective in part borrowed from the ‘core’. ‘No needle in the sky’ mixes stories and viewpoints from both core and periphery, challenging the neatness of Moretti’s distinction with a hybridity resulting from the complex intercultural interaction the poem foregrounds.

The poem’s complication of the difference between inner and outer experience, therefore, corresponds with a formal palimpsest (Laing’s poem, in a sense, overwrites Hopkins’s) that performs the very intercultural dialogue his later works prescribe. Allusion in ‘No needle in the sky’ works to encourage readers to think comparatively across cultural boundaries. The poem demands a way of reading capable of registering a dialogic relationship between two cultural products. Laing’s poem at once accentuates its own similarities to ‘The Windhover’ and tempers Hopkins’s poem’s presentation of exceptional perception by ‘dropping the wonder’ in the lap of the ‘Poor man’. Quotation is used not just to demonstrate points of equivalence, but also to foreground points of departure: Laing’s ‘AND’, for example, introduces a very different conclusion to Hopkins’s. Rather than

²⁴ For recent discussions of hyperstitional processes see Mark Fisher & Judy Thorne, ‘Luxury Communism’, *Futures and Fictions*, eds. Henriette Gunkel, Ayesha Hameed & Simon O’Sullivan (London: Repeater, 2017), p. 162; Nick Srnicek & Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, revised and updated edition (London & New York: Verso, 2016), p. 75.

merely an ‘African-Ghanaian’ version of an already existing poem, ‘No needle in the sky’ is both a response to and development of an antecedent poem.

Rather than accepting the peripheral status conferred on Ghanaian writing by both global markets and the anglophone academy, ‘No needle in the sky’ demonstrates a form of intertextuality very different from the type Fredric Jameson has associated with postmodernism’s ‘renunciation of the new’ and its drive ‘to eschew originality and to embrace repetition’.²⁵ Instead, Laing’s uses of reference and intertextuality appear to gesture towards the ‘aesthetic of cognitive mapping’ which Jameson suggests as a corrective to the stagnating tendencies of much of postmodernist culture; and the cognitive mapping Laing’s work regularly delineates depends on an ability to conceive of the cultural and economic development of both centres and peripheries as intimately combined.²⁶ This is literalised in a characteristically surreal way in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, in which ‘a snore in Levensvale could originate in Tukwan, and [...] an elbow in Tukwan could have its counterpart in Levensvale’.²⁷

What emerges in Laing’s novels is an acute awareness that the ‘disconnection’ to which the poems attest is not indicative of real economic disconnection, but rather the result of the unevenness of development within a combined global system. As Korner Mensah argues in *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, regarding the perceived inferiority of countries held to be peripheral: ‘when you can’t get a biological reason for the so-called backwardness then you look for cultural reasons ... of course economic ones can’t exist’.²⁸ This ‘mapping’ of the global system within which he writes aligns Laing’s works with the Warwick Research Collective’s recent attempt to reposition debates about world literature in light of an awareness of the ways global systems are

²⁵ Jameson, p. 104.

²⁶ Jameson, p.54.

²⁷ *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, p. 86.

²⁸ *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, p. 190.

Combined *and* uneven: the face of modernity is not worn exclusively by the “futuristic” skyline of the Pudong District in Shanghai or the Shard and Gherkin buildings in London; just as emblematic of modernity as these are the favelas of Rocinha and Jacarezinho in Rio and the slums of Dharavi in Bombay²⁹

Confirming that this conception of the global system reflects the experience of writers in the global south, Kofi Anyidoho’s poem ‘Slums of Our Earth’ (published thirty years before the Warwick Research Collective’s description of these ‘necessary flipsides’ to perceived modernity) proclaims that ‘The darkness of the slums / is the shadow side of / proud structures on Wall Street’.³⁰

‘No needle in the sky’ refuses to be ‘the shadow side’ of Hopkins’s poem. Instead of an aesthetic reflective of the unevenness of development, Laing’s poem enacts an aesthetic of combined and *even* intercultural dynamics. Meaning is created in the various types of friction between the two poems, and is therefore created through cultural contact: a contact that is seen as a potential solution for the economic disconnection experienced by ‘peripheral’ nations. The poem’s recognition that ‘great words’ can carry ‘the world’ is in part a recognition of the ways in which language can act as the site of these international interactions. In this sense, it provides a template for the ‘new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication’ Santos associates with the function of ‘intercultural translation’, and evidences that such ‘new hybrid forms’ were an imaginative priority for Laing right from the start of his career.

To conclude, it is worth recalling that critics of postmodernism, from Jameson to the late Mark Fisher, have concentrated on the effects that ‘capitalist realism’ has had on the lives of individuals, who frequently find themselves radically isolated from each other, unable to construe the ‘required subject – a collective subject’ that late capitalism

²⁹ Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 12-3.

³⁰ Kofi Anyidoho, *Earthchild with Brain Surgery* (Accra: Woeli, 1985), p. 31; Warwick Research Collective, p. 13.

‘permanently defers’.³¹ This ‘collective subject’, however, has been an essential structural and thematic concern of Laing’s work since the late 1980s. His work can be read as a literary attempt to develop a form of intercultural translation capable of exemplifying a collective model for the creation of meaning; a model able to show that, as Ayesha Hameed has recently argued, ‘there is still the possibility for fictioning to undo the “dreamwork of imperialism”’.³² ‘No needle in the sky’ inaugurates this hyperstitional process (that is, ‘the process whereby fictions make themselves real’), by exemplifying the ways in which opportunities for creativity can be found in free and equal cultural contact.³³ More critical work is required to reveal the full extent of Laing’s vision of an aesthetic capable of construing this collective subject, but it is clear that this work cannot ignore the poems’ contribution to the development of this aesthetic.

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³¹ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zer0 Books, 2009), p. 66.

³² Henriette Gunkel, Ayesha Hameed & Simon O’Sullivan, ‘Futures and Fictions: A Conversation’, *Futures and Fictions*, eds. Henriette Gunkel, Ayesha Hameed & Simon O’Sullivan (London: Repeater Books, 2017), pp. 4-5.

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BURIED POLITICS:

THE FERRYMAN, THE TROUBLES, AND THE DISAPPEARED

HANA TERAIE-WOOD

let assent be divine
As I unveil things profoundly beyond us,
Mysteries and truths buried under the earth.
- Seamus Heaney, trans. *Aeneid Book VI* (2016)¹

Politics is buried in Jez Butterworth’s play, *The Ferryman* (2017). In an act of political silencing, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) has murdered and buried suspected informer Seamus Carney ‘in a bog across the border’.² Pickled in peat, his body serves as a metonym for the power of silence to suspend time, as ‘the years roll by, and nothing changes’.³ Set in August 1981, at the height of The Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-99), *The Ferryman* is based on the story of Eugene Simons and other members of The Disappeared – a group of sixteen individuals who were murdered and secretly buried by the IRA.⁴ Until the Peace Process in 1995, their deaths were publically unacknowledged and the circumstances and location of their murders undisclosed. The agreement brokered between the British Government and the IRA during the Peace Process has, while helping to locate the bodies, ensured that those responsible for the deaths have not been, and will never be, publicly known.⁵

Butterworth discovered the story while watching Darragh MacIntyre’s BBC documentary, *The Disappeared* (2013) with actress Laura Donnelly, who originally played Caitlin Carney in *The Ferryman* and whose uncle was Eugene Simons. By 2017, the year

¹ Heaney, Seamus, trans. *Aeneid Book VI* by Virgil (London: Faber, 2016), 354-6, p.16.

² Jez Butterworth, *The Ferryman* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2017), p. 47.

³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴ Sandra Peake and Orla Lynch, ‘Victims of Irish Republican Paramilitary Violence – The Case of “The Disappeared”’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28.3 (2016), 452-472, 453.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.455.

that *The Ferryman* was written and staged, Brexit had destabilised the borders of Northern Ireland, and Britain had experienced a wave of terrorist attacks. Sam Mendes, director of *The Ferryman*, noted that ‘the politics of the play are so buried, and yet it speaks to us so loudly now’.⁶

In the first academic article on the play, I will argue that *The Ferryman* is a modern tragedy that uses the context of the Troubles in Northern Ireland – and specifically, the stories of the Disappeared – to explore the pathology of silence, as repressed truths transform into tragic power. *The Ferryman*’s title conjures the image of Charon in the underworld of Virgil’s *The Aeneid*, a literary link which gestures towards the national epic. Seamus Heaney’s translation of *Aeneid Book VI* describes the underworld as a space for unveiling silenced truths buried beneath the earth. *The Ferryman* adopts this chthonic structure, as personal, familial, and national politics buried within the Carney family and the wider political discourse resurface as memory, confession, and ghosts, driving the characters’ tragic actions. The play’s setting in the borderland of County Armagh roots rebellion in the soil, as its silenced politics finally rise in rumours, rhetoric, and radicalism.

Sean Carney argues that modern tragedies unearth ‘aspects of humanity that have been repressed or disavowed, “buried”, so to speak, within the public discourse; in a sense they are public acts of mourning, with an understanding that public mourning is a political act’.⁷ In its final act, *The Ferryman* enacts justice onstage and creates a dramatic space in which a silenced part of history can be exhumed, debated, and publically mourned, playing out the politics of revenge that remains unchallengeable in the public sphere.

⁶ Jez Butterworth and Sam Mendes, ‘Jez Butterworth and Sam Mendes on *The Ferryman*’ *Front Row*, BBC Radio 4, 22 June 2017 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08tvjkc>> [accessed 10 January 2018].

⁷ Sean Carney, *The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary English Tragedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p.16.

I. Borderland

Land speaks history in *The Ferryman*. Set in the border county of Armagh, Butterworth positions his play at the point of dispute of the Troubles, along what many Republicans viewed as the ‘unnatural’⁸ imperial fissure between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Arthur Miller stated that modern tragedies stage ‘the cramping of our lives’,⁹ and the cramped political and economic livelihoods of Northern Irish Catholics are sown into the play’s soil. Plantation by the English in the 1600s pushed Northern Irish Catholics into marginalised plots of the least fertile land, creating entrenched inequalities which culminated in what R.F. Foster calls the ‘agrarian secret-society tradition’, fuelling the conflicts of the Land Wars, the Easter Rising, and, ultimately, the Troubles.¹⁰ This legacy is lived upon by the farming Catholic Carneys, as the land and its politics are inherited through the generations; father of the household, Quinn Carney, proudly proclaims this lineage at the harvest table: ‘This was Big Jack’s farm. And his father’s father before him’.¹¹ The exact location of the Carney’s farmhouse is undisclosed until well into Act Two, leaving the audience to guess location from accents, hints in dialogue, and set paraphernalia, such as the ‘*Celtic FC*’¹² scarf draped in the recesses onstage. This ambiguity conveys how the underlying political tension of the land is uncomfortably suppressed within the Carney’s domestic lives.

⁸ Christopher Hitchens quoted in Henry Patterson, *Ireland’s Violent Frontier: The Border and Anglo-Irish Relations During the Troubles* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.2.

⁹ Arthur Miller, ‘Tragedy and the Common Man’, *Jewish Quarterly*, 62.4 (2015), 62-63, 63.

¹⁰ R.F. Foster, ‘Ascendancy and Union’ in *The Oxford History of Ireland* ed. by R.F. Foster, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 134-173, 170; James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question since 1945*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.49.

¹¹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.68.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.11.

The Prologue initially confines the Troubles to the play's borders. Its setting in 'An alley in Bogside, Derry. Back of a building. The wall is painted with Republican graffiti'¹³ introduces the secret underworld of the IRA operating in backstreet urban spaces. This marginality is conveyed by the cramped set, with the alley wall just a few metres from stage front. The Prologue introduces the play's anti-Gods – Malone, Magennis, and Muldoon – who, as local IRA members attempt to divine, like Juno in the opening lines of *The Aeneid*¹⁴, the fates of the characters onstage. Their responsibility for Seamus's death is inferred, as is their tight control over local services and the media. Despite their access to 'police photograph[s]' of Seamus's body, we see that Magennis, relaxed against the wall, is 'reading a paper' with no headlines covering Seamus's murder.¹⁵ In my interview with Sandra Peake, CEO of WAVE – the grassroots organisation chiefly responsible for supporting the families of the Disappeared – she comments that 'most times there was nothing in the papers'¹⁶ about the disappearances, as the stories were buried from public discourse for fear of shame and violent repercussions. Muldoon's blackmailing of Father Horrigan in the Prologue dramatises this social control, but it also departs from acknowledged fact: priests are not known to have been blackmailed in this way during the Troubles.¹⁷ Butterworth arguably manipulates history at the risk of caricaturing the IRA, and his positioning of the Prologue in famous Derry – 'the capital city of injustice' in Republicans' eyes and the site of the Battle of the Bogside (1969) and Bloody Sunday (1972) – may pander to recognisable tropes of the Troubles for its non-(Northern)Irish audience.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid., p.6.

¹⁴ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by Robert Fagles. (London: Penguin, 2010) 1.1:90.

¹⁵ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.8, 6.

¹⁶ Sandra Peake, Personal Interview, 18 January 2018.

¹⁷ Darragh MacIntyre, Personal Interview, 8 January 2018.

¹⁸ Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 63; Marie-Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey, and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p.147.

The tension between Quinn Carney's escape from and entrapment by violent national politics is suggested by the sound bridge of "Street Fighting Man" by *The Rolling Stones, loud*' which ferries the audience in 'Blackout' between Derry and Act One.¹⁹ As lights rise on the farmhouse, Quinn dances wildly, inebriated, to Jagger screeching, 'Everywhere I hear the sound of marching, charging feet, boy'.²⁰ The song, released in 1968, was a rallying cry of the civil rights movement which sparked the Troubles.²¹ Quinn's moment of acting out captures his fight against, and partaking in, a national political discourse. Etymologically, Quinn is the 'Anglicized form of Ó Cuinn "descendant of Conn"', meaning 'chief, leader'; Carney is the Anglicised form of Kearney: 'warlike', 'victorious', 'foot soldier'.²² Quinn's military and colonised history is inscribed into his character: he is a streetfighter in exile. The play's setting in a 'farmhouse kitchen, in rural Northern Ireland, harvest time'²³ deliberately disguises *The Ferryman* as a domestic drama, as the kitchen sink takes centre stage for the three acts. The vaulted, cavernous, high ceilinged kitchen, filled with real familial paraphernalia from the actors' homes,²⁴ creates an appearance of abundance and space, crowding out the absence of Seamus Carney and the bloodied history of the soil beneath. With the majority of *The Ferryman* staged in rurality beyond urban warfare, dramatic tension is created between the Prologue and the Carney home: as

¹⁹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.10.

²⁰ 'Street Fighting Man' in *Beggars Banquet* (London: Decca, 1968).

²¹ '100 Greatest Rolling Stone Songs' *Rolling Stone*, (15 October 2013)

<<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-greatest-rolling-stones-songs-20131015>> [accessed 10 January 2018].

²² Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, and Flavia Hodges, 'Quinn' in *A Dictionary of First Names*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198610601.001.0001/acref-9780198610601-e-2635?rskey=FyW7uB&result=1> [accessed 10 January 2018]; Richard A. Coates, Patrick Hanks, and Peter McClure, 'Kearney' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) < <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199677764.001.0001/acref-9780199677764-e-21983#>> [accessed 10 January 2018].

²³ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.11.

²⁴ Jez Butterworth and Sam Mendes.

Butterworth comments on his earlier plays, 'It's what's left *off* that ignites what's *on*'.²⁵ The realities of the Troubles grow and fester in the audience's minds, as stories of the conflict accumulate throughout the play and slowly exert pressure on the farmhouse's familial borders.

The harvest festivities, which are the play's centre piece, are another reassertion of borders. According to Naomi Conn Liebler, festive tragedies, from *'festum* ("feast")' display 'the celebration of a community's survival', a 'ritual to protect and reaffirm' values.²⁶ The harvest is an act of defiant bounty at the time of the hunger strikes in August 1981.²⁷ Yet Tom Kettle's reading of Sir Walter Raleigh's poem, 'The Silent Lover' at the harvest table inadvertently invokes the spectre of the Potato Famine, for, according to his biographer, Raleigh was remembered for 'some of the worst horrors' in Ireland under Elizabeth I and for bringing the first potatoes to Ireland in 1588.²⁸ Further, the legacy of Plantation, felt by Catholics complaining of poor land well into the 1980s,²⁹ is aired by Aunt Pat:

AUNT PAT. The 1976 Agricultural Act decreed weather in South Armagh too damp to grow crop for human consumption. Since when Quinn's wheat gets packed up and shipped off to Poland for animal feed.

MULDOON. And what types of animal are they?

AUNT PAT. Pigs.

MULDOON. Pigs, eh? Polish pigs?³⁰

Aunt Pat ventriloquises the unwelcome bureaucracy of the British Government, a twentieth-century manifestation of British rule against Catholic Northern Irish livelihoods. As the audience sees the Carneys enjoying the land's harvest, the crops'

²⁵ Jez Butterworth quoted in David Ian Rabey, *The Theatre and Films of Jez Butterworth* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.10.

²⁶ Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Genre* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.12, 8.

²⁷ Paul Bew and Gordon Gillespie, *Northern Ireland: A Chronology of the Troubles 1968-1999* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), p.154.

²⁸ Raleigh Trevelyan, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (London: Penguin, 2002), p.32; K.H. Connell, 'The Potato in Ireland' in *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland*, ed. by C.H.E. Philpin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.110-125, p.110.

²⁹ Patterson, p.4.

³⁰ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.77.

unworthiness of ‘human consumption’ speaks hypocrisy. Law relegates the Carneys to animals, like ‘Polish pigs’, which hints to changes enacted by Northern Ireland’s entry into the European Economic Community in 1973.³¹ The laughter elicited in the London audiences is recycled to unsettling effect, as the ‘Polish pigs’ draw an uncomfortable link to the anti-Polish undertones of the contemporary Brexit debate which continues to fuel discussions today.³² Northern Ireland’s vote to stay in the EU by 56%³³ questions whether England has again exercised authority to manipulate Northern Irish borders and jeopardise the livelihoods of families like the Carneys against their will.

The land’s colonial legacy is resurrected in *Tom Kettle*. Prominent poet and Irish Republican Thomas Kettle (1880-1916) was famously a ‘gifted speaker with an incisive mind and devastating wit’.³⁴ He is recast with irony as the play’s sole Englishman, who struggles with speech and is ‘not the full bucket’.³⁵ His similarities to John Steinbeck’s Lennie Small in *Of Mice and Men* – with their shared love of rabbits and ability to stack bales³⁶ – inscribes in *Kettle* a sincere humanity *and* his role as melting pot for societal violence:

TOM KETTLE. Would you like an apple, Mr Muldoon. I grew it in my garden. It’s a Royal Gala.
 MULDOON. Sure, that doesn’t sound like an Armagh apple.
 TOM KETTLE. I sent off for the seeds. In 1953, to celebrate the Queen’s Coronation.³⁷

³¹ D.S. Johnson and Liam Kennedy, ‘The Two Economies in Ireland in the Twentieth Century’ in *A New History of Ireland VII: Ireland, 1921-84*, ed. by J.R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.452-472, p.472.

³² See Stewart Paterson, ‘Married Polish couple want YOU to fund their Brexit! Family plead for £10,000 on fundraising site to get them back to Krakow... after EU vote left them ‘stressed and insecure’ in UK.’ *Daily Mail Online*, (12 September 2017) < <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4875672/Married-Polish-couple-want-fund-Brexit.html> > [accessed 18 January 2018].

