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ARCHIPELAGIC POETICS:
ECOLOGY IN MODERN SCOTTISH AND IRISH POETRY

Alexandra Campbell

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School of Critical Studies
College of Arts
University of Glasgow

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines a range of poets from Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland from the Modernist period to the present day, who take the relationship between humans, poetry and the natural world as a primary point of concern. Through precise, materially attentive engagements with the coastal, littoral, and oceanic dimensions of place, Louis MacNeice, Hugh MacDiarmid, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, Kathleen Jamie, John Burnside, Moya Cannon, Mary O'Malley and Jen Hadfield, respectively turn towards the vibrant space of the Atlantic archipelago in order to contemplate new modes of relation that are able to contend with the ecological and political questions engendered by environmental crises. Across their works, the archipelago emerges as a physical and critical site of poetic relation through which poets consider new pluralised, devolved, and 'entangled' relationships with place. Derived from the geographic term for '[a]ny sea, or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands', the concept of the 'archipelago' has recently gained critical attention within Scottish and Irish studies due to its ability to re-orientate the critical axis away from purely Anglocentric discourses. Encompassing a range of spatial frames from bioregion to biosphere, islands to oceans, and temporal scales from deep pasts to deep futures, the poets considered here turn to the archipelago as a means of reckoning with the fundamental questions that the Anthropocene poses about the relationships between humans and the environment. Crucially, through a series of comparative readings, the project presents fresh advancements in ecocritical scholarship, with regards to the rise of material ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism, and the 'Blue Humanities'.

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION
Ecopoetry in the Atlantic Archipelago

In their introduction to *Wild Reckoning* (2004)*,* an anthology inspired by the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the poets John Burnside and Maurice Riordan suggest that one of the major concerns for contemporary poetry is the way in which it is able to shape 'human relationship[s] with the natural world' as a form of 'belonging, a reckoning, and an accommodation.'[1] The 'wild reckoning' that their anthology cultivates presents an understanding of poetry that is shaped by modes of contemplation, recording, and recounting.[2] The use of the term 'reckoning' is of particular importance for Burnside and Riordan as it invokes questions of judgement and consequence. For these poets, poetry must not only *recount* modes of being in the world, but must also *account* for the consequences of our actions as a species, where 'careless human activity' has thrown the 'natural world' into disarray.[3] The anthology is thus comprised of poems and poets that have 'something vital to say about the human relationship with the natural world in the broadest sense: poets with a philosophical concern with the land; those whose work deal[s], in clear-sighted and compassionate fashion, with animal and plant life; poets whose lyrical explorations had to do with connection, continuity and the interlaced quality of all life'.[4] Drawing from the legacy of Carson's environmental activism and writing, Burnside and Riordan suggest that her exploration of a 'new form of ecology, a science of belonging, a science founded as much on appreciation and lyricism as on observation and precision [...] shares a lot of common round with poetry.'[5] By placing the interrelationships between science and poetry at the forefront of the

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[1] John Burnside and Maurice Riordan, 'Introduction', *Wild Reckoning,* ed. by John Burnside and Maurice Riordan (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2004), pp.13-22, (pp.20-1).

[2] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'reckoning' as: '1a. The action or an act of accounting to God after death for (one's) conduct in life', 'b. The action or an act of giving or being required to give an account of something, esp. one's conduct or actions', '2. The action of providing an account or record of property, money, etc. entrusted to one's charge', and '4.a. Manner or mode of considering or regarding a matter'. *OED* [online], 'reckoning', <http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=reckoning&_searchBtn=Search> [accessed 05.06.2017].

[3] Burnside and Riordan, p.22.

[4] Ibid, p.20.

[5] Ibid, p.19.

anthology's inquiry into 'nature', Burnside and Riordan prompt us to consider the ways in which poetry has come to inform our comprehension of the natural world, and inversely, how the natural world has come to inform the very function and production of poetry itself.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Burnside and Riordan choose to frame their discussion of the relationship between science, poetry, and the natural world around Carson's work. *Silent Spring* is often cited as foundational in the establishment of the American environmentalist movement of the 1970s, and has subsequently come to inform the contemporary disciplines of ecocriticism and the wider environmental humanities.[6] Her work on the chemical fallout of industrial agriculture during the post-war period (namely tracing the toxic trans-corporeal relations of organic pesticides such as DDT, Aldrin, and Dieldrin in the USA) was foundational in highlighting the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman bodies that have been equally exposed to, and threatened by, pollutional practices.[7] For Sam Solnick, the publication of *Silent Spring* provides a key date from which to consider advancements within the discourses of contemporary ecocriticism and ecopoetics that have since moved from 'an early focus on phenomenological engagement and specific places' to a modified rubric that further considers the complex interconnectivity 'between local and non-local' and the ways in which humanity is enmeshed 'with different materials, objects, and processes on multiple scales'.[8] Akin to Burnside and Riordan, Solnick draws from the common ground that falls between poetry and science, and suggests that contemporary British and Irish poetry has been increasingly drawn to the 'fundamental questions the Anthropocene poses about the relationships between the local and the global, individual and collective, economy and ecology, thought and technology'.[9] Referring to the current (unofficial) geological epoch in which human activity has become the prime influencer of the planet's climate and environment, the Anthropocene poses a 'radical challenge to cherished ideas of the natural'.[10] The advent of the Anthropocene necessitates poets to ask serious

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[6] See for example: Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[7] For a more detailed discussion of the function and forms of pesticides discussed by Carson see: 'Elixirs of Death', *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin, 2000) pp.31-50.

[8] Sam Solnick, *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, Biology, and Technology in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2017), p.19.

[9] Ibid, p.4.

[10] There are several debates surrounding the official dating of the Anthropocene within current scholarship. The initial coinage of the term, as proposed by the work of Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, aligns the advent of the Anthropocene with the Industrial Revolution in which 'data received from glacial ice cores show the beginning of a growth in the atmospheric

questions about 'what it means to read and write poetry now that humanity and its technologies have the capacity to disrupt (but not control) biological and ecological processes across multiple scales.'[11] For the poets examined in this thesis, the deranging scales of the Anthropocene prompts the production of a new poetics of relation that seeks to contend with questions regarding scale, encounter, belonging, and connection.[12] Encompassing a range of spatial frames from bioregion to biosphere, islands to oceans, and temporal scales from deep pasts to deep futures, the poets considered here each attempt to reckon with the fundamental questions the Anthropocene poses about the relationships between humans and the environment.

Sonic pollution, light pollution, water pollution, air pollution, waste, micro-plastics, overpopulation, water scarcity, artic melt, drought, extreme weather, radioactivity, pesticides, bio-toxins, agricultural run-off, carbon emissions, extinction, erosion, deforestation, biodiversity loss, ozone depletion, ocean acidification, oil-spills, climate change; the list of environmental concerns currently plaguing our planet is difficult to comprehend. While the scale of these issues are certainly global, a significant portion of poetry to emerge from Scottish and Irish authors over the last century has displayed a remarkable sensitivity towards both local and global scales of environmental crisis. This thesis examines a range of poets from Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland from the Modernist period to the present day who take the relationship between humans, poetry and the natural world as a primary point of concern. Through precise, materially attentive engagements with the coastal, littoral, and oceanic dimensions of place, Louis MacNeice, Hugh MacDiarmid, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, Kathleen Jamie, John Burnside, Moya Cannon, Mary O'Malley and Jen Hadfield, respectively turn towards the vibrant space of the Atlantic archipelago in order to contemplate new modes of relation that are able to contend with the ecological

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concentrations of several "greenhouse gasses"' in the latter part of the 19th Century. (Joe Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, 'The Anthropocene', *International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme Newsletter,* 14 (2000) pp.17-8 (p.17)). However other persuasive cases have been made for either '1610 (after changes stemming from the conquest of the Americas took hold) or 1964 (the peak fallout from nuclear testing which begin to decline thanks to the nuclear test ban treaty in 1963)' (Solnick, p.5).

[11] Solnick, p.4.

[12] Timothy Clark has most recently described how 'global environmental issues such as climate change entail the implication of the broadest effects in the smallest day-to-day phenomena, juxtaposing the trivia and the catastrophic in ways that can be deranging or paralyzing'. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.14.

and political questions engendered by environmental crisis. Whether it be a fascination with the decline of Gaelic communities in the work of MacNeice and MacDiarmid, the violence and atrocities of The Troubles in the work of Longley and Mahon or the resonances of economic collapse in the poetry of Cannon and O'Malley, their works ask key questions about what it means to belong to and dwell within a tempestuous and changing world.

The significance of the environment within Scottish and Irish literatures is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that the relationship between cultural and natural history in Scotland and Ireland is one shaped by legacies of 'development', plantation, clearance, and land ownership.[13] While these historical instances will remain salient across the ensuing discussion, emerging through ideas of value, access, and control, this thesis is more concerned with the ways in which the modern forces of globalisation, climate change, and devolution have come to alter the way Scottish and Irish poets both perceive and practice their relationships with place.[14] This is not to suggest that the work of modern Scottish and Irish authors constitutes an exceptional case in their attention to narratives of climate change, ecological crisis, and political identity, but that the cluster of authors examined within this thesis provides a fecund means of contemplating questions of locality, belonging, community, interconnection, and indeed, reckoning, that further contributes to the growing international discipline of ecocriticism.

The relationship between nature and culture within Scottish and Irish literature has drawn increased critical attention in recent years with numerous articles, chapters and book-length studies emerging that address the rise of environmentalist thought across the archipelago. For example, Louisa Gairn's *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008) proposes that the relationship between humans and the natural environment has been central to the work of Scottish writers 'since the mid-nineteenth century'.[15] Exploring a range of literary

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[13] For more on the histories of land ownership and clearances see: T.C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2005).