³³ Jonathan Tonge, ‘The Impact of Withdrawal from the European Union upon Northern Ireland’, *The Political Quarterly*, 87: 3 (2016), 339-342, 339.

³⁴ D.J. Hickey and J.E. Doherty, ‘Kettle, Thomas M.’ in *A Dictionary of Irish History Since 1800* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1980), p.279.

³⁵ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.86.

³⁶ See John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 115, 42; Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.26, 30.

³⁷ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, 76.

In a tense tête-à-tête with the head of the local IRA, Kettle's use of the possessive 'my garden' unconsciously and uncomfortably mimics the ownership exercised by English landowners from the 1600s and onwards. As Kettle innocently repeats the cycle of plantation by Royalists in Armagh, a county already known for its apples,³⁸ Butterworth ironises England's historically flippant view of Ireland as her backyard. The imported 'seeds' which celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation pun on Queen Elizabeth I's brutal plantation of Ulster. Muldoon's response – 'What is an Englishman doing all the way out here now?'³⁹ – encompasses the entire Republican cause. Yet Kettle's unawareness of subtext highlights the refusal of other characters, imbued with sectarianism, to accept his naïveté. Free of embitterment, Kettle is the most empathetic character towards Caitlin: he tells her that 'I understand'⁴⁰ six times in the wake of Seamus's death. Yet his final, shocking act of killing Oisín with the same method that he applied to the harvest goose – 'I wrung his neck' – mimics the barbarism of the IRA, who will disappear humans because, in the words of ex-IRA member Brendan Hughes, 'the order was given for them to be *put down*'.⁴¹ Kettle's mental disorder frees him of murderous intent and isolates the act from the actor, redistributing guilt among the characters onstage – and, possibly, with the English audience. This violence registers the Carneys' resistance to English colonisation as fruitless, as the land's historical inequalities are revived. History is resurrected to have the final say, as its buried politics come alive to kill.

³⁸ Conor Macauley, 'County Armagh apple growers: Harvest worth £20m a year' *BBC News*, BBC (29 September 2015) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-34381677>> [accessed 18 February 2018].

³⁹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.76.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.127; Brendan Hughes interviewed in *The Disappeared* (television programme), *BBC4*, 5 November 2013, <<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/05F71CCC>> [accessed 2 July 2018].

II. Silence

Politics is buried in the silences of *The Ferryman*. A loud, vibrant play, its silences – forty-nine are written into its stage directions – are particularly pronounced. They reflect how, ‘throughout The Troubles [...] *silence* and related notions of loyalty permeated all levels of society’.⁴² The Disappeared were, and still are, a paradigm of this silence, for, as Darragh MacIntyre simply puts it, ‘by definition people didn’t know what happened to them’.⁴³ This absence of information finds its most lucid dramatic outlet in Seamus’s teenage son, Oisín Carney, whose tragic trajectory sees his anger, stemming from the absence of his father, Seamus, transform into radical action. His tragic attempt to kill Tom Kettle dramatises the damage that silence creates within the family. Laura Donnelly noted that her mother rarely spoke of Eugene’s disappearance:

We just got a sense that it wasn’t something we talked about. I think, either consciously or not, my parents made a decision to really neutralise the politics in our family.⁴⁴

This omission of the political, which is mirrored in the onstage relationship between Oisín and Donnelly’s role as his mother, Caitlin, pushes Oisín into eavesdropping, as he seeks facts from elsewhere. The stage, on which ‘there is no visible door’⁴⁵ allows Oisín to eerily appear in silence and overhear characters without drawing their attention. As Jean Howard observes, silent mimes and movements onstage throw into sharp relief ‘the role language plays in the “making sense” process’,⁴⁶ and Oisín’s uncanny, puppet-like appearances convey silence’s dehumanising power. Instead, damaging rumours spread by the IRA about Seamus, as heard by Oisín on the street – ‘my ears aren’t innocent. Sure,

⁴² Peake and Lynch, p.452.

⁴³ Darragh MacIntyre, Personal Interview, 8 January 2018.

⁴⁴ Laura Donnelly, ‘*The Ferryman’s* Laura Donnelly on how her uncle’s murder inspired the IRA drama’ *The Guardian*, (8 August 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/aug/08/laura-donnelly-the-ferryman-jez-butterworth-paddy-considine>> [accessed 21 December 2017].

⁴⁵ Sam Mendes, ‘In Conversation with Sam Mendes’ Programme for Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman* at the Gielgud Theatre, (London: Dewynters, 2017), pp.35-36, p.36.

⁴⁶ Jean E. Howard, *Shakespeare’s Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p.90.

I've heard ten times worse at school⁴⁷ – fill his void with misinformation and misguide him towards radicalism.

According to Adrian May, myth unfolds stories to 'show us what we are inclined to ignore', charting 'what we tend to forget'.⁴⁸ Ironically, the mythical tales told by the dementia suffering Aunt Maggie Faraway fill the silences kept within the family, as her myths make sense of the past and portend the future. Onstage for most of the play, she is the repository of secrets: '*AUNT MAGGIE watches everything*'.⁴⁹ She breaks the silence surrounding Seamus's disappearance, telling the children that 'Seamus is in the ground, girls. Seamus is in the ground'.⁵⁰ Her singing of 'The Stolen Child' by W.B. Yeats⁵¹, first published in his collection, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889), foresees the fate of Oisín, whose wandering to Kettle's outhouse leads to his death. As Aunt Maggie sings 'The Stolen Child', silence descends onstage, as a slippage occurs between the characters' surprise of Aunt Maggie speaking, and an uncanny sense that she is foreseeing the play's tragic denouement. Yeats's poem, which was one of 'the first major works of the [Irish literary] revival based on Gaelic mythology', shows how myth, recycled for political purposes, appears to hold an 'unchanging wisdom'.⁵² However, Sean O'Hagan – a critic who vocally dissented from *The Ferryman's* overwhelmingly positive reviews – argues that Butterworth here performs dramatic Irishness, by delivering a heavy dose of Irish myth-making.⁵³ Aunt Maggie's position on stage left, opposite the staunchly vocal Republican

⁴⁷ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.24.

⁴⁸ Adrian May quoted in Rabey, p.24.

⁴⁹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.72.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁵² Vivian Mercier, 'Literature in English, 1891-1921' in *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland under the Union 1870-1921*, ed. by W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.357-384, p.365, 364.

⁵³ Sean O'Hagan, 'Critics loved *The Ferryman*. But I'm from Northern Ireland, and it doesn't ring true' *The Guardian*, (16 July 2017) <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/16/jez-butterworth-the-ferryman-irish-stereotypes-sam-mendes>> [accessed 29 June 2018].

Aunt Pat on stage right, uncomfortably paints two poles of Irish heritage – the mythic and the political – with, arguably, little nuance in between.

The Corcoran and Carney boys’ debate over Seamus’s guilt demonstrates how extreme narratives propagate when difficult questions are silenced:

JJ. So they were just beating on a Catholic boy?
 DIARMAID. They was punishing him.
 JJ. What for?
 SHANE. Because he fucked up.
 MICHAEL. Like Uncle Seamus.⁵⁴

As extended family members from Derry, Diarmaid and Shane Corcoran represent the wider response to Seamus’s disappearance. Here, it is only after the liberation of a night of ‘*drinking whiskey*’,⁵⁵ with the adults offstage, that the shame of Seamus’s death is discussed. As Eunan O’Halpin points out, ‘The term ‘informer’ [...] has a particular resonance in Irish nationalist memory [...] blamed for successive failures to throw off the British yoke’, with the practice of disappearing informers reaching back to the War of Independence.⁵⁶ This taboo is exhumed by the IRA, as the ‘boy’ who ‘fucked up’ ‘was gagged’⁵⁷: a clear punishment for speaking out. Butterworth notes that:

You can look at the Corcoran boys and look at those pictures of the four people who were radicalized in Barcelona. The process of radicalization is going on in that late-night scene.⁵⁸

The Corcorans, in black leather boots and leather jackets, echo the dress of Muldoon’s men, signalling their influence. In opposition, the Carneys’ white trainers remind the

⁵⁴ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.98.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁵⁶ Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Problematic Killing in the Irish War of Independence: the Killing of Spies and Informers.’ in *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013), pp.317-348, p.320, 321.

⁵⁷ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.97.

⁵⁸ Jez Butterworth, ‘*The Ferryman*: Jez Butterworth on the Legacy of Hate’, *The Atlantic* (5 September 2017). <<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/09/the-ferryman-jez-butterworth-on-the-legacy-of-hate/537984/>> [accessed 10 February 2018].

audience of the ‘Gola trainers’ that Seamus was found buried in – the same shoes which Brian McKinney was found wearing in his grave after his disappearance in 1978 aged 22, as was revealed in *The Disappeared* (see Figure 1).⁵⁹ The white Gola trainers, fashionable among young men in the 1970s, function as a timestamp, freezing Seamus in his youth, while communicating in the white-black opposition a less radical politics. This subtle connection back to Seamus’s body in the Prologue demonstrates how Butterworth creates what Noel Grieg calls ‘depth charges’,⁶⁰ as motifs repeat and resurface within the play to build meaning. The trainers gather an emotional charge, as they force the audience to consider whether Seamus was any different from the Carney boys onstage, and if he had indeed ‘fucked up’ at all. Speaking out becomes a dangerous act in *The Ferryman*, as silence acts as social control to manipulate young minds filled with radical voices.



Figure 1: Still from *The Disappeared*: Brian McKinney’s Gola trainers.

The evasion of political rhetoric in the Carney family is disrupted by Aunt Pat, as she resurrects the spectres of the hunger strikers:

⁵⁹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.7; *The Disappeared* (television programme).

⁶⁰ Noel Grieg quoted in Rabey, p.21.

Suddenly AUNT PAT *switches off the tape player* [...]

Silence. AUNT PAT turns. *Silence.*

AUNT PAT. Michael Devine has starved himself to death.

Silence.

Michael Devine. Thomas McElwee, Kieran Doherty. Kevin Lynch. Martin Hurson, Joe McDonnell. Patsy O'Hara. Raymond McCreesh. Francies Hughes. Bobby Sands.

Silence.

QUINN. To the hunger strikers.⁶¹

As Jean Howard argues, silences are a 'way of calling attention to a potentially important stage moment',⁶² and the silence created by Aunt Pat as she switches off the music signals a turning point in the play. In the midst of the festivities, Aunt Pat revives the suppressed conversation around contemporary nationalist politics, as the bearded, emaciated, Christ-like forms of the hunger-strikers haunt the harvest table, their images pulling on a lineage of 'self-sacrificial deaths' in Irish nationalism.⁶³ This fearless speaking out garners Aunt Pat her position as Oisín's surrogate matriarchal figure. At the end of Act One, as Oisín stares at the Christ-like hanging carcass of the harvest goose,⁶⁴ it is clear that he has absorbed the rhetoric of martyrdom. It is pertinent that Oisín steals Aunt Pat's pistol to kill Tom Kettle: inherited from Aunt Pat's brother who died in the Easter Rising, the pistol gathers its own depth charge. Its changing of hands down the generations shows how, in the wake of silence, the radical politics buried within the Carney family resurfaces and repeats.

⁶¹ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.73-74.

⁶² Howard, p.96.

⁶³ John Wolffe, 'The Mutations of Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland, c. 1850-2005' in *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013), pp. 349-368, p.363.

⁶⁴ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.53.

III. Justice

The Ferryman exposes how Republican politics was buried during the Troubles from British political discourse. As Aunt Pat tunes in to the BBC World Service on her radio, Thatcher's disembodied voice rings onstage:

There can be no question of political status for someone who is serving a sentence for crime. Crime is crime is crime. It is not political.⁶⁵

Butterworth condenses time to abide the Aristotelian unities of time and place, as he places this speech, initially broadcast in April 1981,⁶⁶ at the centre of harvest preparations. The speech demonstrates Thatcher's refusal to acknowledge the hunger-strikers' political status, which, in riposte, led to Bobby Sands' famous phrase, 'I am hungry only for justice'.⁶⁷ Her disembodied voice makes visible the 'formless and bureaucratic face of state power'⁶⁸ while highlighting the distance from which it extends. This melding of politics and criminality sees history recycle, repeating how British official death tolls from the Easter Rising 'make no distinction between insurgents and civilians'.⁶⁹ Yet, Quinn's act of switching the radio *off* signals how the contentious political discourse is also censored at home.

Act Three uncovers how justice for the families of the Disappeared was denied. Due to terms agreed to in secret by the British Government and IRA, the families had 'to sacrifice the option of a criminal justice resolution' in exchange for information on the location of the burial sites.⁷⁰ But most families knew who was involved in their loved one's disappearance:

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.36.

⁶⁶ Margaret Thatcher, 'Press Conference ending visit to Saudi Arabia (IRA hunger strikes)', *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, (21 April 1981) <<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104501>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

⁶⁷ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.92.

⁶⁸ Rabey, p.13.

⁶⁹ F.S Lyons, 'The Rising and After' in *A New History of Ireland VI: Ireland under the Union 1870-1921*, ed. by W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 207-223, p.217.

⁷⁰ Peake and Lynch, p.455.

I believe I know the people who done it and I'll always know them. And even the day of my father's funeral I had to thank those people. I felt it was something I had to do. I had to get up and thank whoever gave us that information.⁷¹

Caitlin's wooden thanks to Muldoon – 'I thank you for the kindness you've shown me and my son' – dramatises how, in the face of Seamus's killer, justice was sacrificed in exchange to 'bury Seamus in peace'.⁷² The terms of this exchange show again the strapping of silence:

QUINN. I accept that neither you, nor anyone you know, was involved in the disappearance of Seamus Carney. (*Beat.*) That no one will speak a word on the subject. No one will talk to the press. No one will breathe a word to anyone. It's in the past and it will stay in the past.⁷³

As Quinn states these facts face-to-face with Muldoon, the hypocrisy of this agreement (which the audience feels through the '*Beat*') is made dramatically clear. The gagging of the families by the IRA, who also negotiated that 'no post mortem or other forensic examination would be undertaken' and 'that the funerals had to be held in private'⁷⁴, is laid bare. Muldoon's use of Quinn's children to secure his silence – 'For Honor. Mercy. [...] Bobby'⁷⁵ – takes on a sinister double meaning, as their names play on the traits asked of the Republican cause and bring into terrifying proximity the memory of Bobby Sands and Quinn's youngest baby, also called Bobby, who is seen live onstage.

Justice – in some part – is delivered onstage. As Jean-Paul Sartre claimed, 'The law *is* theater', 'the stage is the courtroom in which the case is tried'.⁷⁶ In line with the Greek tradition, Butterworth creates a dramatic space where the publically unchallengeable is tried, as judgement on the IRA is performed. Donnelly, in her role as Caitlin, is given an audience with Muldoon to assert that the rumours spread by the IRA 'didn't work, see. I

⁷¹ Anna McShane interviewed in *The Disappeared* (television programme).

⁷² Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.125, 123.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.123.

⁷⁴ Peake and Lynch, p.455.

⁷⁵ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.124.

⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre quoted in Kerrigan, p.28.

knew. You never got me, Mr Muldoon. You never got me.⁷⁷ Donnelly described playing Caitlin as ‘cathartic’,⁷⁸ and her well-publicised familial link draws on the audiences’ *pathos*, as her confrontation poignant slips between reality and stage.

The isolation of the families of the Disappeared from the church⁷⁹ is given an imagined judgement as Uncle Pat reads from *The Aeneid*:

Enter QUINN from upstairs, unseen. He is dressed differently.

“Son of Anchises, true child of the gods, all this crowd, you see, they are the unburied. The ferryman is Charon. He may not carry them from the fearful shore on the harsh waters before their bones are at rest in the earth. They roam for a thousand years lost on these shores, their souls abandoned. Only then are they admitted, and revisit the pools they long for.”

Silence.

QUINN. Who’s there?

UNCLE PAT. Fear not, Quinn. It’s that old fool Pat, and the Father...⁸⁰

Father Horrigan, who betrayed the Carneys by colluding with the IRA is judged by Quinn from his elevation ‘*upstairs*’. Quinn’s shout of ‘Who’s there?’ continues the play’s trope of overhearing and mimics the first line of *Hamlet*,⁸¹ invoking in the ‘*Silence*’ the presence of a ghostly betrayal. This quoted passage from *The Aeneid*, spoken by Sibyl – the *vates* and guide to the underworld – poses *The Ferryman*’s central question of who holds power to end lives and bury souls in peace or without. As he brings their ghosts in tow, Horrigan is faced with an image of the unburied who he abandoned, having failed to deliver burial rites to ferry their souls from earth to heaven. However, Quinn asserts his own agency, as his change of clothes suggests a switch to battle dress before his final act of taking revenge, mirroring Aeneas’s ascent from the underworld in Book VI to war thereafter.

⁷⁷ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.84.

⁷⁸ Laura Donnelly, ‘Actress Laura Donnelly on how uncle’s IRA murder inspired hit West End play’, *The Irish News*, (11 September 2017) <<https://www.irishnews.com/arts/2017/09/11/news/actress-laura-donnelly-on-how-uncle-s-ira-murder-inspired-hit-west-end-play-1130900/>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

⁷⁹ As stated by Eugene Simons’s father, Walter Simons, ‘There was no one you could talk to, not in the church or anywhere else.’ Quoted in WAVE, *The Disappeared of Northern Ireland’s ‘Troubles’* (Belfast: WAVE Trauma Centre, 2012), p.75.

⁸⁰ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.114.

⁸¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G.R. Hibbard. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.1:1.

The Ferryman reclaims the space, left vacant by official discourse, to judge Quinn's act of revenge. Act Three resembles a revenge tragedy, as it stages what John Kerrigan calls an 'ethical deadlock: moments of trial within and beyond character in which rhetoric is, in the liveliest sense, an agent of action'.⁸² Muldoon reminds Quinn of his old values:

you'd watch that baby burn in the fire, if it meant a free Ireland. And I thought, "that is what it takes. *That* is the cost of freedom."⁸³

Sean O'Hagan critiques this line as caricaturing Muldoon beyond redemption.⁸⁴ This analysis overlooks the moment's dramatic potential to humanise, as it verbalises the extremes of ethical deadlock between political freedom and home-life. Initially banned by the British Government for humanising terrorists, the BBC documentary *Real Lives: At the Edge of the Union* (1985) filmed Martin McGuinness feeding his children at home whilst also undertaking his duties as IRA Chief of Staff (see Figure 2).⁸⁵ Butterworth revives this mix of domesticity and violence in Quinn, which ultimately culminates in '*blood spurts all over the wall of family pictures*'.⁸⁶ Quinn's lack of formal justice avenues demonstrates how, as Adrian Poole conjectures, there is in tragedy 'no *logical* escape from the nightmare'.⁸⁷ Quinn's ethical space is cramped by sectarianism, as inevitable death becomes the only risk-free escape from injustice.

Quinn's quip that the past 'will stay in the past' is misleading. The past avenges in *The Ferryman*, as the play's buried injustices surface as ghosts. Each act ends with the building of an unsettling noise, revealed in the final scene as '*the Banshees scream*'.⁸⁸ According to Yeats, banshees wail before a death, and 'When more than one banshee is

⁸² Kerrigan, p.29.

⁸³ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.82.

⁸⁴ O'Hagan.

⁸⁵ 'Real Lives 1985' *History of the BBC*, BBC <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/research/culture/bbc-and-gov/real-lives>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

⁸⁶ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.128.

⁸⁷ Adrian Poole, *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.36.

⁸⁸ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.129.

present, and they wail and sing in chorus, it is for the death of some holy or great one'.⁸⁹ The chorus of banshees thus grant the Carneys mythic status, like the giants and Jonny Rooster Byron at the end of *Jerusalem*.⁹⁰ Ghosts in Irish folklore 'live in a state of intermediary between this life and the next. They are held there by some earthly longing or affection, or some duty unfulfilled, or anger against the living.'⁹¹ The banshees, or ghosts, return onstage in an act of retributive justice. It is a repeat of family history, recalling Aunt Pat's return from the Easter Rising with '*Banshees. Ten thousand.*'⁹² The banshees' cry could also be the sound of the combine harvesters, or of Muldoon's men coming to arms, creating ambiguity akin to *Jerusalem*, as the sound of giants melds with the trucks driving to flatten Byron's home.⁹³ The ghosts, therefore, may represent liberation or a final enclosure. Uncle Pat's quotation from *The Aeneid* states that ghosts are 'the unburied. And liars';⁹⁴ and so, within the play's logic, all those wronged in Irish history – and its wrong-doers – return in defiance of death's silence. The invisible become palpable, mirroring how the stories of the Disappeared have become politically visible in response to what Peake and Lynch identify as 'undulations of the political landscape'.⁹⁵ As Ed Moloney points out, Jean McConville's disappearance 'came back to *haunt* Sinn Fein during the height of the peace process in the mid-1990s'; in 2014, Gerry Adams was arrested in relation to her death, although he subsequently received no charges.⁹⁶ Both onstage and off, history becomes a ghostly presence, as buried injustices revive after years of silence to haunt the audience with their own voice.

⁸⁹ W.B. Yeats, ed. *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p.99.

⁹⁰ Jez Butterworth, *Jerusalem* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2010) p.109.

⁹¹ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales*, p.117.

⁹² Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.59.

⁹³ Butterworth, *Jerusalem*, p.109.

⁹⁴ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.125.

⁹⁵ Peake and Lynch, p.453.

⁹⁶ Moloney, p.124, emphasis added; 'No charges against Gerry Adams but Jean McConville's family vow to seek justice' *Belfast Telegraph*, (29 September 2015) <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/no-charges-against-gerry-adams-but-jean-mcconvilles-family-vow-to-seek-justice-31567533.html>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

Closure and disclosure

The Ferryman ends with political and supernatural forces enclosing the Carney's pastoral idyll. Arthur Miller argues that tragedy 'requires the finest appreciation by the writer of cause and effect',⁹⁷ and *The Ferryman* uncovers how this cramping of physical, political, and ethical space stems from the land's legacy. As Aunt Pat proffers, 'Who are we in a war with these past four hundred years?'⁹⁸

This form of closure, 'that which encloses, shuts in, or confines; a fence, wall, barrier, case, cover, setting, etc.'⁹⁹ is a force that both represses and radicalises. In Act Two, the audience hears of Quinn's internment 'back in the cage',¹⁰⁰ a personal history which he hides. This buried memory embodies both the physical and the verbal forms of closure that ghost *The Ferryman*, driving its characters to radical action. Internment was, in 1916 and 1972, a catalyst for violence and a Republican hothouse.¹⁰¹ It is emblematic of the Troubles, a conflict defined by 'a fundamental polarization within such a tiny space'.¹⁰²

The Ferryman appeals for disclosure over closure. Disclosure is 'the action or fact of disclosing or revealing new or secret information; the action of making something openly known.'¹⁰³ In his poem, 'Mahogany Gaspipes', Bernard O'Donoghue remarks on how Irish voices are sometimes lost, or distorted, as they cross the Irish sea:

They didn't seem to hear what we were saying
across the water: probably the wind
was in the wrong direction and blew away
our voices.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Miller, 'Tragedy', p.63.

⁹⁸ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.32.

⁹⁹ 'closure, n.' *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, June 2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/34641> [accessed 8 February 2018].

¹⁰⁰ Butterworth, *Ferryman*, p.80.

¹⁰¹ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972*, (London: Penguin, 1989), p.590.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.583.

¹⁰³ 'disclosure, n'. *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, June 2018) <www.oed.com/view/Entry/53779> [accessed 2 July 2018].

¹⁰⁴ Bernard O'Donoghue, 'Mahogany Gaspipes' in *The Seasons of Cullen Church* (London: Faber, 2016), p.5.

Though Donoghue speaks to an Irish experience, his message could also be applied to suppressed Northern Irish narratives. By unearthing stories silenced within families, communities, and at the highest political level, *The Ferryman* has re-opened a dialogue on the Disappeared and added to the gathering excavation of secrets buried within Northern Ireland's recent history. Sandra Peake believes that *The Ferryman* has 'brought the issue of the Disappeared [...] back into the public area again, in terms of in England'.¹⁰⁵ The play has ferried between the isles to tell a story still relatively unknown across the waters.

The play's act of revenge humanises the dehumanising, while displaying the futility – and logic – of violence. Revenge is a fitting mode for sectarianism, as it stages how, through the act or attempt of killing, 'the sins of the fathers are visited upon the sons'.¹⁰⁶ Revenge becomes a chthonic cycle which is inherited and perpetuated by Quinn and Oisín. Hope must exist within tragedy, to prove, as Miller puts it, that humans are 'capable of flowering on this earth'.¹⁰⁷ *The Ferryman's* ambiguous ending enacts the Carneys' entrapment by near certain death, while also dramatising the ascent of the Troubles' buried ghosts into the public consciousness. Within Northern Irish politics, the rise of Mary Lou McDonald, who succeeded Gerry Adams as President of Sinn Féin this year, promises to open a new chapter in Republican politics – she has, in her words, brought 'her own shoes to fill'.¹⁰⁸

To conclude on whether Butterworth does justice to the Troubles requires further space than here allows. By traveling outside Northern Ireland, what *The Ferryman* offers is a personal appeal for dialogue beyond borders. As it tours on Broadway, and as national

¹⁰⁵ Peake.

¹⁰⁶ Kerrigan, p.8.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Miller, 'The Nature of Tragedy' in *The Collected Essays of Arthur Miller* ed. by Matthew Roudane (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), pp. 11-13, p.13.

¹⁰⁸ 'Sinn Féin's Mary Lou McDonald brought "her own shoes to fill"' *BBC News*, BBC, (20 January 2018) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-42758915/sinn-fein-s-mary-lou-mcdonald-brought-her-own-shoes-to-fill>> [accessed 8 February 2018].

and global politics develop, the play will continue to ask its audiences to speak out – not to stay silent: to disclose in the face of closure, in order to put past ghosts to rest.

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ENLIGHTENING THE MARGINALISED

JOHN THELWALL AND THE VALUE OF LAUGHTER

DANIEL NORMAN

In the first of his *Political Lectures* the radical orator John Thelwall, who had become a household name in the 1790s for his outspoken condemnations of Pitt's Tory government, reveals an underlying consciousness of the new political significance of laughter. Writing in early 1794 of the 1792 'Royal Proclamation Against Seditious Writings' (under which Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* had been banned), Thelwall describes how

our looks [were] in reality called into question, and a seditious meaning [was] applied even to our very smiles; so that, in the midst of our other ALARMS, with which the nation was harassed at that period, I am informed that certain lovers of wit and pleasantry were in horrible apprehension lest it should be made CAPITAL to laugh without permission of his MAJESTY'S MINISTERS!!!¹

Laughter, he emphasises, had become a politically dangerous act, given a new gravity by a government increasingly intent on prosecuting political radicals for sedition and treason.² This is the cultural atmosphere within which one must contextualise the satirical elements of Thelwall's lectures. Far from representing a simple rhetorical tool, unthinkingly included by a skilful orator, they are in fact the product of considerable (and perhaps, given the political climate, unavoidable) reflection upon the nature and function of humour. By examining specific details within the lectures Thelwall delivered in the mid-1790s, this essay seeks to throw new light upon Thelwall's perception and use of humour. The following argument will draw chiefly on the printed versions of lectures delivered between 1794 and 1795 in London, and published in his periodical *The Tribune*, arguing that Thelwall employs jokes not simply as rhetorical flourishes, but as a means by which

¹ John Thelwall, *Political Lectures (No. 1): On the Moral Tendency of a System of Spies and Informers* (London: D. I. Eaton, 1794), pp. 18-19; Jon Mee, 'Treason, Seditious Libel, and Literature in the Romantic Period', *Oxford Handbooks Online* (2016), 1-21 (p. 3).

² John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 29.

the politically side-lined and oppressed amongst his audience might be informed and educated.³

Thelwall's theatrical background provided him with an intrinsic awareness of the difficulty of holding an audience's attention, and an attendant grasp of the importance of entertainment. He had from the earliest part of his career directed his literary efforts towards the stage: *Incle and Yarico*, a farce written in 1787, and *The Incas*, an opera of 1792, had both been submitted to London theatre houses (the former to Haymarket, by then a patent theatre, and the latter to Covent Garden).⁴ Performance, and the demands of a paying audience, were thus realities with which Thelwall was well-acquainted in the years before he began his political lectures, and (as a regular theatre-goer himself) he would have had frequent first-hand experience of the boisterous and occasionally violent behaviour of the assembled crowds.⁵ Both Haymarket and Covent Garden had been the sites of numerous riots in the decades leading up to Thelwall's association with them (the most notorious occurring in 1738 and 1763 respectively), and by the 1770s the management of the London patent theatres had resorted to installing metal spikes in front of the stage, intended to prevent exuberant attendees from climbing up and assaulting the cast.⁶ Such crowds were not reluctant to make their dissatisfaction known.

Humour, as his writing of the early 1790s makes plain, was a crucial weapon to be used in the fight to placate and subdue the fervour of these audiences. In early 1794 a comedy by Thomas Holcroft (a personal friend of Thelwall's) entitled *Love's Frailties* was

³ Thelwall's lecture notes from this period have not survived; *The Tribune* constitutes the only source for their content.

⁴ John Thelwall, *Incle and Yarico and The Incas: Two Plays by John Thelwall*, ed. by Frank Felsenstein and Michael Scrivener (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), p. 14.

⁵ Denyse Rockey, 'John Thelwall and the Origins of British Speech Therapy', *Medical History*, 23 (1979), 156-75 (p.169).

⁶ Judith W. Fisher, 'Audience Participation in the Eighteenth-Century London Theatre', in *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance*, ed. by Susan Kattwinkel (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), pp. 55-70 (p. 57); Heather McPherson, 'Theatrical Riots and Cultural Politics in Eighteenth-Century London', *The Eighteenth Century* 43 (2002), 236-252 (p.237).

performed at Covent Garden with a prologue attributed in the script to ‘a literary friend.’⁷ Subsequently identified in a contemporary review in the *European Magazine* as one ‘Mr. Thelwall,’ this literary friend has been convincingly contended by Georgina Green to denote Thelwall himself.⁸ If the supposition is taken as valid, the prologue may be shown to reveal significant details regarding Thelwall’s early attitude to the function of humour as a tool in performance and public speaking. Imagining the auditorium as an army, the actor (on the night a Mr Bernard) is prompted in parentheses to address the auditorium’s various sections individually (firstly the pit):

Lo ruthless veterans rang’d, intrench’d chin deep!
 Flanking this fearful centre in a ring, (*Boxes*)
 Gay knights and Amazons form either wing!
 Corps of reserve (*Gallery*) drawn up in dread array,
 On yonder heights await the coming fray!⁹

Given the character of contemporary audiences, the comparison is perhaps not so fanciful as it initially appears, and Thelwall’s parenthetical emphasis upon engaging the space reinforces his understanding of the need to form a direct bond with his physical audiences in order to keep their attention.

It is in the closing lines, however, that Thelwall depicts the strategies with which this attention is won (or lost):

Cassandra like, in black prophetic view,
 I see the massacres that may ensue!
 Wit, humour, character, are put to rout!
 The prompter breathless, and the actors out!
 Quibbles and clap-traps in confusion run!
 Slain is a sentiment! Down drops a pun!¹⁰

Thelwall is clearly drawing upon *The Rape of the Lock* here (which he had praised in his journal *The Peripatetic* a few months earlier), and more particularly upon the battle of Canto

⁷ Thomas Holcroft, *Love’s Frailties* (London: Shepperson and Reynolds, 1794), p. 1.

⁸ ‘Theatrical Journal’, *European Magazine*, February 1794, pp. 137-38; Georgina Green, ‘John Thelwall Author of the Prologue to Thomas Holcroft’s *Love’s Frailties* (1794)?’, *Notes and Queries*, 55 (2008), 422-424.

⁹ Holcroft, p. 1.

¹⁰ Holcroft, p. 1.

Three.¹¹ Here too there are allegorical ‘warlike’ factions and ‘routed arm[ies]’ whose actions similarly result in the ‘wild disorder’ Thelwall also recounts.¹² As with Pope, it may be argued that Thelwall cannot help but take a certain pleasure in the chaos; rather than condemning the exuberance of the event, he loses himself in the painting of it (lapsing, for example, into the quicker pace of the dactylic ‘[q]uibbles and clap-traps in confusion run’). Where *The Rape*’s concluding moral consists of an intentionally tonally incongruous memento mori (‘after all the murders of your eye, / [...] after millions slain, yourself shall die’), Thelwall instead continues to relish the use of humour within his concluding lines, taking a playful shot at Holcroft:

How shall our general dare such danger meet?
 Were it not better, think you, sirs, to treat?
 War honours grant then, as he files away;
 So may he live and fight another day.¹³

It is plain that, for Thelwall, theatrical spectacle, with all the rowdiness and disorder it provoked, is a pleasure to be revelled in. At the heart of this joy, as the prologue makes clear, is the pivotal role of wit and good humour, with which he evidently engages with enthusiasm.

In his political lectures, the first of which was to take place only a few weeks after the writing of this prologue for Holcroft, something of the same underlying attitude may be discerned. It is particularly clear in the derision he pours upon those he criticises, an often vehemently mocking scorn frequently pointed out by critics as hypocritical. Judith Thompson, for example, writing of the nature of his oratorical style, describes the easily-drawn conclusion that he is ‘indulging in the very vices of rant and cant that he attacks in

¹¹ John Thelwall, *The Peripatetic*, ed. by Judith Thompson (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2001), p. 295.

¹² Alexander Pope, *Selected Poetry*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 42-43.

¹³ Holcroft, p. 1.

his opponents.¹⁴ His 1790s lectures are full of examples of such jeering derision, most frequently directed at Edmund Burke, and his advocacy, for example, of restricting

that very diffusion of information, the very mention of extending which to the *Swinish Multitude*, throws Mr. Burke into such paroxysms of frenzy!—‘to be led otherwise than blindly,’ says he ‘the followers must be qualified, if not for actors, at least for judges; they must be judges also of *natural weight and authority*,’—not the factious authority of tyranny and wealth—but ‘NATURAL WEIGHT AND AUTHORITY!!!’¹⁵

The aggressively sarcastic repetition, hammering home his perception of the absurdity of Burke’s phrase, reveals the emphatic approach to humour one might expect from the prologue writer of *Love’s Frailties*. Thelwall’s scoffs are almost audible behind what Thompson elsewhere refers to as the ‘confrontational punctuation’ of his printed lectures, and they certainly appear to undermine the strength of his censure of Burke’s ‘paroxysms of frenzy,’ drawing attention to what some might construe as Thelwall’s own.¹⁶

For Thompson the apparent hypocrisy here may, however, be resolved through an alteration of the manner in which one considers the audiences to which these lectures were delivered. A perception of Thelwall as a hypocritical and superficial demagogue relies, she asserts, ‘upon a view of the audience as a passive and inflexible mob, lacking the intellectual and verbal resources to follow and interpret ironies, capable only of immediate, unthinking visceral response to sensational sounds and images.’¹⁷ The growing literacy of the labouring classes (which, alongside a few interested attendees from other social classes, constituted the majority of Thelwall’s audience) lends weight to Thompson’s argument; radical literature sold extremely well amongst the growing labouring class reading public, who actively engaged with the large quantity of cheap

¹⁴ Judith Thompson, ‘John Thelwall and the Science and Practice of Elocution,’ in *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*, ed. by Angela Esterhammer and Alexander John Dick (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 21-45 (p. 41).

¹⁵ John Thelwall, *The Tribune* (London: J. Thelwall, 1795), I, p. 222.

¹⁶ Thompson, ‘John Thelwall and the Science and Practice of Elocution,’ p. 41.

¹⁷ Thompson, ‘John Thelwall and the Science and Practice of Elocution,’ p. 42.

political material available at this time.¹⁸ Thelwall's self-contradictory enthusiasm, if Thompson's assertion of his audience's greater 'verbal resources' and their ability to detect ironies is granted, may instead be argued to parody Burke's own hypocritical 'frenzy,' for which he had already earned criticism from much of the radical community (Wollstonecraft notably emphasising the inconsistency in his advocating cool rationality in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, whilst simultaneously 'foster[ing] every emotion till the fumes, mounting to your brain, dispel the sober suggestions of reason').¹⁹ Thelwall's caustic humour, under this reading, may be interpreted as an indication of a deeper and more considered sarcasm within his approach to his subject matter.

Yet despite these apparent subtle parodies and inversions, and their appeal to intellectual engagement rather than 'immediate, unthinking visceral response,' the fundamental thrust of Thelwall's rhetorical technique largely operates on a more basic level. It must be remembered that many of his lectures were delivered in taverns (notably the Globe Tavern off the Strand), to animated, often singing, crowds.²⁰ In turning to the substance of Thelwall's lectures in 1794 and 1795 it is clear that, contrary to an assessment of his apparent subtlety, immediate and instinctive emotional response was absolutely pivotal to his project. Laughter, instinctive almost by definition, provides the perfect case in point for this claim. Across Thelwall's lectures, the act of laughing is held up as a symbol of accurate and sincere moral judgement: the honest instinctual chuckle of an ordinary citizen is presented as anathema to corrupt and oppressive politicians. This attitude is particularly clear in his discussion of William Fitzwilliam (the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam) in a lecture of early May, 1795. Fitzwilliam, a Portlandite Whig, had

¹⁸ Gillian Russell, 'Spouters or Washerwomen: the Sociability of Romantic Lecturing', in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 123-144 (p. 125); Michael Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 78; Michael Scrivener, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 55.

¹⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, with A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, and Hints*, ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 7.

²⁰ Thelwall, *The Tribune*, I, 166.

hesitatingly given his support to the Pitt-Portland Coalition of mid-1794, accepting Pitt's offer of the role of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.²¹ Fitzwilliam was later recalled (as a result of his support for the extension of Catholic rights), and subsequently critiqued the prime minister, writing that '[I have] the glory of being objectionable to Mr. Pitt.'²² Despite this, his acceptance of the Lord Lieutenancy was seen by Thelwall as a fundamentally self-interested act, the moral bankruptcy of which could be precisely diagnosed in the ridicule his ignominious dismissal would attract:

to talk of the glory of being obnoxious to a man who has made you his tool and instrument to swindle Ireland of her men and money, and then throws you away with neglect and contempt, is language too ridiculous, [...] And to say afterwards that 'he has not rendered your character subservient to his views,' is talking that, at which children themselves would laugh. The very drivellers in the street would point their fingers at the man who could make use of such logic as this 'I have bargained for the wages of iniquity, and was refused my reward. I, therefore, stand up before the people and talk of my character, and glory in being made obnoxious to the being by whom I am thus disappointed.'²³

In order to understand the truth of the affair, in Thelwall's opinion, one need look no further than the laughing derision of ordinary people: even the intellects of 'children' and 'drivellers' are, through the medium of laughter, capable of grasping Fitzwilliam's moral failings. In this way, Thelwall presents the instinctive and immediate nature of honest laughter as a symbolic expression of an innate understanding of virtue, one that everyone, regardless of social status, possesses.