[14] Here I use the term 'modern forces' to distinguish from earlier forms of globalisation during the early modern period in which contact 'between continents and hemispheres generated an increasingly rapid physical and cultural intermingling, such that human and nonhuman creatures and things that were once isolated in different spots around the globe have promiscuously mixed together'. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between ecology and early modern globalisation see: Steve Mentz *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550-1719* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2015), p.xvii.

[15] Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2008), pp.1-2.

figures such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Hugh MacDiarmid, Sorley MacLean, Neil Gunn, Nan Shepherd, Edwin Muir, George Mackay Brown, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, John Burnside and Kathleen Jamie, Gairn's study suggests that Scottish literature has long drawn from the science and philosophy of ecology understood as a discourse that centres around questions of 'being in the world', of 'dwelling' and 'belonging'.[16] For Gairn, the ability to read Scottish texts through an ecocritical lens allows us to examine not only the 'regional' dimensions of Scottish writing, but also holds a 'potentially liberating influence on the study of Scottish literature, placing it within a field of enquiry that is of global relevance'.[17] In a related vein, Eóin Flannery has recently argued that 'Irish writers have long been attuned to the deleterious environmental effects of modernisation in Irish and international settings'.[18] Flannery examines the work of writers such as Derek Mahon, Tim Robinson, Paula Meehan, Moya Cannon and Roger Casement, suggesting that contemporary Irish literature also exhibits a preoccupation with notions of ecological 'belonging and responsibility', 'attachment to place and community' while simultaneously remaining sensitive 'to the pressing urgencies of global climate change'.[19] While both Flannery and Gairn nod towards the planetary dimensions of their selected authors, their studies both remain tied to the spatial imaginary of the nation and consequently address their works from the apparent singularity of an Irish *or* Scottish ecocritical context. Yet their remarkably similar critical interests in the relationship between the local and the global alongside questions of value, place-attachment, community, belonging, responsibility, ownership, language, and landscape indicates the potential for a fruitful, and necessary, cross-cultural ecocritical analysis of both Scottish *and* Irish texts. This is not to suggest that the specific national contexts of a Scottish or Irish ecocritical enquiry is without merit, but that the global scales of environmental crisis cannot be contained, nor fully addressed, within purely national parameters. For Edna Longley, one way in which to retain the socio-cultural specificity of the nation without losing sight of wider transnational global contexts is to 'conceive poetry in an archipelagic' as opposed to purely national 'frame'.[20] This thesis thus interrogates the extent to which the adoption of

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[16] Ibid, p.2.
[17] Ibid, p.2.
[18] Eóin Flannery, *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History, and Environmental Justice* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.2.
[19] Ibid, p.3.
[20] Edna Longley, 'Introduction', *Modern Scottish and Irish Poetry,* ed. by Peter Mackay, Edna Longley and Fran Brearton (Cambridge: CUP, 2011) pp.1-19, (p.1, p.6).

archipelagic perspectives enables modern Scottish and Irish poets to imagine new relationships not only with one another, but wider planetary concerns and environmental crises. By showcasing different poetic forms, political attitudes, and places of writing, the following chapters highlight the multiple and variegated ways in which Scottish and Irish poets bring their respective cultures into dialogue with one other, and the natural world.

i.   Archipelagic Literatures and the 'Poetics of Relation'

In 1973, in a lecture delivered at the University of Canterbury, the historian J.G.A. Pocock coined the phrase 'Atlantic archipelago' to describe a group of islands located off the northwest coast of Europe.[21] Writing in a period in which the idea of 'Britain' was under examination due to the violence of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the shift in geopolitical emphasis from the Commonwealth to the European Economic Community, Pocock's coinage of the 'Atlantic archipelago' is presented as a term that hints towards a future in which 'historians may find themselves writing of a "Unionist" or even "British" period in the history of the peoples inhabiting the Atlantic archipelago, and locating it between a date in the thirteenth, the seventeenth or the nineteenth centuries and a date in the twentieth or twenty-first'.[22] Serving as a key geographical, cultural, and political space that allowed scholars to re-orientate the critical axis away from the Anglocentric hegemony of a 'British history', which has in the past denoted nothing much more than "English history" with occasional transitory additions', Pocock's turn to the archipelago embraces 'the plural history of a group of cultures situated along an Anglo-Celtic frontier'.[23] Since the delivery of this initial lecture, Pocock's archipelagic framework has been adopted by numerous early-modern scholars who have respectively turned to the archipelago in the hopes of stripping 'away modern Anglocentric and Victorian imperial paradigms [in order] to recover the long, braided histories played out across the British-Irish archipelago between three kingdoms, four countries, divided regions, variable ethnicities, and religiously determined allegiances'.[24] Presented as an alternative 'imaginary to the centralising, homogenizing, and essentializing

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[21] J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History,* ed. by J.G.A Pocock (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp.24-47, (p.26).
[22] Ibid, p.26.
[23] Ibid, p.29.
[24] John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p.2.

schema of nation-state or "island" space' the archipelago has gained increased attention from both historians and literary scholars who seek to advance an understanding of the history and cultures of this cluster of islands as shaped by plurality, multiplicity, interdependency, and interaction.[25] The archipelago is consequently conceived of as a vibrant geographical, cultural and political space through which to consider narratives of national identity, cultural connection, and belonging through more active and relational terms than have previously been available.