This attitude to laughter provides useful context for the satirical passages in Thelwall's lectures, casting light upon the way in which he intended them to function. It is vital not to underestimate the role of basic and instinctive human reactions to Thelwall's conception of moral virtue, and his satire conspicuously seeks to induce a basic and

²¹ E. A. Smith, *Whig Principles and Party Politics: Earl Fitzwilliam and the Whig Party, 1748-1833* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 176-80.

²² Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 373; David Wilkinson, 'The Fitzwilliam Episode, 1795: A Reinterpretation of the Role of the Duke of Portland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29 (1995), 315-339 (p. 316); William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, *Observations on the Letters of Lord Fitzwilliam to Lord Carlisle* (Dublin: Thomas Burnside, 1795), p. 35.

²³ Thelwall, *Tribune*, I, p. 219.

universal instinctive reaction, of the kind he advocates in his discussion of the Fitzwilliam episode. This intention is most noticeable in his use of established Jacobin motifs, among which the image of the ‘swinish multitude’ is perhaps the most ubiquitous and well-known. First used in Burke’s *Reflections* to describe the threat posed by unruly commoners to ‘the natural protectors and guardians’ of learning (namely ‘the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion’), the phrase provoked an immediate outcry.²⁴ It became, as Darren Howard puts it, ‘emblematic of a political philosophy that advocates a rigidly hierarchical social structure,’ and was sarcastically adopted as an epithet by radicals themselves in such works as James Parkinson’s *An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke from the Swinish Multitude* and Daniel Isaac Eaton’s periodical *Politics for the People, or, A Salmagundy for Swine* (to which Thelwall contributed).²⁵ By exploiting the overt distinction between how their audiences saw themselves, and how the phrase suggested they were seen by the ruling classes, such authors deliberately manipulated the swinish motif for comic effect. For Thelwall too it represented a symbol whose prevalence (which ensured universal comprehension) made it a useful comic tool, and he enthusiastically adopts its basic premise throughout his 1795 lectures. In a lecture delivered on Friday, May 1st of that year, for example, Thelwall uses the image to criticise the government’s role in causing the ‘present DEARNESS and SCARCITY of PROVISIONS:’

They sent all the good corn out of the country, as fast as they could, to supply their good allies; and behold when they came to open their supplies [...] they found precious stocks of the stuff, the greatest part of which was obliged to be sold to the real swinish multitude: not to the *two legged swine*, but the real swinish multitude, who run on all fours.²⁶

The humour here is not complicated, playing largely upon the ridiculousness of the image of ‘*two legged swine*’ (the italicisation perhaps denoting the comic emphasis with which he

²⁴ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by L. G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 79.

²⁵ Darren Howard, ‘Necessary Fictions: The “Swinish Multitude” and the Rights of Man’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 47 (2008), 161-78 (p. 161).

²⁶ Thelwall, *Tribune*, II, p. 43.

spoke the line) to underscore the absurdity politicians display in treating their citizens like (or indeed worse than) beasts. Just as Parkinson and Eaton had before him, Thelwall draws upon this simple and instantly recognisable image to form a joke in which all members of his audience may share, effectively and simply conveying how ludicrous he finds the government's actions to be.

At its core, the humour in these satirical appropriations of animalistic epithets lies in its straightforward irony; as Olivia Smith describes in *The Politics of Language*, radical authors like Thelwall were to a large extent simply 'pretending to be as their political opponents imagined them' for comic effect.²⁷ Thelwall does not, however, make use of such images unthinkingly: upon closer inspection of his writing, a subtle attempt to build upon and reframe them becomes plain. This is not to say that he seeks to negate or correct the impact of the established metaphor, but rather that he attempts to harness its inherent comic value for a deeper moral purpose, one which is particularly conspicuous in his use of fish-related imagery. Though less popular than the swinish multitude trope, fish allegories were employed in a similar way within radical rhetoric, as may be seen, for example, in an anonymous contribution to the radical periodical *Politics for the People*:

the net of state power and cruel policy is cast abroad, even over the whole land; and we, like fish, are entangled therein, and blended with almost all the swine of Europe.²⁸

More of a flourish than a joke, the metaphor here follows the central thrust of the swinish trope by emphasising that governments are cruel because they treat their subjects like animals, and that (if the reasoning is taken to its obvious conclusion) humans ought to be treated better than fish or swine.

²⁷ Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 88.

²⁸ Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Politics for the People: Or, A Salmagundy for Swine* (London: D. I. Eaton, 1794), p. 58.

When Thelwall adopts the metaphor, however, the underlying implication is fundamentally altered, as is particularly evident in his first *Tribune* lecture, where he asserts that

Circumstances [of] impolicy and injustice have produced an artificial scarcity of salt water fish: and a red herring which some years ago might be bought for a half-penny, is not now to be had for less than threehalfpence or twopence.

When discussing the cause of this increase, Thelwall employs fish imagery in an unconventional manner (quoted here in full to demonstrate the cumulative effect of his style):

Will any man make me believe that the fishes are infected also with the rage of emigration?—Will you tell me that they also have drank the poisonous doctrines of jacobinism, and become discontented with that *glorious constitution*, under which for so many centuries they have so happily been eaten; and that, therefore, the herrings have fled from the coasts of Scotland, and the salmon deserted our rivers, and, together with the other factious inhabitants of our streams and shores, have fled, with atheistical abhorrence of all *regular government*, to the coasts of French anarchy, or the distant and happy shores of America, that they might enjoy the pleasure of being eaten without alloy from the consideration that they were put in the mouths of what they rebelliously consider as bondsmen and slaves? No, Citizens, it is the infernal spirit of monopoly, that cruel and wasteful demon that has rendered poverty, want, and distress the portion of the mass of the people of this country; that had produced in the midst of abundance this cruel, artificial scarcity.

Rather than founding his quip in the disjunction between humans and fish (as the *Politics for the People* piece had), Thelwall instead realigns it to focus on their similarities: just as it is ridiculous to argue that fish may act under Jacobin principles, so too is it ridiculous to impose the artificial limitations of monopoly upon humanity's relationship with the natural world. Our right to eat fish, Thelwall implies, is entirely natural and just, and any attempt to restrict or tamper with this right must appear as absurd as the suggestion that the natural behaviour of fish displays the influence of 'the poisonous doctrines of jacobinism.' By founding his argument upon a simple and recognisable humorous image, Thelwall is able to prompt deeper reflection within his audience: the natural moralising of their sense of humour (as he sees it) thus provides the ideal foundation for a more

complex message about social justice. In this way, Thelwall's use of these commonplace radical motifs does not merely echo what Michael Scrivener calls the 'cultural insurgency' of radicals like Eaton; it seeks fundamentally to channel and redirect their radical energy.²⁹

This channelling of humour provides a valuable key for understanding the wider nature of Thelwall's project in the *Tribune* lectures, and how he approached the task of lecturing itself. Writing in *The Tribune's* 'Farewel Address [*sic.*],' Thelwall outlines what in his view constitutes good oratory, emphasising the importance of 'fire of expression' and 'rapid energy of conception and arrangement.'³⁰ From passages like this it is possible to conclude, as Scrivener does in *Seditious Allegories*, that Thelwall felt effective lecturing to entail 'a necessary moment of "intemperance,"' and that, for him, 'the "soul of oratory"' is spontaneous energy.³¹ Centring upon 'intemperance' to explain Thelwall's rhetorical style, however, stands intrinsically at odds with the way in which Thelwall himself understood and used this particular term. In the same way that he describes Burke's writing as the product of 'paroxysms of frenzy,' 'intemperance' is similarly used to denote a 'disordered imagination' or a debilitating mental chaos, something that 'the enthusiasm of weak minds is apt to produce.'³² This is precisely the reverse of how Thelwall sought to communicate to his public, as his use of humour makes particularly clear. Though he does employ the underlying energy of simple Jacobin satirical motifs in order to provoke an instinctive response from his audience, he does not do so out of an unthinking paroxysm of enthusiasm. By prompting an instinctive response, Thelwall lays the groundwork for a deeper moral and political argument, harnessing an audience's laughter to underscore his ethical conclusions regarding politics and politicians. As he himself puts it, speaking about his lectures as a whole, his primary intention is 'to force my way to the conviction of your

²⁹ Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories*, p. 127

³⁰ Thelwall, *Tribune*, III, p. 322.

³¹ Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories*, p. 169.

³² Thelwall, *Tribune*, II, p. 228.

better judgements.³³ This ambition goes some way to explaining the meaning of the assertion Scrivener dissects, namely that good oratory consists of ‘rapid energy of [...] arrangement:’ fire and wit alone are not enough, Thelwall intimates; they must be arranged in service of a higher goal.

Laughter, thus, lies at the core of Thelwall’s moral and political project. It is clear from his earliest writing that Thelwall had a fundamental appreciation for wit, not only enjoying participation in communal laughter, but seeing laughter itself as an essential tool with which to win over an audience. His prologue to Holcroft’s *Love’s Frailties* reveals a conception of jokes as weapons to be used in the struggle to capture listeners’ attention, and this same attitude fundamentally influences the approach he takes to his lectures. They feature a potent mixture of humour and declamatory rhetoric, aimed intrinsically to regale his audience, and thereby keep them interested. This intention does not, however, simply represent a superficial attempt to pull in attendees and revenue; Thelwall’s oratorical style is wholly bound up with his political objectives. Laughter, for Thelwall, serves a critical role in the exposure of moral injustice: by mocking politicians, he highlights, one is able to expose their true colours, and to judge them accordingly. This capacity, possessed by all members of society, is the underlying target of the humour of his lectures. By provoking laughter, often using recognisable symbols and ideas to appeal to the largest possible proportion of his largely labouring class listenership, Thelwall lays a moral foundation. On this foundation he builds more complex political reasonings, many of which redirect the original significance of the images he employs, thus encouraging his audience implicitly to arrive at his intended conclusions themselves. Humour, in this way, represents the core of his 1795 lectures’ purpose: by harnessing laughter, and the powerful radical energy it signifies, he is able to channel it into political arguments that are, for him, inherently morally justified. In this way Thelwall highlights that satire and mockery can

³³ Thelwall, *Tribune*, II, pp. 2-3.

communicate ethical criticisms not only entertainingly, but also persuasively and effectively.

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'FALSE SPECTACLES' AND 'PASSION'S MIST' DISTORTING TEARS IN THE POETRY OF JOHN DONNE

HARVEY WILTSHIRE

Language thou art too narrow, and too weake
To ease us now; great sorrow cannot speak;
If we could sigh out accents, and weep words,
Grief wears and lessens, that tears breath affords.

John Donne, *Elegy upon the Death of Mistress Bulstrode*¹

Throughout John Donne's secular and devotional poetry, encounters with liquescent, transparent and transforming media disclose latent anxieties concerning the efficacy of poetic representation. As such, metaphors of forming and falling tears convey a sense of unease towards the ephemerality of poetic expression, as the distorting effect of tears make one thing—even if only for a fleeting moment—look like another: refracting, reflecting, colouring, and altering perceptions. In the image of the tear, Donne scrutinises textual tensions between presence and absence, difference and similitude, substance and immateriality. At the same time, however, the seemingly falsifying substance of tears offers the possibility of clarifying and overcoming the limitations of language. Indeed, whilst Donne's 'tears breath' in *Elegy Upon the Death of Mistress Bulstrode* communicates a sense of the transience and semiotic instability of tears—'breath' denoting something 'unsubstantial, volatile, or fleeting' (*OED* 3.d), as in Shakespeare's '[a] dreame, a *breath*, a froth of fleeting joy' (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 212)—his opening lamentation at the 'narrow[ness]' of language prompts the mondegreen-like slip from 'tears breath' to "tears *breath*", drawing our attention to what might be encapsulated and signified within the watery diameter of the teardrop.

In *The Gift of Death*, Jacques Derrida responds to the enigmatic symptomology of tears by asking:

¹ John Donne, *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed. by Robin Robbins (London: Pearson, 2008) p.755, hereafter referred to as *Poems*.

What makes us cry [...] what is it a metaphor or figure for? What does the body mean to say by trembling or crying, presuming one can speak here of the body, or of saying, of meaning and of rhetoric?²

Derrida's direct interrogation of tears as 'metaphor or figure' invites weeping into the realm of readable language, as a decipherable dialect of the body with its own unique meaning and rhetoric. Describing language as 'too narrow' and 'too weak', the speaker in *Elegy upon the Death of Mistress Bulstrode* turns to this lachrymose language of the body as an alternative means of expression, in the hope that it might succeed where language has failed. Where Derrida questions the emblematic semiology of the 'trembling or crying' body, attempting to decode the embodied language of emotion, Donne's poem expresses the hope that 'sigh[s]' and 'tears' might literally overcome the inadequacies of spoken 'accents' and 'words'. However, where Donne continues by writing that 'guiltiest men stand mutest' (6) because 'extreme sense hath made them desperate' (8), the extreme emotion and desperation of sorrow quickly regresses into the inarticulacy of silence. At once expressive and potentially articulate, and yet also prone to the inarticulacy of silence, the depiction of tears in the poetry of John Donne comes to represent the displacement of language, alongside the unsurpassed expression of emotion. Just as Derrida's response to the problematic interpretation of tears looks to the dissymmetry that exists between the divine and human, reading Donne's tears as a part of a poetic dissymmetry reveals them to be an intermediary between, rather than manifestation of, disparate images and discourses.

As Marjory Lange asserts, 'in literature, tears have always appeared as an attribute of an abundant variety of mental, physical, and spiritual states.'³ Indeed the Renaissance physician Timothie Bright writes that 'of all the diverse actions of melancholie [...] none

² Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. by David Willis (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.55.

³ Marjory E. Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance* (New York: E.J.Brill, 1996), p.1.

is so manifolde and diverse in partes, as that of weeping'.⁴ Abundant, diverse and equivocal, the depiction of and attitude towards tears in early modern literature undermines the possibility of singular interpretation. In *Walton's Lives*, Izaak Walton writes that Donne:

Preach[ed] the word so as showed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he laboured to distil in others: A preacher in earnest, weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them.⁵

However, whilst Donne himself preached that 'it is a common place I know to speak of teares: I would you knew it as well, it were a common practice, to shed them', he also frequently spoke of a need for moderation and self-discipline when showing emotion publically.⁶ As all studies of his work are forced to recognise, contradictions, paradoxes and binaries abound in Donne's poetry and prose, and whilst there is always the temptation to reconcile such inconsistencies in order to account for their resistance to synthesis, inviting these oppositions to lead rather than challenge our readings of Donne illuminates a fundamental aspect of his work. Where 'contemporary preferences leaned towards a Stoic dismissal of tears' it is important to recognise that both 'traditional penitential practice and Jesus' own tears legitimised weeping.'⁷

In the *Elegy Upon the Death of Lady Markham*, Donne describes tears as 'false spectacles' (15).⁸ Likening tears to spectacles, this depiction figures tears as an altering medium through which reason is negatively distorted. The speaker's admission that 'we cannot see, / Through passion's mist, what we are or what she' (15-16) emphasises this falsifying quality of tears. In contrast, Donne returned to the image of the tear as an optic lens whilst preaching on the subject of Christ's tears, at Whitehall, during Lent 1622 :

⁴ Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie...* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1586), p.135.

⁵ Izaak Walton, *Lives of John Donne, Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, & C.*, ed. by Thomas Zouch, 2nd edn (York: T. Wilson & R. Spence, 1807), p.51.

⁶ John Donne, 'Sermon XII, Preached at Whitehall, The First Day in Lent, 1622', *The Works of John Donne*, Vol.1, ed. by Henry Alford (London: John W. Parker, 1839), p.251, hereafter referred to as *Sermons*.

⁷ Lange, p.157.

⁸ *Poems*, p.738.

We shall looke upon those lovely, those heavenly eyes, through
this *glasse* of his owne tears⁹ (emphasis added)

In this instance, Christ's tears become refractive prisms through which humanity see in a positive and truthful way. Presented as optic lenses in both cases, tears come to represent opposing ways of seeing, conversely false and yet truthful too. As Joan Hartwig asserts, 'distortion through tears is a valid way of seeing, and that, if we could but put aside given ways of seeing, of perceiving reality, we might find that all is one – dualities are only apparent.'¹⁰ As such, through the distorting medium of tears, the distinction and separation between self and other collapses; in the context of Donne's secular poetry, this deconstruction takes place between lover and beloved, whereas in Donne's devotional poetry and sermons the difference to be overcome is that between heaven and earth, human and divine. Consequently, the distorting, anamorphic form of the tear registers the poet's—and the preacher's—desire for continuity between self and other. As will become clear, however, the difficulty encountered with Donne's depictions of tears is that for as many that discourage weeping, an equal measure encourage tears as an essential and (most significantly) human mode of expression. Accordingly, and against Donne's own charge of falsity in *An Elegy upon the Death of Lady Markham*, this study intends to suggest that, rather than being associated with deception, tears embody a crisis of representation and interpretation that pervades the poetry of John Donne.

The tradition of English Renaissance tear poetry often finds itself discussing issues of interpretational perspective. Whilst Donne describes tears as 'false spectacles', for his near contemporary and fellow metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell tears take on a positive, corrective quality. Writing on Marvell's *Eyes and Tears*, Gary Kuchar contends that Marvell challenges the conventions of tear poetry inaugurated by Robert Southwell's *Saint Peter's Complaint*, and by doing so 'revises the Catholic literature of tears tradition by

⁹ *Sermons*, p.253.

¹⁰ Joan Hartwig, 'Tears as a Way of Seeing,' in *On the Celebrated and Neglected Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), p.82.

putting verbal adaptations of anamorphic forms of representation' into the service of an alternative ontotheological vision.¹¹ Set against an understanding of sight as 'self-deluding', Marvell depicts tears as the 'better measure':

And, since the self-deluding sight
In a false angle takes each height,
These tears, which better measure all,
Like watery lines and plummets fall.
(5-8)¹²

Whilst initially tears are imagined as a corrective prism through which the world and human sin can be perceived, however, the clarity offered by these tears provides a 'measure' rather than a perception. Echoing Southwell's depiction of tears as 'dew[s] of devotion [that] never fayleth, but the sunne of justice draweth up', Marvell's falling tears measure the upward rise of devotion and prayer.¹³ Tears measure and quantify, and are not 'a function of perceiving 'all'', as the later reference to 'the scales of either eye' (10) compounds.¹⁴ Poised between repentance and sin, these falling tears gauge the distance between the grace of heaven and earthly immorality. As such, the tears of *Eyes and Tears* mediate the gap between the binary conception of divinity and iniquity, affording the speaker with a re-aligned perspective on human finitude and sin. Joan Hartwig's gloss of *Eyes and Tears* as an affirmation of 'the wisdom of nature in decreeing that the same organ should "weep and see"' alerts readers to Marvell's depiction of tears as a wholly natural and honest response to the vanity of earthly life.¹⁵ Marvell's opening lines, 'How wisely Nature did decree, / With the same eyes to weep and see!' (1-2), conceive tears as part of an authentic relationship between the visual perception of earthly life and emotional responses to vanity and sin. Without a need to resort to another instrument of perception or, as Hartwig suggests, not 'requiring an intermediary function', the weeping response of

¹¹ Gary Kuchar, 'Marvell's Anamorphic Tears', *Studies in Philology*, 103.3 (2006), p.346.

¹² Andrew Marvell, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), p.52

¹³ Robert Southwell, *St. Peters Complaint and Saint Marie Magdalen's Funeral Tears 1616*, ed. by D. M. Rogers (Menston: English Scholars' Press, 1971), p.138.

¹⁴ Kuchar, p.361.

¹⁵ Hartwig, p.73.

the eyes is immediate and unmitigated.¹⁶ Where Clayton indicates that the object of the tear and subject of repentance become ‘syntactically as well as naturally one’ in *Eyes and Tears*, it becomes clear that, by coalescing sin and repentance in the image of the unified eye and tear, Marvell propagates a distinctly non-dualistic theology of tears.¹⁷ Marvell’s *Eyes and Tears* expresses concerns towards onto-theological understandings of the division between heaven and earth, and tries to account for difference and separation within the metaphorical image of the tear. Indeed, Kuchar suggests that Marvell’s poetry, especially his deployment of tears, sustains the paradoxical approach of incarnationist theology by ‘asserting that the breach separating material and spiritual orders constitutes the space by which the two are conjoined.’¹⁸

Described by Lange as the ‘apex of the Renaissance hermeneutic discussion of tears’, Donne’s sermon on the tears of Christ, preached during Lent 1622, presents not only the most eloquent Renaissance response to Christ’s tears, but is perhaps the most expressive literary response to the wider subject of tears and weeping during the early modern period.¹⁹ As such, it requires particular attention for the light that it can shed on Donne’s poetic depictions of tears and weeping. On the subject of John 11.35 ‘And Jesus Wept’, Donne presents weeping as a fundamentally human quality and a necessary means of human expression. Donne structures this sermon around the three biblical occasions on which Christ shed tears: over the death of Lazarus, upon entering into Jerusalem and finally during his crucifixion:

The first were Humane teares, the second were Prophetically, the third were Pontifically, appertaining to the Sacrifice. The first were shed in Condolency of a humane and naturall calamity fallen upon one family; *Lazarus* was dead: The second were shed in contemplation of future calamities upon a Nation; Jerusalem was to be destroyed: The third, in Contemplation of sin, and the everlasting

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.73.

¹⁷ Thomas Clayton, “‘It is Marvell He Outdwells His Hour’”: Some Perspectives on Marvell’s Medium,’ in *Tercentenary Essays in Honour of Andrew Marvell*, ed. by Kenneth Friedenreich (Hamden: Archon Books, 1977), p.66.

¹⁸ Kuchar, p.347.

¹⁹ Lange, p.173.

punishments due to sin, and to such sinners, as would make no benefit of that Sacrifice, which he offered in offering himselfe.²⁰

Depicted as ‘Humane’, ‘Propheticall’ and ‘Pontificall’ tears, Donne closely relates the instances of Christ’s weeping in order to illustrate his inherent humanity. Whilst Gail Kern Paster suggests that ‘Christ embodies temperance, not by avoiding emotions altogether but by keeping his emotions within the bounds of moderation’, Donne conversely writes that:²¹

Inordinatenesse of affections may sometimes make some men like some beasts;
but indolencie, absence, emptinesse, privation of affections, makes any man at all
times, like stones, like dirt

(330)

Here, Donne echoes Bishop Edward Reynolds’ explication of Christ’s emotions as that ‘never proceeded beyond their due measure, nor transported the mind, to undecencie or excesse; but had both their rising and origin all from reason, and also their measure, bounds, continuance limited by reason.’²² In Donne’s reckoning, ‘inordinatenesse of affections’ is to be encouraged over ‘indolencie’ and the ‘privation of affections’. Accordingly, Donne’s exegesis pays particular attention to Christ weeping over the death of Lazarus, his ‘humane teares’, by which he ‘elevates tears and weeping as quintessentially humane expressions to an unprecedentedly positive degree’.²³ In this regard, the case that Donne makes for emotional moderation, examining the efficacy of weeping in this scriptural context, aligns his understanding of the hazards of emotion with the emergence of Neostoicism, which advocated the rejection of the passions. Repeatedly describing Christ’s weeping as his compassion, Donne juxtaposes the tears voluntarily shed for Lazarus with the involuntary, forced shedding of his blood upon the cross, his passion.

²⁰ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by Simpson and Potter, Vol. IV (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1962), p.58, hereafter referred to as *Sermons*.

²¹ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.1.

²² Edward Reynolds, *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, ed. by Margaret Lee Wiley (Gainesville FL: Scholars Facsimiles and Prints, 1971), p.47.

²³ Lange, p.173.

Even here, however, Donne conflates Christ's divinity and humanity within the image of a tear, stating that Christ 'wept because [Lazarus] was dead [...] and he wept though he meant to raise him again' (336). Contrasting Donne's assertion that 'e'en those tears which should wash sin are sin' (*Markham* 11), Christ's tears are figured as a '*trina immersio*' (725), a threefold baptism as 'the soule bathed in these teares cannot perish: for this is *trina immersio*' (724-5).

Speaking specifically of Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, Tilottama Rajan suggests that:

Donne deliberately randomised the arrangement of his poems in order to the challenge conventional assumptions of the reading process as a linear movement in which a 'truth' is progressively explored and consolidated.²⁴

Here, Rajan challenges attempts to fix and derive conclusive interpretations of Donne's poetry, by asserting Donne's own measures against diachronic analysis. However, whilst elucidating the function of tears in Donne's poetry does require individual poems to be encountered as dialectical in their own right, it is the relationship between contradicting and corresponding depictions of tears that elevates their importance. Accordingly, such groups as the *Valedictions* can and should be read as a sub-sequence of related poems, and within that sequence, *A Valediction: forbidding mourning* and *A Valediction: of Weeping* stand out as two that specifically concern the role and significance of tears.

Utilising the image of a tear, *A Valediction: of Weeping* struggles to account for the insubstantiality of poetic language, against the substantial power that the beloved wields over the speaker:

Let me power forth
My teares before thy face, whil'st I stay here,
For thy face coins them, and thy stampe they beare,
And by this mintage they are something worth,
For thus they be
Pregnant of thee;
Fruits of much grieffe they are, emblemes of more,
When a teare fals, that thou falls which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore. (1-9)

²⁴ Tilottama Rajan, "Nothing Sooner Broke": Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* as Self-Consuming Artifacts', *ELH*, 49 (1982), p.823.

Initially absent, the beloved is afforded textual presence within the small, enclosed ‘coin’ (3) of a tear, as the speaker’s tears are impregnated with her minute effigy. Transformed from empty vessels into the beloved’s material body in miniature, these tears challenge the ability of language to meaningfully capture the lady’s visual presence. Having been minted with her image, his tears obtain their own value and become ‘of something worth’ (4), however this value is fleeting, for as the falling tear descends it becomes ‘nothing’ (9). Evoking the separated lovers on ‘diverse shores’ (9), the plummeting tear returns to its empty, meaningless form without the reflected presence of the lady. Ultimately, Donne’s tears are ephemeral, for even when they seem to hold value and meaning, their worth rapidly disappears. The juxtaposition of ‘fruits’ and ‘emblems’ highlight this concern, for whilst as Baumlin asserts ‘as “fruits,” the tears literally “bore” her soul, as if her image animated them’, as ‘emblems’ the tears are reduced to *simulacra*, refusing the beloved anything more than a superficial aesthetic presence.²⁵ Even within the already precarious metaphysics of the tear, the beloved can only be conjured in fleeting moments of signification, in a coin, a fruit or an emblem; repeatedly disappearing into the textual past, the lady’s presence fades and disappears with each failed attempt to materialise her in language. Even when the lover’s tear poetically transforms into a cartographic globe, the lady’s own tears threaten to flood and ‘overflow/ this world’ (17-8). As ‘workman that hath copied by, can lay / An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia’ (11-2), the Lady’s presence is only imprinted on the lover’s lachrymose globes. Consequently, the role of tears changes from ‘beare[ing]’ (3) to merely ‘wear[ing]’ (15) the beloved’s image, as not only is it the case that tears require meaning to be inscribed on them, but as simulacra, mere images, their representative value is transitory. Expressing the fragility of poetic language to embody the poet’s world, the economic image of the tear in *A Valediction: of weeping*

²⁵ James S. Baumlin, *John Donne and the Rhetorics of Renaissance Discourse* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), p.194.

divulges Donne's concerns towards the efficacy of language, as 'the poet and the lady are [...] reduced to the traces or effects of language – to emblems, coins, "copies", and maps'.²⁶

However, where Donne overtly cautions against tears and crying in *of Weeping*, in *A Valediction: forbidding Mourning* his warning against 'teare-floods' (6) is employed for a very specific reason:

So let us melt and make no noise,
 No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
 'Twere prophanation of our joys
 To tell the laity our love.²⁷

(5-8)

Summoned as love's ministry, the tears of the lover's are a 'prophanation', a violation of their spiritual love. Shedding tears risks 'tell[ing] the laity' (8) and returning their transcendent love to the earthly matter of sighs and tears. In contrast to 'Dull sublunary lovers' (13) the beloved's tears pose no threat to their love, because where tears rise from the 'elemented' (16) body, they are 'so much refined' by love that their souls are not bound to the same elemental matter as tears. The lover's have been removed from physical existence. However, counterpoised against the non-material lovers, the 'elemented' tears threaten to return their 'aery' (24) forms to the 'harms and fears' (9) of earthly life. Echoing *The Dissolution*, in which Donne relates bodily passions to the elemental, humoral body – 'My fire of passion, sighs of air, / Water of tears, and earthly sad despair' (9-10) – tears draw the ethereal paramours back to their watery bodies.²⁸ At once, these tears are both threatening to the lovers, and yet natural and earthly, for whilst they risk divulging their union to the base 'laity', without humoral expressions their love is intangible and frail 'like gold to aery thinness beat' (24). So whilst Donne's speaker pleas

²⁶ Baumlin, p.196.

²⁷ *Poems*, p.258.

²⁸ *Poems*, p.165.

for ‘no teare-floods’, without them his existence, and that of his lady, becomes insubstantial.

Encountering similar oppositions in her readings of Donne’s poetry, Rajan suggests that where ‘individual poems are themselves binary [...] they are incipiently self-questioning, and point to the need for other poems to overturn their conclusions’.²⁹ However, wholly relying on subsequent poems to overcome moments of opposition and contradiction, unconvincingly and incorrectly negates the importance of paradox as a determining structure of Donne’s poetry. In both the Valedictions discussed, Donne’s writing is charged with a concern over the ability of language to give substance to his poetic forms, where tears play a central role in the poem’s oscillation between substantiality and insubstantiality. Whilst Baumlin posits that *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* ‘asserts the power of language to preserve love in the physical absence of the beloved’, the degree to which tear imagery educes concerns over the fragility of poetic representation and the stability of language, raises questions over his conclusion.³⁰ When, like a tear fleetingly impregnated and coined with the lover’s reflection, Donne’s poems only manage to ephemerally capture the essence of his thoughts, how can we account for Baumlin’s faith in the ‘power of language to preserve’? In reality, language is only able to provide Donne’s thoughts with form and substance for a brief, transitory moment, before moving on.

Whilst we may well consider Donne’s depictions of tears to be a recurring motif of mutuality, shed and shared in love, in *Witchcraft by a Picture*, ‘they are relational only to the speaker and his interests’.³¹

I fixe mine eye on thine, and there
 Pitty my picture burning in thine eye,
 My Picture drown’d in a transparent teare,
 When I look lower I espie;

²⁹ Rajan, p.822

³⁰ Baumlin, p.17.

³¹ Lange, p.192.

Hadst thou the wicked skill
By pictures made and mard, to kill³²
(1-6)

Witnessing his ‘picture burning in thine eye,’ the lover does not look through his beloved’s tears, but upon his own reflected image. Quoting Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Eric Langley’s assertion that ‘the beloved’s eye is a mirror in which the lover beholds himself, [...] a subtle acceptance of a discordant narcissism underlying erotic exchange’ proposes that the glassy surface of the beloved’s eye, or in the case of *Witchcraft by a Picture*, the mirror-surface of a tear, become a *locus* of narcissistic self-reflection.³³ As Robert Southwell asserts:

Much sorrowe [...] is eyther the childe of selfe-love, or of rash judgement: if we should shead our tears for others death, as a meane to our contentment, wee shewe but our owne wound perfit louers of our selves.³⁴

Whether caught in the self-reflection of his beloved’s tear, or the ‘selfe-love’ occasioned by his own, as is the case with Southwell’s self-contenting weeper, the subject appears to be caught within the sphere of his own narcissistic gaze. Where Donne’s speaker, in *Witchcraft by a Picture*, claims ‘I fixe mine eye on thine’, in reality he fixes his gaze upon his own reflection, transforming his beloved’s eyes and tears into an image of self-contentment. Echoing the beloved’s miniature, tear bound form in ‘of Weeping’, here the lover finds his own image ‘drown’d’ (3). The Lady’s ‘wicked skill’ (5) in both conjuring the speaker’s reflection and drowning it in her tears reminds us that Donne is writing during a period when the tears of women were openly associated with not only original sin, but specifically the deception of Adam and the ‘ruine of man’. Only by drinking her ‘sweet salt teares’ can the lover safeguard his image, and although she threatens to capture and kill his image again with more weeping, he departs and escapes the witchcraft of her

³² *Poems*, p.281.

³³ Eric Langley, *Narcissism & Suicide in Shakespeare & His Conetmporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 2009), p.82.

³⁴ Robert Southwell, *The Triumphs over Death: or, A Consolaterie Epistle, for Afflicted Minds in the Affects of Dying Friends* (London: Valentine Simmes, 1595), B2.

reflective tears. The poem ends with the resolution that only ‘one picture more [...] being in thine own heart’ can be ‘from all malice free’, further envisaging the beloved’s tears as wicked in contrast with the malice free heart. In *Twickenam Garden*, likely written a few years after *of Weeping*, Donne’s declaration that you can no ‘more judge a woman’s thoughts by tears’ (24) conclusively declares the deceptive nature of women’s tears. Indeed, Recalling *Love’s Diet* in which tears are ‘counterfeit’ (17) because ‘eyes which roll t’wards all, weep not, but sweat’ (18), women’s tears are presented as fundamentally deceitful.³⁵ In *Love’s Diet*, Donne appears to suggest that what seem like sincere tears are in fact the false, sweaty product of the labour of indiscriminate desire, of eyes ‘roll[ing] t’wards all’. In *Twickenam Garden*, however, the speaker’s tears, which are described as ‘lover’s wine’, evoke Christ’s transubstantiated blood captured in ‘crystal vials’ (19); nevertheless, whilst the suggestion of the sacramental significance of tears momentarily affirms their authenticity, the speaker declares ‘all are false [...] hearts do not in eyes shine | No can you more judge women’s thoughts by tears, | Than by her shadow, what she wears’ (22-25).

Although it must be agreed that ‘Donne stands out among seventeenth-century preachers for the degree to which he countenances and celebrates affective expression’, it must also be recognised that Donne’s poetry articulates its own concerns towards that which confounds normative expressions, that which is unreadable and accordingly disruptive to the poet’s desire for direct linguistic expression.³⁶ Rather than simply being associated with falsity, tears are paradoxically the closest to and yet furthest away from the meaningful expression of emotion. Thus rather than asking how we can account for, or overcome these oppositions and complexities, we should try to understand what these contradictions say about Donne’s work, even as he fervently attempts to capture a sense of stability that he never achieves. At the same time as Donne’s seemingly paradoxical

³⁵ *Poems*, p.214.

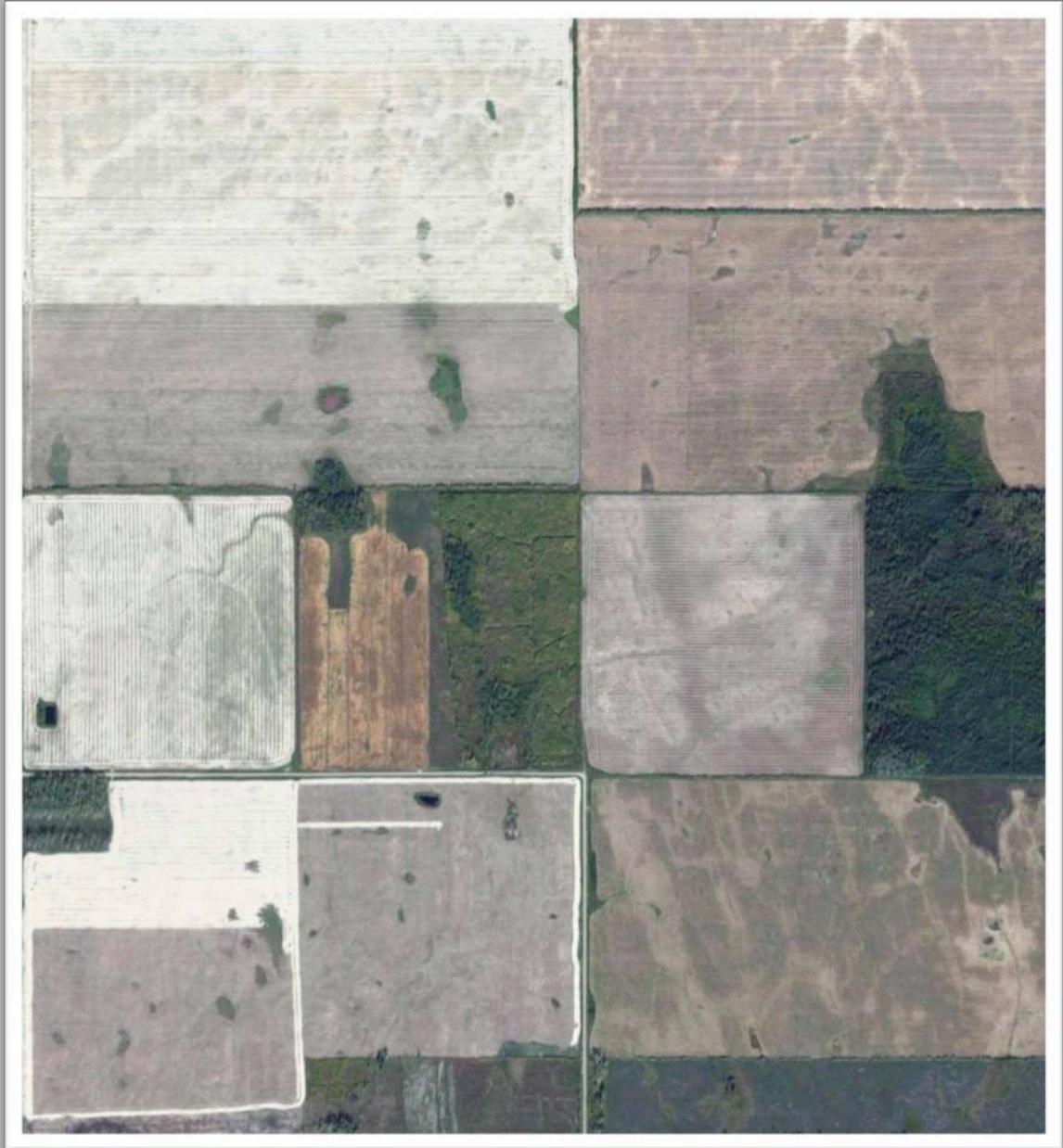
³⁶ Lange, p.173.

presentation of tears (as both distorting and yet also a correcting) registers anxieties relating to the efficacy of language, the recurrent image of the tear also offers a crucial metaphor through which he is able to interrogate this efficacy and the insubstantiality of language. Where there is always the temptation to view Donne's poems as endlessly paradoxical and ultimately self-negating, and to look towards Donne's religious writing as his conclusive, theologically supported, outlook, rescuing Donne's work from the inevitable drive towards linearity and truth, by reading his poetry and prose synchronically, we see that Donne's work represents an anxiety towards the effectiveness of language as a means of representing human emotions. That Donne's secular scepticism towards the efficacy of language and representation exists alongside his more dogmatic religious stance towards language and meaning only adds to the paradoxical nature of Donne's work.