Unlike the singular terrestrial island, the archipelago is always numerous and terraqueous. Defined as any 'sea or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands and *transf.* a group of islands',[26] the archipelago is '*not* reducible to a mere aggregate of territorial surfaces or a collection of individual islands. Instead what is significant about the archipelago is the *sea between* – the site of a multiple series of relationships that are never fixed, but constantly in flux'.[27] Indeed, as John Kerrigan notes, during the early modern period oceanic waters did not constitute a separatist boundary but instead served a connective purpose: 'The standard route from Edinburgh […] to London was through coastal waters, not on horseback along difficult roads. The seas which we view on maps as surrounding and dividing the islands drew them together, and opened them to continental and Atlantic worlds'.[28] Within archipelagic contexts, the sea is not viewed as an empty or metaphorical zone that conjures narratives of confusion, separation, and danger, but is the medium through which new 'worlds' are exposed and drawn into a 'poetics of relation in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.'[29] This extension of identity follows material currents of travel, trade, and transmigration, and encourages the pursuance of a dynamic model of history and culture that considers relationships to place through progressive and plural *routes,* as opposed to ethnically nationalist and grounded *roots.*

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[25] Marco Cuevas-Hewitt, 'Sketching Towards an Archipelagic Poetics of Postcolonial Belonging', *Budhi,* 1 (2007), 239-246, (p.240).
[26] 'archipelago, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/10387?redirectedFrom=archipelago#eid> [accessed 01.12.2015].
[27] Cueavas-Hewitt, italics in original, p.244.
[28] Kerrigan, p.48.
[29] Edouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation,* trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997) p.11.

As Kerrigan suggests, the adoption of the term 'archipelagic' allows us to address these plural and progressive relationships in three key ways:

> it designates a geopolitical unit or zone, stretching from the Channel islands to the Shetlands, from the Wash to Galway Bay, with ties to North America and down to the Caribbean; it does so neutrally avoiding the assumptions loaded into 'the British Isles';[30] and it implies a devolved, interconnected account of what went on around the islands.[31]

This sense of plurality and neutrality is particularly important in relation to the recent political climate of the United Kingdom in which the devolutionary politics of the 1980s and 1990s 'encouraged the peoples of the islands to imagine different relationships with one another, and with the peoples of Europe'.[32] By encouraging us to embrace a form of history and culture that is 'pelagic, maritime and oceanic into which an extraordinary diversity of cultural and other movements has penetrated deeply', the spatial turn towards the archipelago has influenced the ways in which modern Scottish and Irish poets contend with the cultural, political, and ecological construction of place.[33] Thus, while a significant portion of archipelagic scholarship has flowed towards Anglophone literatures of the Seventeenth Century, this project suggests that modern Scottish and Irish literature is increasingly concerned with forms of archipelagic relation that have arisen in the wake of geopolitical change and environmental crisis in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

John Brannigan has recently conceived of the Atlantic archipelago as a material and metaphorical space of cross-cultural connection that is sensitive to the changing political and physical climates of:

> the British and Irish isles in the 1920s and 1930s, when the very notion of the 'wholeness' of 'Britain', 'England', or the 'United Kingdom' was undermined politically and culturally by the emergent sovereignty of the Irish Free State (1922) and its constitutional claim to the 'whole island of Ireland' (1937), by the Scottish Renaissance of the 1920s, by

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[30] The term 'the British Isles' is regarded 'as a geographical or territorial description rather than as one which designates a political entity' and encompasses the group of islands lying off the northwestern coast of Europe, including Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales), Ireland (Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland), the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, the Orkney Isles, the Shetland Islands, the Isles of Scilly, and the Channel Islands. 'British Isles, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/272964?redirectedFrom=british+isles#eid> [accessed, 02.06.2017].
[31] Kerrigan, p.vii.
[32] Ibid, p.2.
[33] Pocock, p.78.

the formation of Plaid Cymru (1925) and the Scottish National Party (1934).[34]

Despite the importance of this early twentieth-century period it is curious that Brannigan has chosen to restrict his archipelagic study from 1890 to 1970. In closing his analysis in the 1970s, Brannigan's text falls short of engaging with the contemporary political dynamics of devolution that have come to greatly affect cultural relationships within the archipelago. One can easily construct a comparable timeline to the above dates of destabilisation, starting with the ascending violence of the Troubles in the late 1960s; the entry of the United Kingdom and Ireland into the European Union in 1973; the gradual decline of Empire through the decolonisation of Oceania, the Caribbean, and Hong Kong between 1950 and 1997; the 'failed' Scottish devolution referendum of 1979; the later establishment of devolved governments and assemblies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales in 1998 and the Good Friday Agreement of the same year; the boom and bust of the 'Celtic Tiger'; the Scottish independence referendum of 2014 and most recently the EU referendum of 2016.[35] This long list of geopolitical, cultural, and economic destabilisation prompts us to push Brannigan's initial archipelagic attentions beyond 1970, to consider how these more recent destabilisations have prompted the peoples of the Atlantic archipelago to once again reimagine their contemporary relationships with both their environment and one another.

One critic who does draw attention to these more recent political destabilisations is the Irish philosopher Richard Kearney. Kearney points to the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) as a key moment in opening new archipelagic perspectives as it signalled 'the possible end of the constitutional battle over the territory of Ulster: that contentious piece of land conjoining and separating the islands of Britain and Ireland for so long.'[36] Here, Kearney's construction of a 'postnationalist archipelago' actively invokes Pocock's so-called 'British Problem' through the 'Irish-British' problem of Ulster.[37] For

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[34] Brannigan, p.147.

[35] Between 1950 and 1989, nine Pacific Nations transitioned from British rule to Dominion status. See: Robert Aldrich, 'The Decolonisation of the Pacific Islands', *Itinerario*, 24:4, (2000) pp.173-191. Between 1962 and 1983, twelve Caribbean Nations transitioned from British rule to Dominion or independent status. See: John Connell, 'Britain's Caribbean Colonies: The End of the Era of Decolonisation?', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 32:1 (1994), pp.87-106.

[36] Richard Kearney, 'A Postnationalist Archipelago', *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays 1976-2006,* ed. by Richard Kearney (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2006), pp.5-17, (p.5).

[37] Ibid, p.5.

Kearney the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent establishment of the 'British-Irish Council of Isles' (BIC) corresponded with the growing realisation that rather than existing as isolated members of separate states the 'citizens of Britain and Ireland are inextricably bound up with each other' and share 'an increasingly common civic and economic space'.[38] While Kearney's turn towards the archipelago stresses the need to consider 'more inclusive and pluralist forms' of belonging that recognise how in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries Irish identity 'is no longer coterminous with the geographical outlines of an island', but must include 'an international group of expatriates and a subnational network of regional communities', his analysis is not as archipelagic as it initially appears.[39] Interestingly, while Kearney's analysis is drawn to the 'contentious piece of land' of Ulster, he does not consider the island of Britain to be a similarly 'contentious piece of land'.[40] Despite his closing assertion that '[c]itizens of these islands might, I suggest, do better to think of themselves as mobile mongrel islanders than as eternal dwellers of two pure, god-given nation-states',[41] Kearney's continual mediation between the two 'Siamese twins' of Britain and Ireland cancels out the fluidity and specificity of both national and sub-national spaces within the Atlantic archipelago, effectively sustaining the Anglocentrism of Pocock's original 'British Problem'. Thus while Kearney's archipelagic model may use the language of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, his critique ultimately sustains the binaries of critical discourse that allows England to remain 'the central trunk [...] in our governing sense of what constitutes "English Literature" in the UK and Ireland', thus precluding important cross-cultural relations between Ireland and Scotland, or Ireland and Wales.[42] Furthermore, Kearney's particular archipelagic perspective presents the danger of underwriting a form of 'tacit unionism' where reading Ireland and Britain through the archipelago effectively 'situates Ireland culturally and politically back within the same island grouping' from which it so 'violently' extricated itself from in 1921.[43] It is only by remaining attentive to the shifting geopolitics of the Atlantic archipelago, understood as a space that is both linked and divided, connected but never homogenous, that archipelagic perspectives can

[38] Kearney, 'A Postnationalist Archipelago', p.12.
[39] Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture,* Philosophy, (London: Routledge 1997), p.99.
[40] Kearney 'A Postnationalist Archipelago', p. 5.
[41] Ibid, p.16.
[42] Brannigan, p.8.
[43] Ibid, p.8.

avoid the dangers of unconsciously endorsing a utopian or unionist imaginary. Indeed, the variety of localities, poetic forms, and political ideologies explored by the selected poets within this study diminishes any problematic sense of cultural homogeneity or consensus that might arise from the adoption of archipelagic frameworks. For these poets, archipelagic interconnection does not connote sameness but multiplicity.