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FEATURE

ENCOUNTERS WITH HER PRESENCE RELATING WITH THE FERAL . . .

DAWN M GAIETTO

Watching

I watched anthropomorphised animals walk, talk, and sing. I did not confuse this as the language of the animal or the world of the animal, but a way to attempt in understanding an ‘other’. I knew from experience that animals lived their own lives, in their own way.

The elusive

In February, I am walking a dog at night. We both notice a fox following us.

She remains at a constant distance bobbing elusively from our sights, yet
she remains present; her sight fixed firmly upon the dog.

By March, the dog and I are in the garden, late
one evening. I notice as she repeatedly sniffs along
the bottom of the fence row. I continue to watch -
then I see the whiskers, the nose, and the cream-coloured snout.

A fox and a dog chase noses and scents along this line.

Both curious - enough to follow; both elusive - enough to avoid the other.

In April, I am sitting in a chair in the garden in the late evening. The dog is doing dog-
stuff in the centre of the garden. I look down - emerging from my legs is a fox. I watch

her quietly, as she
silently stalks the dog. She stops -
she slowly raises her head -
we make eye-contact. Looking with one another.

After the slightest hesitation she
spins around out of the garden. The dog
has no idea as she continues upon her dog-doings.

Things progressed, slowly.

In August, mid-afternoon I was heading to the garden.

I stop before the door, she is present,
she is sleeping.

A few days later, I cannot see her in the garden.

I open the door for a dog
and a cat to go into the garden.

Returning a bit later,
I notice the dog standing in the exact centre
of the garden. Repeatedly looking
from the far back corner to the front. I look more closely to see this scene.

In the foreground the cat is wandering around, with the dog in the centre,
looking anxiously back and forth, and in the background
a fox is curled up under a tree. Upon opening the door, the cat returns inside.

I walk calmly outside into the corner farthest from the fox.

While I smoke, a dog and a fox sniff each other and walk a boundary -
uncertain who has trespassed upon whom.

The dog walks over to me and the fox walks out of the garden



Still from *encounters with her presence*, 26'21", 2016.

This video is an unfolding of three near identical views. Each includes a bit of the garden patio and a faux sheep skin blanket; the first includes Miss Maddie Dog, and the last includes a fox. The video opens with a black screen, a void to be filled. Emerging first, on the left side of the screen, is the landscape with a dog, then the middle third opens to the landscape and foregrounds the lighting. Lastly, on the right third of the screen a fox is revealed. This video is soft in the individual treatments of the three images, yet retains hard divisions which aid in maintaining the sense of replication. The breathing of the dog is obvious and she is continually moving. The landscape flows with fluctuations from the wind and the dappled sunlight. The fox is eerily still, and has been confused by some viewers as a taxidermised specimen, until her eventual departure from the frame. These visual qualities allow a sadness to emerge; a potential elegy. The duration of the film as a whole is 26'21", yet the duration of each of the three images varies. The three scenes come and go, and through the formal repetition allow a sense of being-with that merges between the three images. This sense of being-with is physically present in the experience of the animals as both have shared the bed and left remnants of their fox-ness and dog-ness on the surface. Each chooses to inhabit a shared space. If the first space is the void, the second through forth spaces are variations on habitation, and this in turn reveals a fifth space. This fifth space is the opportunity for the viewer to cross between the images, and the visual frames; to understand the sense of co-habitation. This is reinforced through the narrative arc — void, dog-ness, space, fox-ness — the near identical-ness yet obstinate differentiation. This is a presentation of a question, a question of one's knowledge of the feral and domestic nonhumans by which one is surrounded, and of the liveliness of the animate.



REVIEWS

INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUES

KATHERINE CHESTON

Medicine, Health and the Arts: Approaches to the Medical Humanities.

Eds Victoria Bates, Alan Bleakley and Sam Goodman. 2015. 280p. £37.99.

Routledge. ISBN 978-1138960183.

Medicine, Health and the Arts is the first title in the ‘Routledge Advances in Medical Humanities’ series that aims to move the medical humanities from the peripheries to the centre of academic research. This edited volume was borne out of the 2011 AHRC-funded conference ‘From Cradle to the Grave: Reciprocity and Exchange in the Making of Medicine and the Modern Arts’, and the seminar series ‘Medicine, Health and the Arts in Post-War Britain’ that was funded by the Wellcome Trust. It treads new ground in medical humanities research for its diverse approach, looking beyond literature to consider the importance of medicine in music, visual arts and performance.

Medical humanities scholarship has become characterised by widespread debates surrounding terminology – the question of whether the medical, or ‘health’ humanities are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, for example, remains unresolved – yet editors Victoria Bates, Alan Bleakley and Sam Goodman advocate for a ‘broad and inclusive approach’ (5).¹ As Bates and Goodman explain in their introduction to the volume, ‘terminology [...] is not a matter of priority’ (5); they do not set out to ‘engage with the complexities surrounding definitions and redefinitions of the medical humanities’, but instead to bask in the term’s ‘malleability’ (4). The subtitle to Bates and Goodman’s introduction – ‘Critical conversations: Establishing dialogue in the medical humanities’ – makes their aim clear, and their edited volume seeks to fill what they see as this dialogic lacuna within medical humanities research: ‘The opportunities for truly multidisciplinary discussion [...] remain largely unfulfilled’ (4). This edited volume is certainly ‘a multidisciplinary conversation between artists, doctors, historians, literary scholars, medical educators, art therapists and more’ (12) as established academics in the humanities, such as Therese Jones, write alongside clinicians, for example physician Ian Williams and GP Louise Younie.

¹ For a detailed discussion of this topic, see H. M. Evans and Jane Macnaughton, ‘Should Medical Humanities be a Multidisciplinary or an Interdisciplinary Study?’, *Medical Humanities*, 30 (2004), 1-4.

This multidisciplinary conversation is defined by reciprocity and exchange. Bates and Goodman identify this as the third – and arguably most important – principle that underlies the volume as a whole, alongside a focus on inclusivity and a consideration of history and context. Reciprocity is of both structural and conceptual importance to the volume, with each of the four main sections – on Visual arts, Literature and writing, Performance, and Music – containing first an introductory overview, then a case study of the impact of medicine on the particular art form, and followed by another case study of the impact of that art form on medicine.

Section one opens with introductory chapters by established scholars Alan Bleakley and Therese Jones, which outline the development of the medical humanities in Britain and North America since 1900, and cumulatively argue to keep the patient's voice central to the future development of the critical medical humanities. Ludmilla Jordanova introduces the second section by suggesting that the Visual Arts have propelled the cultural prominence of medicine in British society since 1945. It is appropriate that this should be the first art form elucidated, as Bleakley and Jones trace the genesis of the medical humanities to a 'nascent art therapy movement' building on the publication of Adrian Hill's *Art Versus Illness* (1945), which used art to treat patients in a tuberculosis sanatorium (281). Ian Williams turns to the so-called 'graphic pathologies' (64), tracing 'the changing perception of medicine in society' (82) through the medium of autobiographical comics, while Louise Younie provides an alternative case study, drawing on her experience as both doctor and educator to fully explore the progression of the visual arts in medical education.

Anne Whitehead's introduction to the third section, 'Literature and writing', eloquently proposes 'that literature can fruitfully intersect with medicine in opening up the uncertain and contingent' (124). This is arguably the most accomplished and authorial essay in the collection, as Whitehead succeeds where other authors fail in deftly balancing historical overview with a view to the future. Patricia Novillo-Corvalán subtly and effectively expands existing scholarship on the 'literary genre of pathography' (112), rethinking the myth of Philoctetes in terms of the present-day treatment of chronic pain, and Fiona Hamilton argues, alongside Whitehead, for the therapeutic potential of writing in her case study of 'expressive and reflective writing' (ERW). The fourth section looks to performance, a relatively new avenue for medical humanities research. Drama therapist Emma Brodzinski makes explicit the interconnected, reciprocal relationship between medicine and theatre, before Jessica Beck's and Phil Jones' chapters are set in dialogue to explore the role of emotions onstage, and the impact of drama therapy, respectively.

Finally, musical notes replace literary quotes as the fifth section takes music as its focus. Paul Robertson's introduction boldly establishes 'the beauty of music as an intervention to alleviate suffering and enhance quality of life' (244), and this leads directly to Zack Moir and Kate Overy's case study on the musical experience of cochlear implant users, and then to Helen Odell-Miller's exploration of music therapy as 'a form of "medicine"' (277). In lieu of concluding comments is 'A timeline of the medical humanities' drawn up by Bleakley and Jones, which, while barely three pages long in the paperback edition, is a very welcome resource, especially to those new to this expansive and broad field.

Overall, this edition fulfils Stephen Pattison's vision for the medical humanities, which he believed as an academic discipline

should aspire to be a "broad church" of many languages and kinds of performance and analysis, in which bridges are built and conversations occur that reveal things to participants that they could not have learned within their own original limits and worldviews.²

The diversity of the chapters cannot be denied, and the editors have certainly taken the statement on 'kinds of performance' literally in their inclusion of music and theatre. The new focus in these chapters, while introductory, will surely be welcomed by academics. However, where this volume falls short is in suggesting further avenues of research; while authors such as Bleakley and Whitehead succeed in proposing the 'emergent "critical medical humanities"' (24) as a future scholarly direction, most of the authors are overly inward-looking, and the result is somewhat disorientating. Despite this, the accessibility and variation of the individual chapters will provide an interesting launch-point from which to introduce new scholars to this rich and exciting field of research, thus ensuring the future continuation of the dialogue that Bates and Goodman so recommend.

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² Stephen Pattison, 'Medical Humanities: A Vision and Some Cautionary Notes', *Journal of Medical Ethics: Medical Humanities*, 29 (2003), 34.

URGENT ADAPTATION

KOSUKE FUJIKI

Carol.

Dir. Todd Haynes. 2015.
The Weinstein Company.

Though remaining a faithful literary adaptation, Todd Haynes's sixth feature, *Carol* (2015), maintains its appeal to contemporary audiences by breathing new life into Patricia Highsmith's original novel. The film's vivacity is conveyed not only by the meticulously crafted *mise-en-scène* (especially the décor and costumes, which add visually pleasing period details to the screen) but also by Carter Burwell's poignant musical score which gives expressive voice to the characters' unspoken emotions and thoughts. Therese Belivet (Rooney Mara) is an aspiring photographer working temporarily at the toy section of a Manhattan department store where she meets and falls in love with Carol Aird (Cate Blanchett), a well-to-do housewife undergoing a divorce. Both Blanchett and Mara convincingly convey the emotional intensity of the central couple through their subtle gestures and restrained actions. In this manner, they contribute rich physical substance to Carol and Therese's discreet romance, beginning with a gentle caress of the shoulder and ultimately culminating in the sensuality of a love scene where tactile sensations are fostered through close-ups of the skin and body parts.

However, what is most noteworthy about Haynes's adaptation of this work by one of the best suspense writers of the twentieth century is his abundant use of film noir iconography for transferring onto the screen the compelling force of the source, a novel which has been described as having 'the drive of a thriller but the imagery of a romance.'¹ Cinephilic nods to film noir abound in Haynes's *Carol*: the private eye, the gun, motel rooms, recurrent scenes of the car, the flashback structure, and an excerpt from the Billy Wilder classic *Sunset Boulevard* (1950). Even at the opening, where the camera follows an unidentified man concealed in a trench coat and fedora, we see the urban bustle, the iconic period costume, and the dexterous camera movement reminiscent of *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958), all together attesting to a nostalgic obsession with the noir genre. However, what may perplex the audience is that the generic expectations built up by the

¹ Val McDermid, 'Foreword' in *Carol* [formerly titled *The Price of Salt*] by Patricia Highsmith (1952; repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. vii.

film prove to be only a façade. Unlike in his earlier *Far from Heaven* (2002), a faithful reworking of 1950s melodrama, Haynes makes his generic allusions in *Carol* incongruous for the genre of romance films. Haynes's film is not so much a crime thriller as it is a story of love between two women; the gun in the film turns out to be unloaded; the man whom we follow in the extensive opening shot proves to have little significance to the rest of the film; and, most importantly, the film ends not with a heap of dead bodies, but with a hopeful touch.

This generic mismatch serves to underscore the conflict between the protagonists and their harsh surroundings. The hint of darkness created by the noir references seems to emblemise the hostility of social perceptions toward homosexuality in the 1950s, when sodomy laws were still enforceable in most states and gay culture remained on the invisible peripheries of the society. In 1952 when Patricia Highsmith published her second novel *The Price of Salt*, on which Haynes's film is based, she felt compelled to do so under the pseudonym of 'Claire Morgan.' At that time, homosexual characters in fiction usually faced a doomed fate, as Highsmith recalls in her afterword to the 1991 reissue of the novel: 'Prior to this book, homosexuals male and female in American novels had had to pay for their deviation by cutting their wrists, drowning themselves in a swimming pool, or by switching to heterosexuality (so it was stated), or by collapsing [...] into a depression equal to hell.'² Highsmith's—and by extension, Haynes's—refusal to offer another gay tragedy can be seen in the love-struck couple's ultimate triumph over their conservative, heteronormative surroundings within which a romance such as theirs is pathologised and punished.

In the film, the pervading sense of isolation within a repressive society is conveyed also through the motif of photography, Todd Haynes's creative addition to the original material. His unique choices in cinematography visually foster the photography of the period: shot in Super 16, *Carol* provides grainy images that resemble 1950s journalistic photographs of Ruth Orkin, Saul Leiter and others, whom Haynes recognises as key aesthetic influences on his film.³ Beyond simply inducing nostalgia, the decidedly antiquated look of the screen serves as a constant reminder of the distance between the characters and the contemporary audience. Photography is additionally incorporated within the narrative, with Therese being presented as a fledgling photographer rather than as a set designer, as in the source novel. Therese's affectionate gaze through the lens as

² Patricia Highsmith, *Carol* (1952; repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 311.

³ Anna Leszkiewicz, 'Behind *Carol*: the photographers who influenced Todd Haynes' award-winning film', *New Statesman*, 27 November 2015 <<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/art-design/2015/11/behind-carol-photographers-who-influenced-todd-haynes-award-winning-film>> [accessed 10 February 2018].

well as her exchange of looks with Carol speak eloquently of their attraction to each other. The romance of Carol and Therese is so very much restrained by repressive social pressures that the subtlety of their non-verbal cues indicates the protagonists' inability to express their feelings openly. In fact, it is not until after months of enforced separation that Carol finds the courage to say 'I love you' to Therese. Through its decoratively retro-fashioned visual surface and restrained dialogue, the film refuses to provide automatic access to the protagonists' mind, prodding us instead to muster our imagination in order to understand Carol and Therese's suffocating sense of marginalisation within the restrictive society of the McCarthy era.

Another point where Haynes notably departs from Highsmith's novel is in the use of glass reflection. In *The Price of Salt*, Highsmith uses the imagery of glass reflection to foreground Therese's uncertainty about Carol's feelings, rather than their isolation in the society. The novel's use of such imagery is evident when Carol, frustrated about Therese's meekness, chides the younger woman for her partiality for reflected images, asserting that Therese gets 'all [her] experiences second-hand.'⁴ Symbolised by the glass reflection, Therese's emotional blockage keeps her, along with the reader, in suspense about Carol's affection. By contrast, by visually separating the protagonists from their surroundings, Haynes's film constructs a visual schism between society and the protagonists. Carol and Therese are often viewed through the glass windows of cars and buildings, a trope for distancing the characters from their environment and thus creating a sense of their alienation. The mediation by glass windows, along with the grainy cinematography, visually isolates Therese and Carol, both from their surroundings and from the audience. We are therefore led to be concerned less about whether Carol truly cares for Therese than whether the society's homophobic prejudice and oppression will destroy their love.

With its focus thus shifted from the personal to the societal, Haynes's *Carol* can be seen as offering contemporary commentary on currently developing American attitudes toward LGBT people and their rights. Beginning with Massachusetts in 2004, same-sex marriage has been legalised in the majority of the states. Nevertheless, despite wider social recognition and acceptance of such diversity, there remains a residue of homophobia that all too frequently erupts in violent crime. Although the critical acclaim given to *Carol* testifies to the substantial progress the US has made since publication of *The Price of Salt*

⁴ *Carol*, p. 186.

more than half a century ago,⁵ the film serves as a haunting reminder that there is yet much further to go, because the sinister shadow of malice is lurking still.

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⁵ For example, the film received six nominations at the 88th Academy Awards and nine nominations at BAFTA. At Cannes, Rooney Mara won Best Actress.

QUEER HISTORIES

ALEX HEWITT

Days Without End.

Sebastian Barry. 2016. 272p. £8.99.
Faber and Faber. ISBN 978-0571277001

The Sparsholt Affair.

Alan Hollinghurst. 2017. 464p. £15.99.
Picador. ISBN 978-1447208211

Gay men have always had a slightly vexed relationship to history, and any effort to write historical gay fiction is inevitably forced to navigate an endlessly complicated slipstream of nostalgia, shame, homophobia, erasure, anachronism, and violence. Both Sebastian Barry and Alan Hollinghurst are, in very different ways, largely historical writers, and both wrestle with queer life's exclusion to the historical peripheries in their most recent work. Where Barry's *Days Without End* (2016) affirms the actuality of queer lives in the central events of America's creation and, in so doing, interrogates the grander historical narratives that erase such lives, Hollinghurst's *The Sparsholt Affair* (2017) explores the subversive potential of narrating from the periphery.

The Sparsholt Affair bears marked similarities to Hollinghurst's previous novel, *The Stranger's Child* (2011). Once again, the novel is an episodic narrative that depicts a wide swathe of history, from 1940s Oxford to present-day London, in which the major events occur off-page; in this case the titular affair, the scandalous repercussions of which are felt but never depicted. An event and a character that would serve as the tragic centre-piece in a more conventional novel, David Sparsholt's sexual transgressions - 'a dim nexus of provisional misconduct' that becomes a 'national scandal' - remains an occluded shadow that haunts but never possesses the narrative, which is concerned with subtler, and ultimately more affecting, elements of gay life and history (182).

The novel's gaps, and the stark jumps in time that accompany them, can be somewhat disgruntling, especially the jump following the novel's brilliantly evocative opening, which casts a lengthy shadow from which the subsequent sections struggle to break free. 'A New Man', the novel's opening segment, is presented as a fragment from the 'little memoir' of Freddie Green during his time in 1940s Oxford (3). It details the impact of David Sparsholt's arrival on a group of sexually ambiguous undergraduates whose literary 'Club' exerts a heavy presence on the rest of the novel.

As always, Hollinghurst's prose is impeccable. Freddie Green's narration veers between pastiche, parody, and straight-faced replication of the grandly repressed queers in a loving recreation of the archly euphemistic and allusive styles of Henry James, E. M. Forster, and Evelyn Waugh. There is something wonderfully fussy in the section's self-conscious literariness, and war-gripped Oxford is brilliantly depicted in all its gritty twilight; a half-empty city of 'brief dislocated intimacies' and shadowed voyeurism conducted in 'that brief time between sunset and the blackout when you could see into other people's rooms' (43, 4).