Responding to notions of multiplicity and interconnection, the recent rise of Irish and Scottish Studies has worked to address the continued Anglocentrism of the academy, suggesting that the tendency of critics to pursue 'Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Scottish hyphens [have historically] conceal[ed] an Irish–Scottish interface, with literature as a crossover'.[44] As Stefanie Lehner's recent study of contemporary Scottish and Irish literature suggests, the 'comparable experience of marginalisation and subordination' experienced by both Ireland and Scotland in relation to Britain 'seems to offer a productive archipelagic postcolonial approach that is perceptive to forms and practices of domination'.[45] Through close attention to the internal conflicts of class, nation, and gender within Scottish, Irish, and Northern Irish literatures, Lehner's work mounts a critique towards Kearney's 'postnationalist archipelago' who despite employing 'a grammar of pluralism and inclusiveness' continues to perceive of the singular 'nation as the most privileged sociopolitical category through which to analyse and understand each of these respective cultures and the challenges that they face' and thus effectively effacing sub-national differences, regional 'inequalities and disenfranchisements'.[46] For Lehner, the continued insistence upon the nation as the primary category for literary enquiry means that the 'reconvened nation-state is often positioned as a panacea that can resolve all issues of identity and belonging' that further 'subsumes and occludes alternative forms of social and cultural relationships – in terms of gender, class, region, religion, ethnicity and so on' effectively effacing the internal intricacies and regional divisions that proliferate within the national body.[47] Lehner's study thus adopts a transnational perspective that follows the 'movements of capital, labour as well as culture'.[48] A

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[44] Willy Maley, '"Kilt by kelt shell kithagain with kinagain": Joyce and Scotland', *Semicolonial Joyce,* ed. by Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp.201-219, (p.205).

[45] Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Literature: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p.31.

[46] Ibid, p.7.

[47] Ibid, p.6.

[48] Ibid, p.30.

similar turn to transnational perspectives arises in the work of Michael Morris who suggests that nation-centric studies risk 'homogenising what are distinct, disparate and fractured elements into a coherent "national story"' one that is often in support of 'a national elite' that can also risk undervaluing 'the significance of events that take place outwith national borders'.[49] Importantly neither scholar seeks to posit a false dichotomy between national and transnational perspectives, but instead both Morris and Lehner emphasise the need to recognise that nations 'do exist' and do so as 'transnations or internations' which 'share a "tilted" structure of orientation to other nations that is dialectical and dyadic yet also multiple and circumferential or horizonal'.[50] For both critics, the turn towards the transnational does correspond with the discarding of the national, but recognises that the scale of the nation is but one possible 'epistemological lens, one possible horizon amongst many' through which we can read and consider our relationships with place.[51]

As Edna Longley suggests, archipelagic 'literary studies complement rather than usurp nation-based studies. They can expose internal disconnections [...] and transnational connections. And they can replace *a priori* assumptions with readings that elicit what is truly distinctive in national or literary terms'.[52] Archipelagic frameworks are thus able to encompass multiple scales of relation, allowing both authors and critics to simultaneously adopt critical lenses that include the national while also attending to the 'local, regional, international and transnational – as well as the intersections of such features as class, race, gender and religion that inflect all such territorial approaches'.[53] Indeed, as Kerrigan suggests, 'the appropriate unit of literary enquiry might be the nation or a locality' or it might be wider transnational frames that are 'continental European or trans-Atlantic rather than British and Irish'.[54] As a space that is able to mediate between these different scales of political and cultural relation, from the region to the nation, the local to global, archipelagic frameworks help to explore a sense of place as derived through the complex interconnectivity of cross-cultural relations

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[49] Michael Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean 1740-1833: Atlantic Archipelagos* (London: Routledge, 2015), p.46.
[50] Laura Doyle, 'Towards a Philosophy of Transnationalism', *Journal of Transnational American Studies,* 1.1 (2009), 1-30, (p.12).
[51] Morris, p.47.
[52] Lehner, p.9.
[53] Morris, p.47.
[54] Kerrigan, p.26.

and transnational flows. Importantly, this study does not engage the critical grammar of transnational interconnection and multiplicity in a purely utopian sense, nor does it engage transnationalism without acknowledging that the adoption of such approaches holds the risk of paying insufficient attention to the disparate and fractured localities that populate the archipelago. Rather this study understands that 'a localized sense of place is incomplete unless augmented by a sense of how that place is integrated into the wider biosphere and the global network of cultures and economies', but also suggests 'that a sense of the global is likewise incomplete without an awareness that the globe is an amalgamation of infinitely complex connections among variously scaled nesting places'.[55] By addressing the transnational dimensions of the archipelago through themes of devolution and migration, in addition to more disturbing transnational political and ecological phenomena such as terrorism, war, plastic waste, bio-toxins, and climate change, this project situates itself within a field of scholarship that takes the relationship between person, place, and planet as its core concern.