Much like *The Stranger's Child*, an inevitable sadness evolves when the novel leaves the dreaming spires and the subsequent and successive re-orientations of time and place carry a frustrating edge. Yet, where its predecessor suffered from disjointed and confusing changes of perspective, *The Sparsholt Affair* largely limits its focus to Johnny Sparsholt who, after Freddie Green's opening narration, becomes the novel's central character and focal point. A wonderfully sketched figure, whose work as a portrait artist provides valuable parallels to Hollinghurst's own captivating portraiture, the novel coalesces around his warm-hearted and tender perspective.

Hollinghurst has always struggled to convey juvenile characters convincingly; his depiction of William Beckwith's nephew, Rupert, in *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) was embarrassingly garbled. Similarly, the initial narrative of Johnny Sparsholt's life, which alludes to yet occludes his father's affair during the Sparsholt family holiday to Cornwall of 1965, pales in comparison to Freddie Green's poignant and evocative recollections, which might perhaps be the point. Yet the somewhat shaky and obtuse style of 'The Lookout', which is both adolescent and frustratingly repetitive in its detailing of Johnny's repeatedly frustrated adolescent infatuation, gradually develops and settles in the later segments' detailed depictions of gay London; the area in which Hollinghurst is at his most assured.

'Small Oils', 'Losses', and 'Consolations' track Johnny as he navigates the complicated legacy of his father who, like the affair that bears his name, remains always just beyond the novel's reach. In this gentle eschewing of sensationalism, Hollinghurst refuses to simplify the intricate emotional lives of gay men to the scandalous stereotyping of newspaper headlines and, in its detailing of Johnny Sparsholt's affairs in love and the creation of his own family, the novel offers a peripheral but affecting alternative to grander historical narratives.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act provides a crucial hinge in *The Sparsholt Affair's* narrative; yet while he is marked by 'the irreducible fact that Johnny was doing openly

what for David had been a matter of secrecy and then of very public shame', Johnny's life, in all its confused brilliance, becomes a powerful testament to those that live under and around the burden of previous generations (371). This culminates in what might be the most brilliant passage Hollinghurst has ever written; a hilarious and heart-breaking episode that follows a drug-addled and confused Johnny navigating the perplexing landscape of 21st century gay clubbing and online dating.

While the novel's episodic structure contains inherent flaws - the time-jumps are uncomfortably disorientating and the first twenty pages of each segment inevitably descends into a scrambled search for clues - it proves the perfect format through which to explore Hollinghurst's great theme: the generational divides between gay men. As each segment builds from, echoes, and, in some places, simply rearranges and re-narrates previous sections, Hollinghurst constructs a beautifully elegiac panorama of 20th and 21st century gay life.

In contrast to Hollinghurst's episodic and peripheral re-narration of gay history, *Days Without End's* more traditional narration of untraditional lives works to centralise marginalised experiences. Also somewhat elegiac in tone, Barry's novel forms another volume in his continuing chronicle of the McNulty family history; a history that here extends beyond Ireland across the Atlantic and to unconventional understandings of the family.

The story follows Thomas McNulty and his lover John Cole through an America in the process of its own making and depicts the tangled process by which, as McNulty escapes the violence of the Old World, he becomes complicit in the foundational violence of the New. Opening in 1851 Missouri, McNulty's narration ranges from his tumultuous and violent immigration to America from a famine-stricken Ireland to his early experiences cross-dressing for miners in Daggsville with John Cole, whom he discovers by chance 'under a hedge in goddam Missouri', and then on to their enlistment in the US army (PN). The violence of both the Indian wars and the Civil Wars is rendered in startling, impressionistic prose and the pair's engagement in the atrocities of war, much like the characters' earlier forays into blackface, are uncomfortable historical realities that the novel refuses to shy away from.

Yet amidst the violence, Barry weaves shining glimpses of love and hope into his chronicling of the blood-soaked birth of modern America. In both McNulty and Cole's relationship and in their eventual adoption of Winona, a Native American girl displaced by the conflicts they participated in, *Days Without End* presents a makeshift family that becomes the novel's beating heart. The fragile, hidden beauty of McNulty and Cole's love

for each other and for Winona is carefully interwoven through the bloody tangle of the novel's war narratives, revealed in fragmented but achingly tender sentences that prove, as McNulty states, 'love laughs at history a little' (91).

Barry's breathlessly lyrical book, which frequently threatens to collapse under the weight of the events it narrates and the intensity with which they are depicted, is sustained by the urgent joys and rhythms afforded by Thomas McNulty's narration. His voice, whose obvious forbearers run from Huckleberry Finn to Tom Joad, shivers and stretches across the novel's pages and proves a unifying force in a book that carelessly flits between the genres of the picaresque, the western, and the war novel.

Barry's quiet examination of queer lives amidst such masculine, militaristic violence is his real triumph. Dedicated to his gay son, Toby, *Days Without End* is a gorgeous celebration of alternative ways of loving and living that feels radical in its matter-of-factness. That such a thoughtful meditation is seamlessly interwoven into to the novel's compulsive and heart-rending plot, which grabs the reader early and refuses to let go even in the closing pages, is a testament to Barry's genius as a storyteller and a documenter of the human heart.

Both Johnny Sparsholt and Thomas McNulty are searching for that 'unknown realm where lovers act as lovers without concealment' and, in Hollinghurst and Barry's divergent but similarly radical imaginings of queer history and family, *The Sparsholt Affair* and *Days Without End* render that unknown realm tangibly visible and, more importantly, possible (PN). Where Hollinghurst undermines conventional, sensationalist understandings of gay history, Barry depicts gay men participating in the foundational events of America and, in the process, rearranges the conventions of history that render such lives invisible. Both *Days Without End* and *The Sparsholt Affair* look on the violent histories that haunt contemporary gay life and, through disparate engagements, give love the chance to laugh at history a little.

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TIMELY RESURGENCE

ANTHONY WALKER-COOK

James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives.
Barbara Ravelhofer (ed.) 2016. 233p. £110.00.
Routledge. ISBN 978-1472480361

In *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives* Barbara Ravelhofer has collected twelve superb essays that put forward a strong case for studying James Shirley today. Full of discriminating details and wonderful moments of technical analysis, each essay presents a different cultural aspect of Shirley's work, emphasising his skill as a writer of both tragedy and comedy, and, often, unsettlingly in-between the two. Tied with *The Complete Works of James Shirley (1596-1666) An Edition in 10 Volumes*, also led by Ravelhofer with Teresa Grant and Eugene Giddens, the collection offers numerous opportunities for further study in Shirley's work, with Ravelhofer's 'Introduction' positing, 'If pressed to decide on one defining characteristic of Shirley's art, we might locate it in his willingness to see with, rather than look down on, a person, his ability to examine a situation from various perspectives'.¹ Variety, certainly, is the pervading theme that comes from this collection.

In the opening essay, 'Time for James Shirley', Jeremy Lopez first bifurcates Shirley's position as the 'invisible man of the early modern dramatic canon' due to his historical position: his works look ahead to the 'comedy-of-manners' genre but also back to Jacobean revenge tragedy, and in his created worlds a culturally rich Caroline tone is formed through manipulating the conventions of antecedent dramatic forms. Lopez argues that the multiple moments of authorial self-consciousness and invisibility throughout Shirley's oeuvre are part of a process of assimilation wherein older works disappear. Offering a dramatist deeply informed by his own historical moment, Rebecca Hasler connects the apocalyptic fervour that seized seventeenth-century English society with Shirley's comedies, arguing that the latter adapts the narrative tropes of Revelation, including averting crisis through marriage and on-stage resurrections. Whilst further assertions of the dramatist's manipulation of other religious motifs are absent, Hasler's analysis of *The Bird in a Cage*, *The Wedding* and *The Brother* neatly offers a strong case for the

¹ Barbara Ravelhofer, 'Introduction', in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-16, at p. 12.

dramatist's following of an 'apoci-comedic' structure, positing the potential for further research into the intersection between religious studies and Shirley's work. Peter Happé then dissects the various representations of the court in Shirley's work, including an 'affectionately satiric' portrait of court life, a movement between levity and seriousness, set-pieces that rebuke popular opinions of the court and the notion of 'court face'.² However, any conclusion of general disillusionment is undone by Shirley's movements: though he left the court for Dublin in 1636, within four years he returned, and thus Happé is left to tentatively imply the difficulty of Shirley's Irish experience encouraged him to try again with a London audience. Meanwhile, Shirley is frequently placed amongst many of the intellectual, cultural and political events of his period throughout this collection, with discriminating essays by Rachel Ellen Clark and Rebecca A. Bailey respectively examining his work in relation to his reception of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and contemporary maritime debates (including the Ship Money Levy and piracy).

Ravelhofer's own contribution to the collection on Shirley's tragic works offers a variety of technical observations, bringing out the cadences of Shirley's verse in *Love's Cruelty*, *The Traitor* and *The Cardinal*. Amid this analysis Ravelhofer briefly records the experiences (and difficulties) of Guy Henry and Sonia Ritter, modern actors, when reading the works of Shirley and George Chapman to stress their rhetorical differences. It is a shame more of the media outputs of the James Shirley Project are not used as a way of proving the potential for Shirley to be produced today.³ Robert Lublin's essay on Shirley's Dublin plays picks up where Happé's finished, suggesting the playwright's troubles in Ireland were due to a lack of theatrical infrastructure within Dublin's cultural community. It is a clever argument for suggesting why Shirley failed. However, whilst many of the essays collected offer broader examinations of certain themes in Shirley's drama, Daniel Starza Smith and Jitka Štollová examine the Melbourne Manuscript (potentially a foul copy of Act 2, Scene 1 of *The Traitor*) and the character lists of *The Politician* respectively. Both reveal the fluctuating nature of Caroline theatre culture and deepen our understanding of Shirley's reception history. Philip West argues for the 'persistent concern in Shirley's work with the distinction between true poetic eloquence [...] and what he perceived as a fashion for outlandish, exaggerated, or obfuscatory

² Peter Happé, "And you meane to rise at court, practise to caper": the Representation of the Court in James Shirley's Plays, 1631-36', in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 48-58, at p. 48 and p. 51.

³ See The James Shirley Project's website for more information:
<https://community.dur.ac.uk/james.shirley/>

language' by examining the dramatist's poetry.⁴ Looking to the poetry in Shirley's drama and that presented in *Poems &c* (1646), concerns of excessive behaviour and linguistic decorum inform the previous work by Happé. Andrew Ashbee's analysis of the music in Shirley's oeuvre explains some of the functional purposes of the medium during Caroline stagecraft (it hid the creaking of moving scenery and symphonies allowed actors to make way for the dancers) and, whilst West celebrates the printing of *Poems &c*, by contrast Ashbee validly highlights that the songs printed in the collection were done so at the expense of being separated from their musical scores. Marina Tarlinskaja worthily ends the collection with a piece on 'Versification from Shakespeare to Shirley: Implications for Performance', which, as per the tone of the rest of the collection, is replete with numerous telling details and analysis – especially Shirley's use of the suffix '-ion' compared to his contemporaries – and again posits Shirley as a transitional figure: he 'concludes the epoch of English Renaissance drama' but 'in its smoothness, Shirley's style seems to foreshadow post-Restoration drama'.⁵

In her introduction Ravelhofer explicates that critical interest in Shirley has come in waves, which first began with David Garrick's casting of Shirley as an archetypal English playwright, with the last book-length study being produced during the 1980s alongside several editions of Shirley's works. It is hoped *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre* will prompt a new swell of interest in the dramatist with the release of affordable editions of Shirley's work, and there is an abundance of material to aid (and encourage) revivals and new adaptations. Shirley clearly dominated a transitional moment in literary history, and his return to the canon would certainly offer challenges of assignation to a particular period or movement. It is only through collections such as Ravelhofer's that Shirley can hope to return from the periphery, as it is certainly hoped that he will soon.

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⁴ Philip West, 'The Drama of Shirley's Poems', in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 153-166, at p. 153.

⁵ Marina Tarlinskaja, 'Versification from Shakespeare to Shirley: Implications for Performance', in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Ravelhofer (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 193-210, at p. 209.

THE ART OF LOOKING CLOSER

LOTTIE LIMB

Coastal Works: Cultures of the Atlantic Edge.

Eds Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith. 2017. 292p. £55.
Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-879515-5

Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey.

Madeleine Bunting. 2016. 351p. £9.99.
Granta. ISBN 978-1-84708-518-4

In his celebrated study *Archipelagic English* (2008), John Kerrigan poignantly saw ‘the future of the European Union providing one horizon’ from which inter-island relationships could be re-imagined.¹ A decade on, archipelagic criticism has much to offer. *Coastal Works* (2017), edited by Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith, is an important contribution both to this field and the ‘blue humanities’ more generally. It comprises twelve scholarly essays – each investigating ‘the cultural imagination in relation to a distinctive geography’ on the north Atlantic edge, eloquently unearthing trans-island tales.² Madeleine Bunting’s travel book *Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey* (2016) also uncovers island stories, acquiring a coastal perspective that I shall view through the clustered light of *Coastal Works*. The academic text is dedicated to Tim Robinson and his wife, Máiréad. As an archipelagic founder-figure, Robinson’s fractal view of the Connemara coastline – variously informed by his skills as an artist, cartographer and writer – has shaped an exploration by him of what lies on the margin, a mapping out of the peripheries. As the editors identify in an elegant Introduction, that precedent involves posing the questions:

What level of detail has escaped the eye looking out from the centre? What sits precariously on the outer edge of perception or cultural memory? What new encounters become possible the closer we get to the edge of the known landscape?³

The collection of essays presents not so much a singular, coherent methodology or set of narrow answers as the flexuous consideration of those questions. *Coastal Works*, then, exemplifies the art of looking closer.

¹ John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 2.

² Introduction, *Coastal Works: Cultures of the Atlantic Edge*, ed. by Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 2-3.

³ *Ibid.* p. 2.

Its case studies are most insightful when using precise language to explore coastal particularities. ‘Ecotone’, a boundary zone where two ecosystems meet and overlap’, proves an especially productive way of conceptualizing the shore as a permeable interface.⁴ Nick Groom’s investigation into an anonymous 1722 satirical pamphlet, *Thoughts of a Project for Draining the Irish Channel*, is wonderfully elucidating, historicizing the application of “circulatory system” to the sea. In directly confronting the satire – hypothesizing what *would* have been the outcome of draining the Irish Sea in the 1720s – Groom’s essay is characteristic of the experimental, open-minded and open-bordered approach the collection inspires.

Fiona Stafford’s essay on John Ruskin’s personal response to the Solway Firth is admirably self-reflexive, querying ‘whether such an account can ever be representative of more general truths’.⁵ Her brilliant close analysis of Ruskin’s depiction of the estuary in his autobiography *Praeterita* (1889), so attentive to shifting light, is placed in conversation with other contemporary visions, and latterly Ciaran Carson’s ventriloquised Ruskin in *Belfast Confetti* (1989). Moving from the etymology of ‘estuary’ (‘an arm of the sea’ or ‘the tidal mouth of a great river’) to Carson’s call to ‘let Belfast be the *mouth of the poem*’ indicates the connective intricacy of this piece.⁶ Nicholas Allen’s discussion of Carson’s labyrinthine memoir *The Star Factory* (1997) is similarly inspired, suggesting that the Belfast poet’s ‘imaginative geometry’ is particularly well suited to archipelagic criticism.⁷

As John Brannigan acknowledges at the start of his essay on Louis MacNeice, much has been written about the poet’s search for ‘home’ and his ‘place’ within Irish and English literary criticism.⁸ The ascription of ‘self-consciously archipelagic’ is, then, a refinement of existing critical material, and a re-alignment of MacNeice’s ‘cultural precursors’. Gathering together MacNeice’s coastal writing, and seeing his travelogue *I Crossed the Minch* (1938) as ‘shaped by a scaling of the Hebrides against the measure’ of other places, is a useful re-calibration.⁹ Whilst this may not be the most original chapter in the book, it is testament to the critically sustainable nature of coastal work that it yields returns the closer we look, each time we return. Alongside literary accounts, *Coastal Works* also accounts for the visual arts, as in Margaret Cohen’s penetrating analysis of Zarh Pritchard’s

⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

⁵ Ibid. p. 43.

⁶ Ibid. p. 45, p. 56. Quoting ‘Farset’, Ciaran Carson, *Belfast Confetti* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1990), p. 49.

⁷ Ibid. p. 64.

⁸ Ibid. p. 93.

⁹ Ibid. p. 101.

early twentieth-century submarine paintings. Generous colour re-productions accompany explanations of Pritchard's efforts to render an underwater world transmuted by the effect of water molecules on light.¹⁰ This meeting of optics and art follows two chapters on scientific coastal work. Ness Cronin's recuperation of the natural scientist Maude Delap offers a detailed study of her contribution to maritime ecologies, before examining Delap's Valentia island home in relation to the 'the spaces of domestic science' in late Victorian Britain and Ireland. Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and John Plunkett chart the feedback between fieldwork on the coast of Devon and Victorian popular science, drawing attention to the gendering of seaside collecting as a female pastime.

The expansion of archipelagic criticism to include these natural histories owes much to Andrew McNeillie's literary journal *Archipelago* (2007–present), with its foregrounding of place. Its inter-island focus is the subject of Jos Smith's essay 'Fugitive Allegiances', which is a good place to orientate oneself in this collection. With its conversational and exciting range of approaches, *Coastal Works* reveals the Atlantic Edge as a plethora of peripheries with stories to tell with an abundance of imaginative resources. Of course these can help us to re-imagine our centre(s), and inevitably this study destabilizes that binary. But coasts are peripheries in a very real sense, and, as John R. Gillis argues in a dynamic Afterword, summarizing the ecological thrust of these essays: 'rather than seeing the shore as the edge of something else, it seems time to see it for itself, as one of those invaluable in-between places where two ecosystems meet and enrich one another'.¹¹

Madeleine Bunting's book *Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey* takes the form of a voyage from Inner to Outer Hebrides, each chapter devoted to the cultural history of an island, under an enviable array of epigraphs (from Emily Dickinson to Rebecca Solnit). Bunting's theme is 'the making of myths, and how they flourish on the edge'.¹² She looks at how the isles' peripheral location has informed their marginalized treatment, as during the Clearances on Rum, which have fed back into 'foundational myths' of Scottish identity.¹³ Though the book was six years in the writing, a political moment – the Scottish Referendum – again becomes a prism through which to reflect on the relationship between periphery and centre.

Coastal Works provides an evaluative lens through which we can see *Love of Country* at its sharpest when attending to particular coastal phenomena. Bunting's visit to Fingal's

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 213.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 268.

¹² Madeleine Bunting, *Love of Country: A Hebridean Journey* (London: Granta, 2016), p. 179.

¹³ Ibid. p. 147.

Cave on Staffa, for instance, moves from a volcanic explanation of the cave's unique column structure to that structure's ecstatic impression upon Sir Joseph Banks. The naturalist's naming of the cave is connected to a recently published cycle of epic poems on the Scottish legend of Fingal and Ossian, which influenced the Romantic movement in Britain and across the Atlantic. As in Stafford's essay, etymological excavation uncovers layers of human engagement – the cave was previously called Uamh Bhinn, the Melodious Cave – and older ways of perceiving the world.