Though this aforementioned body of archipelagic scholarship draws renewed attention to the modes of interconnection and relation formed through maritime histories of commerce, conquest, and conflict, their respective studies are devoid of any extended engagement with the actual lived environments of the archipelago. While the constitutive island spaces of the Atlantic archipelago are linked through the flows of capital and culture, they are also connected through deep geological histories, thriving biotic communities, and oceanic currents. In his recent study, Brannigan draws attention to the relatively under examined ecological, topographical and geographical dimensions of archipelagic literatures, suggesting that the work of writers such as Synge, Yeats, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Hugh MacDiarmid, constitutes evidence 'of the historical awareness of crises in the political identities of the states, nations, and peoples settled in these islands, [while also displaying] historical awareness of crises in the relations between human society and its environmental contexts'.[56] For Brannigan the turn towards the archipelago is palpable in the period between 1890 and 1970, as authors began to critique the 'metropolitan bias of "old modernism"' and started to 'explore their peripheries — their seas, coastlines, and islands — for the cultural

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[55] Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Ambruster, 'Introduction', *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place*, ed. by Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Ambruster (London: University of Georgia Press, 2012), pp.1-33, (p.9).

[56] Brannigan, p.17.

resources with which to re-imagine and re-calibrate their identities, cartographies, and ecologies'.[57] This is not to suggest that the poets discussed here only look to the natural world as a means of comprehending political relationships, thus rendering any interactions with 'nature' allegorical, but that for many of the poets examined here 'geography is inescapably political as well as a matter of deep personal implication'.[58] Jos Smith has recently suggested that archipelagic literatures are not only sensitive to political movements that challenge our conception of place as something bounded, fixed, and unified, but are marked by their acute attention to the relationships between humans and the nonhuman world. For Smith, archipelagic contexts are incomplete without considering the 'natural histories, the topographical, climactic and the ecological' contexts that directly affect forms of place-attachment.[59] Thus, while narratives of political belonging will remain a central concern in this thesis – examining the ways in which poets turn to the archipelago to imagine new forms of (trans)national belonging and political identity – this project is also concerned with how the turn towards the archipelago allows for new narratives of place to arise in relation to the environmental crises of the Anthropocene.

ii.   Poetry and Ecology: Matters of Entanglement

This study considers the archipelago to be a powerful spatial metaphor that aids in the production of new political relations that are variously cosmopolitan, transnational and multivalent, while also conceiving of the archipelago as a distinctly material space that has in the past century suffered, and continues to suffer, notable environmental decline. For many of the poets discussed across the ensuing chapters, the experience of environmental and political crisis necessitates the production of new narratives of place that move away from notions of groundedness, rootedness and home, towards a politics and poetics of deracination, mobility and multiplicity. As our understanding of ecosystems has shifted from notions of holistic 'interconnectedness, stability and harmony' towards a 'more complex image of ecosystems as dynamic, perpetually changing, and often far from stable or balanced', so too must our conception of place be

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[57] Ibid, pp.15-17.
[58] Neal Alexander and David Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', *Poetry & Geography: Space & Place in Post-war Poetry*, ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp.2-18, (p.6).
[59] Jos Smith, 'An Archipelagic Literature: Re-framing "The New Nature Writing"', *Green Letters*, 17.1 (2013), 5-15, (p.10).

responsive to the inherent mutability of the environment.[60] This shifting and dynamic quality of place is noted by Arif Dirlik who suggests that whilst 'the groundedness of places in ecology and topography is important' this does not correlate with a sense of 'geographic determinism or bounded notion of place', but rather 'suggests groundedness from below, and a flexible and porous boundary around it, without closing out the extralocal, all the way to the global'.[61] Rather than existing as static and inert entities, places involve active and ongoing engagement, meaning that 'groundedness' is 'not the same as immutable fixity'.[62] For Neal Alexander and David Cooper, to think of place as porous '"open" and "broad" is to stress its scope and connectivity rather than its inherent circumscription'.[63] This understanding draws from Doreen Massey's conception of place, understood not as a static event, but as an assemblage of progressive and dynamic processes filled with 'internal conflicts'.[64] Characterised by movement and transience, for Massey 'what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalised history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus'.[65] The understanding of place as process thus disrupts the consideration of place 'as a source of stability and primal attachment'[66] and instead promotes an understanding of place that is continuously unfolding, responsive, and actively made.