Bunting's oscillations between anecdotal passages and Hebridean histories serve an affective function: they not only make the book more readable, eddying curiosity into learning, but simulate a quasi-narrative experience of looking. In *Coastal Works*, Gillis distinguishes between two ways of seeing: 'the landlubber's vision is pulled outward, but the mariner's focus is on what is hidden below the surface'. Bunting certainly has the self-awareness to characterize herself as a landlubber – the stories she tells are more interesting for that emotional complicity – and yet, over time, as mariners continue 'actually or mentally seeing shoals and eddies and sunken ships', she acquires a new sensory range.¹⁴ After Rum, the 'experience of touch and feel had crept into my mind. It passed after I had returned to the urgency of the city [...] but the memory hung on, a way of thinking versed in the land.'¹⁵

This feeling of disorientation is explored further in *Coastal Works*, and not simply in Pritchard's submarine paintings. Andrew McNeillie's chapter 'In the Labyrinth: Annotating Aran' recounts a journey begun in the company of Tim Robinson, before following the shadowy trails of an Aran sailor and RAF pilot. Appeals to local people prompt the speculation, with sentences depth-charged by the marine context: 'were they remembering or seeing? Or forgetting what they never saw into?'¹⁶ Bunting's pursuit of artists drawn to the Hebrides makes similarly spiralling movements to McNeillie. Her study of George Orwell on Jura is particularly compelling, mingling careful research and conjecture to consider how Orwell 'found the clarity of vision' for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).¹⁷ This approach resonates with Daniel Brayton's more erudite analysis of Erskine Childers's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), which reads Childers's extraordinary spy thriller (and life) through the setting of the Frisian coast, decoding his conflicted national affiliations through the region's 'coastal indeterminacy'.¹⁸ Yet Bunting offers *accumulative* meditations on nationalism and the coastal imaginary, showing how 'the most intense imaginings of nation' have been

¹⁴ *Coastal Works*, p. 265.

¹⁵ *Love of Country*, p. 168.

¹⁶ *Coastal Works*, p. 223.

¹⁷ *Love of Country*, p. 55.

¹⁸ *Coastal Works*, p. 119.

projected onto the periphery.¹⁹ Such knowledge is pre-requisite for re-imagining relationships, and connecting with one another across the archipelago.

Coastal Works makes us more alert to Bunting's strategies in representing the Hebrides, but her companionship is enjoyable beyond its evaluative measure. Introspective passages are interspersed with unpretentious analogies describing 'folds of grey rock like the carcasses of exhausted elephants' and cliffs reminiscent 'of a bad 1980s haircut with frizzy curls on top'.²⁰ Journalistic honesty is the stylistic correlative of Bunting's empathetic engagement with this seascape, making her final claim to the Hebridean Islands as a 'soul territory' ever more credible.²¹ Both these works get beyond 'postcard platitudes', delving into palimpsestic histories, pinpointing time and place to challenge 'a destructive mythology of the ocean's essentially ahistorical nature'.²² In their open-ended approach, they should inspire continued conversation – in the environmental, political, and many more fields besides.

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¹⁹ *Love of Country*, p. 119.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 209, p. 108.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 303.

²² *Coastal Works*, p. 111.

TASTE AND TASTELESSNESS

NOOR BHANGU

British Museum.

Daljit Nagra. 2017. 53p. £14.99.
Faber & Faber; ISBN 978-0571333738.

Part memoir, part reflection on the diasporic experience, part call to arms, Daljit Nagra's fourth book, *British Museum*, tears apart the already crumbling architecture of British culture. The collection offers twenty-seven original and reprinted poems that sit unhindered by strict thematic breakdowns. As the most recent instalment in Nagra's decolonial, diaspora-affirming series, it continues in the same vein as his first three collections: poems are spun out of a "jazzed lexicon," which many (not including Nagra) have termed "Punglish" and "bollyverse."¹ While this linguistic hybridity remains at the heart of *British Museum*, producing such phrases as "chutnified" and "sitarised," Nagra only half-heartedly picks at topics of immigration, British colonization in India, and diasporic modes of re-writing; instead, giving his full attention to an impassioned disarticulation of British culture, one that he stands both inside and outside of.² Concocting as background an orientalist soup of characters from Lakshmi to Allah, Nagra deliberates on the construction of British national identity through the lens of material heritage and concepts of taste and tastelessness.

The eponymous poem "Meditations on the British Museum," comes later in the collection but is by far the most indicative of this timely decolonial venture. Nagra begins by locating his own body at the "dead centre" of the Great Court of the British Museum, or what he refers to as the "noble casket." In contrast to other poems that are similarly engaged with disarticulating Britain's hegemonic taste system, such as "Get Off My Poem Whitey" or even "He Do the Foreign Voices," the poet's voice is framed by an embodied presence that is all but difficult to ignore.³ Nagra performs as an ersatz museum guide, taking his readers through the grand halls of the British Museum,

¹ Ben East, "With Eliot Nod, Daljit Nagra Reclaims Indian Accent from Mockers," *The National*, (2011), <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/books/with-eliot-nod-daljit-nagra-reclaims-indian-accent-from-mockers-1.436861> [accessed March 4, 2018]

² Daljit Nagra, *British Museum* (London: Faber & Faber), p. 40.

³ I use the concept of taste, rather, intentionally in this review to point to its nagging presence within the collection as a method of establishing difference between what is desirable (read: British) and what is undesirable (read: *other*).

unveiling colonial histories of the collection and questions of taste that over the years have grown bitter between the objects of art and its viewers.

The particular setting of museum as a site for decolonisation is a significant one. Invoking the “museum as nation,” where to “bring out the kids from the segregated schools,” Nagra reminds us of the position of the museum within the scope of national culture.⁴ Although, they appear to carry objective histories of the past and/or the foreign *other*, museums are not mere repositories of dead or neutral histories, but are, in fact, the sites upon which knowledge and culture is produced and regulated. A model that is helpful in thinking through the problematics of the museum is that of the universal museum, one that exhibits a range of cultures for its local and global audiences.

According to the Declaration on the Importance and Value of the Universal Museum (DIVUM), universal museums such as the British Museum, Musée du Louvre, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are granted special rights to collect objects from *other* cultures as a way to build their own cohesive national identity.⁵ Once the objects enter the museum’s collection, they are set to permeate the spirit of the nations that host them. When visitors walk through the halls of the British Museum, as Nagra does, they are both enjoying the objects diasporized here from the shores of the colonial past and being colonized into becoming proper British subjects. Walking through this museal haze of double-colonization and commenting on his own discomfort at being “at home, albeit lost,” the poet destabilizes the smooth façade of British culture, which in the end is more smoke than grit.⁶

Yet, despite his ambition to decolonize the inherited and enforced taxonomies of British taste, Daljit Nagra disappoints in his failure to acknowledge his own complicity within its structures, especially in the ways it circulates within the diasporic home space. In “Cane,” Nagra makes himself distant to his mother and her love of *tasteless* Bollywood movies, with their animated cast of characters singing and dancing around lush sugarcane fields.⁷ Throughout his work, Nagra positions himself as the dark, multi-headed *Ravana* of British taste but, as readers, we are never quite sure where

⁴ Nagra, p. 50.

⁵ Karen Exell and Trinidad Rico. "Introduction: (De)constructing Arabian Heritage Debates." In *Cultural Heritage in the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. by Karen Exell and Trinidad Rico (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 1-18 (p.5).

⁶ Nagra, p. 53.

⁷ Bollywood refers to Punjabi language films, predominantly produced in the Indian state of Punjab.

he is located along its spectrum at any particular moment.⁸ Is he the Britishman or the diasporic outsider, who “do the foreign voices?”⁹ In his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois aptly coined the term “double consciousness,” as a way of thinking through internalized colonialism, racism, and trauma of cultural dislocation. He articulated that the “American Negro,” (or, in Nagra’s case, the child of Asian immigrants) was an embodiment of “warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn usunder.”¹⁰ Such strength fails Nagra. What results, instead, is a body drowning in the tides of oppositional tastes and cultures, whose double-consciousness is more suited for criticizing what is outside of one’s self than what is inside.

Taste becomes implicated again in the poem that follows “Cane,” entitled “Naugaja,” where the mother’s longing for the sugarcane dreams of Punjab are replaced, momentarily, by the deliberate nostalgia of her first-generation son. Writing as if he was explaining himself to both his mother and the suspicious citizenry of Britain, Nagra affirms that though he speaks in a “foreign tongue” he can retrace himself to his ancestors in the village of Naugaja. The incongruity of taste between the mother’s dreams and her son’s reclamation of his lineage leads us to, what is probably, the same blend of sugarcane fields and ancestral village.

Reading *British Museum*, I am reminded again of the amount of self-reflectivity required of diasporic subjects. Whether we like it or not, incongruities and blind-spots do slip in. Although Nagra falls short of understanding his own implication in the problematic formations of national identity – ones that continue to leave individuals like his own mother out – he is effective in collecting his efforts around a masterfully-hallowed, floating sense of Britishness. What better distinction for such an in-between poet, after all, than “immigrant’s son?” Fashioning himself in the symbolic auspices of the uninvited guest, the ersatz museum guide, Daljit Nagra charges from the periphery to the centre, from the courtyard to the collection, setting out to dismantle the system from within.

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⁸ This position is articulated most powerfully in poems, “He Do the Foreign Voices,” “The Look of Love,” “The Dream of Mr Bulram’s English,” “Get Off My Poem Whitey,” and “Oliver’s Othello.”

⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Illustrated Souls of Black Folk* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group), p. 14.

THE 'MIDDLING SORT'

NATALIA DA SILVA PEREZ

A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700

Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson. 2017.

Yale University Press. 320p. £40. ISBN 9780300195019.

Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson have a history of collaboration, and *A Day at Home in Early Modern England* reflects their extensive and productive research partnership on the study of material culture. With its highly formal language and wealth of detailed historical evidence, *A Day at Home* was clearly written for an audience of specialists, and it is manifestly grounded at the intersection of Hamling's and Richardson's specializations: literary and cultural history, art history, and religious history. This elegantly edited publication contains pictures, lists of items appearing in probate inventories, schematic blueprints, and diagrams that accompany the authors' nuanced analysis of written and material historical evidence about the home.

The main goal of *A Day at Home* is to show the central importance of the home as a place where social performances, religious beliefs, and work activities all came together to shape status and identity for the middling level of society. The 'middling sort,' the authors explain, were financially affluent, but their social status was not elite; they were 'neither very rich nor very poor.'¹ Hence their preoccupation with outward demonstrations of moral behaviour, religious observance, and loyalty towards those ranking higher than themselves in society, something evidenced by the vast material culture analysed in the book. The authors warn the reader from the start that *A Day at Home* is not a book about family or private life, but instead about 'the way behaviours were located within the material environment of the household, shaping and being shaped by it. We use this most significant early modern space to explore the way identity was formed day by day, hour by hour.'²

The book is organized according to an imagined schedule of activities carried out during the day, following the shape of idealised early modern religious prescriptions about the day's structure. An introduction describes the authors' goals and methodologies, covering some important differences between already-existing

¹ Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (London, UK: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 5.

² Hamling and Richardson, p. 4.

scholarship and the book's interdisciplinary project. In *A Day at Home*, Hamling and Richardson use an interdisciplinary historical approach to connect four key aspects of domestic history that, according to them, have been studied only in isolation: the lives of the 'middling sort,' the urban households of this sector of the population, the extant physical evidence of their domestic culture, and their everyday circumstances and practices.

Chapter one covers getting up in the morning and the religious dimensions of preparations to start the day. Hamling and Richardson cross-reference, for example, extant buildings with probate inventories that describe the contents of middling houses, showing that different types of bedchamber can give a glimpse into the diversity of people's status. Sleeping arrangements, decoration choices, and location of chambers are all covered in the discussion, which also touches on some of the limitations in the evidence encountered: 'Very few early modern buildings at this level of society survive in anything like their original layout;' the buildings that still exist have been greatly modified, providing only suggestions of their original internal configurations. In chapter two, which discusses meal preparation, the authors discuss the domestic spaces that men and women shared for different purposes, providing the reader with a glimpse of how gender roles emerge in interpersonal relations. Here we grasp the diversity of 'the middling sort' through cases like that of the widow Joanna Crisp, or the affluent Loder family. Chapter three focuses on mealtimes. 'Following traditional manorial custom, the midday meal brought together the whole household for a ritualised display of patriarchy and hospitality in the central and communal space of the hall.'³ In this chapter we have the opportunity to contrast evolving dining habits and configurations, by following, for example, the Loders and the Wallingtons. We see the multifunctional communal hall gradually lose its place as the most prestigious space in the home, and be replaced by the parlour in the ground floor or the great chamber in the first floor. This is accompanied by a tendency for the most important meal of the day to move from midday to later in the afternoon, something enabled by the wider availability of candles and lamps. Work at home is the subject of chapter four. Here, the shop is presented as a liminal space between the domestic and the public, where middling wealth was created through sales of goods. The shop was a place where shopkeepers and customers interacted and performed social negotiations, something that can be studied by analysing extant written evidence about the stock, working tools, and raw materials found, for example, in a

³ Hamling and Richardson, p. 98.

shop like that of Henry Rowe of Sandwich.⁴ Chapter five deals with evening leisure, and here the story of Thomas Arden of Faversham's murder at a game table at his parlour serves as the starting case study (a woodcut from 1633 illustrating the story appears on page 179). Through this and other examples, we learn that the parlour increasingly became a place for comfort and privacy, as well as a symbol of status, displayed through lavish decoration. A cross-referencing of probate inventories from Canterbury and Faversham suggests the social importance of the furniture in these areas: 'although only 16 per cent of named rooms were parlours, just under a third of the stools and cushions in the town were to be found within them.'⁵ Finally, chapter six covers preparations for going to sleep, and discusses night-time religious duties. Sleeping and death were interconnected in early modern minds, something evidenced by the amount of *memento mori* artefacts encountered in the sleeping chambers studied in the book. At night, the house seemed not as safe as during the day: lurking in the dark was the threat of fire, violence, disease, cold.

With recourse to the diverse, multidisciplinary historical sources layered throughout the book, the concluding chapter reiterates the authors' main argument: the early modern middling household was a site of negotiations about 'authority, (re)production, education.' Hamling and Richardson invite fellow scholars to 'view the domestic space as a primary site for social interactions and experience, and explore their cultural and political implications.'⁶ *A Day at Home* will particularly suit scholars with an interest in contrasting real quotidian behaviour with conduct manuals' prescriptions in the early modern period. A lay reader with enough interest in the minutiae of early modern English domestic life will also appreciate it, especially as an antidote against commonly held misconceptions about how daily routine was organized, how work at home was divided along gender lines, and how social status could and could not vary within the same social class.

A Day at Home in Early Modern England is a successful book, seamlessly weaving textual and physical evidence through careful analyses of everyday practices of 'the middling sort.' Hamling and Richardson effectively show us that those members of English society whose social status was just at the periphery of the elites were constantly preoccupied with their reputation. While their homes and the objects within were

⁴ Hamling and Richardson, p. 161.

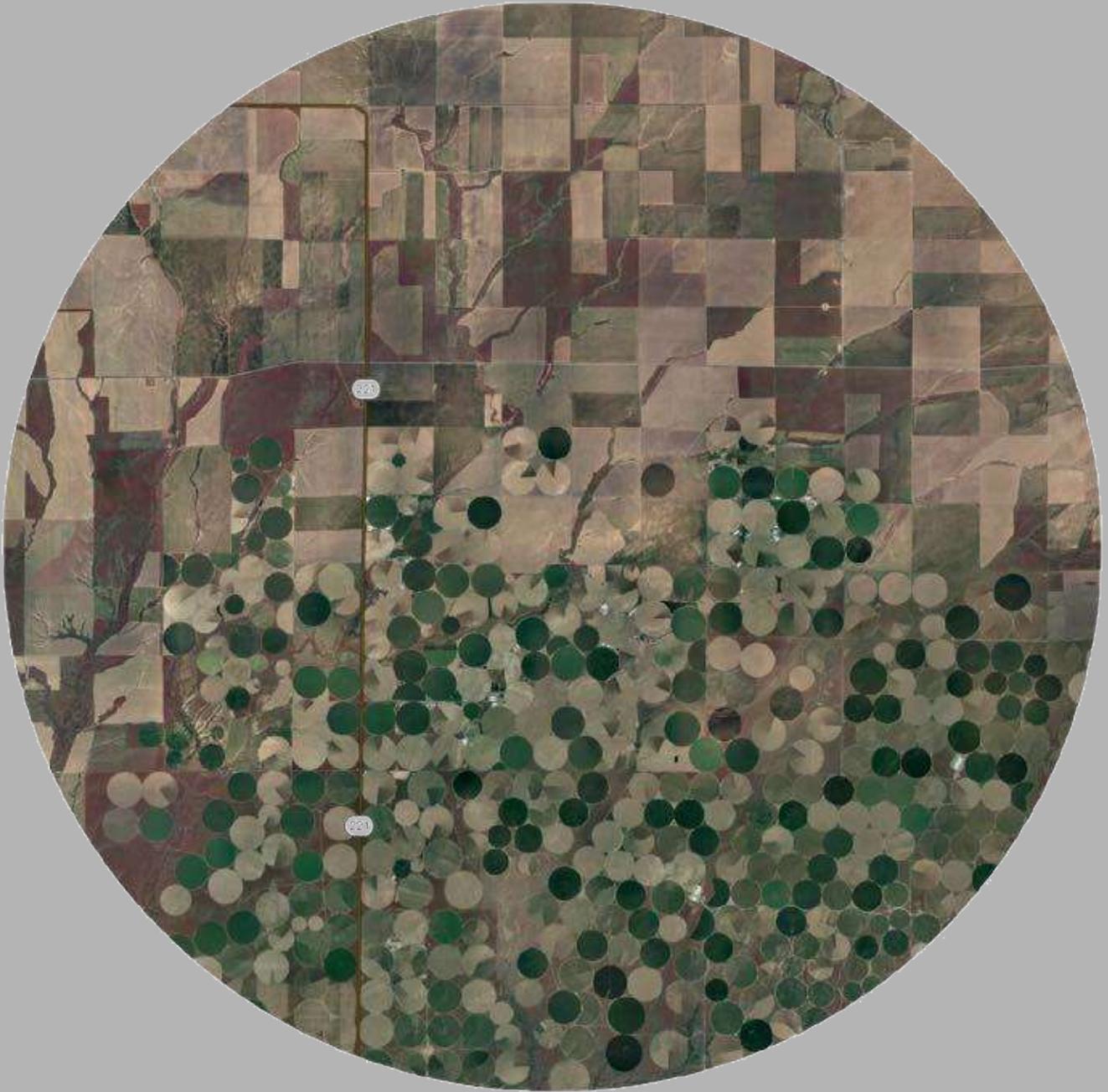
⁵ Hamling and Richardson, p. 186.

⁶ Hamling and Richardson, p. 264.

important instruments to boost social standing, proximity to people of lower ranking proved to be a constant source of downwards pressure.

Grounding their work in an innovative interdisciplinary perspective, Hamling and Richardson engage in a critical yet generous conversation with well-established historical knowledge about the period, all the while putting emphasis on the insights brought about by attending to evidence specific from material culture. In their analysis, the authors are able to account for dynamics of gender and class, for example, but refrain from reducing living beings' individual experiences to simple instances as members of an analytical category. The result is a refreshingly down-to-earth mental image of early modern English everyday life.

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