The act of creation is central to poetic craft whereby the act of *poiesis* (making) 'remind[s] us that places do not simply exist but are made or remade by forces and processes that are at once historical, social and cultural',[67] to which I would add material and ecological. As Jonathan Bate suggests, the act of place-making is the defining feature of ecopoetics (*ecopoiesis*) understood as 'a *poiesis* (Greek "making") of the *oikos* (Greek "home" or "dwelling place").[68] Bate's exploration of Heideggerian notions of being and dwelling, ends with the suggestion that 'poetry is the place where we save the earth'.[69] For Bate, poetry

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[60] Ursula Heise, 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism', *PMLA,* 121.2 (2006), 503-516, (p.510).
[61] Arif Dirlik, 'Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place', *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center), 22.2 (1999), 151-187, (pp.154-5).
[62] Ibid, p.155.
[63] Alexander and Cooper, p.5.
[64] Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today*, June (1991), 24-29, (p.29).
[65] Ibid, p.28.
[66] Alexander and Cooper, p.7.
[67] Ibid, p.5.
[68] Jonathan Bate, *Song of the Earth* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2000), p.245.
[69] Ibid, p.283.

provides a means of reconnection for man's supposed alienation and estrangement from the natural world. Understood as a 're-creational space', for Bate, poems should be regarded as 'imaginary parks in which we may breathe an air that is not toxic and accommodate ourselves to a mode of dwelling that is not alienated'.[70] The ecological value of poetry lies in its ability to espouse a form of 'presencing not a representation, a form of being not of mapping'[71] whereby poetry offers a means of attuning oneself to the Earth thus enabling them to care for and save it. Tuning in to a sense of the actual and the authentic, Bate's work argues for a form of poetic dwelling that 'bespeaks permanence and continuity, grounding identity in the community's customary ties to place [where] place is conceived of as stable, familiar and intimately knowable, permitting an ideally unmediated encounter between people and their native landscapes' that explicitly emphasises 'continuity, authenticity, and oneness'.[72] Yet as previously noted, the environment to which ecopoetry is tuned is 'is seldom harmonious as is popularly believed and might in fact be typified by sudden, even catastrophic shifts and fluctuations'.[73]

As Namrata Poddar notes, the focus on stability, phenomenology and the supposedly harmonious dimensions of ecopoetry problematises the poetics of 'dispersal' evident within postcolonial concepts of place.[74] Poddar's assessment extends a growing line of academic enquiry which has drawn attention to the major schisms between Western and postcolonial ecocritical perspectives, in which Western ecocriticism's apparent reliance upon discourses of purity, natural rootedness, and (often) insular national focus is problematised by postcolonialism's attention to hybridity, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism. As postcolonial critiques have often been drawn to the politics of place and space, as well as narratives of power and representation, critics have begun to find productive synergies between postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives. As Pablo Mukherjee argues, as both fields of postcolonialism and ecocriticism provide 'a comprehensive critique of European modernity, in particular, its core component

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[70] Ibid, p.64.
[71] Ibid, p.262.
[72] Neal Alexander, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', *The Beach in Anglophone Literature: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (London: Routledge, 2015), pp.71-87, (p.73).
[73] Solnick, p.24.
[74] Namrata Poddar, 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Island Tourism and a Geopoetics of the Beach', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 16.1 (2013), 51-71, (p.53).

of capitalism, colonialism/imperialism and patriarchy' there is a convincing need for scholars to facilitate critical discussion that encompasses both ecocritical and postcolonial discussions of place.[75] Similarly, for Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'postcolonial approaches to environmental thought tend to highlight alterity, difference, and rupture' as a means of disrupting narratives of universalism and homogenisation that tend to stem from histories of 'European colonialism [and] its aftermath in neoliberal globalization'.[76] Calling for a 'transnational ethics of place that does not demonize biotic migration and resettlement as antithetical to a valorized purity', recent work within postcolonial ecocriticism has sought to consider more routed, as opposed to rooted, notions of place.[77] It is by considering the postcolonial dimensions of ecopoetics that we may begin to question how the creative function of *poiesis* is not necessarily confined to a 'sedentary ideal' but is rather open, mobile, and participatory.[78] For Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, this interconnected conceptual model of place corresponds more broadly to the postmodern condition in which place 'is increasingly viewed as the product of global, interconnecting flows of peoples, cultures and meanings – of routes rather than roots.'[79] For Kennedy-Andrews, the movement away from restrictive and essentialist national constructions of place is a key characteristic of modern Northern Irish writing, and Irish literature more generally, in which concepts 'of place that are essentialist and exclusionary, based on notions of rooted authenticity, homogenous territory, single identities and internally generated history' have become increasingly 'unsustainable'.[80] While it is true that the political context of the Troubles has resulted in a swathe of Northern Irish writing which highlights the ways that 'the crossing of boundaries the experience of diaspora [can] open up new understandings of the relations between places, a new sense of the permeability and contingency of cultures', so too have the experiences of devolution, economic crisis, and environmental

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[75] Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p.57.

[76] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Postcolonialism', *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism,* ed. by Greg Garrard (Oxford: OUP, 2014), pp.320-334, (p.322).

[77] Cara Cilano and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Against Authenticity: Global Knowledges and Postcolonial Ecocriticism', *ISLE,* 14.1 (2007), 71-87, (p.80). See also: Rob Nixon, 'Environmentalism and Postcolonialism', *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond,* ed. by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antioinette Burton and Jed Etsy (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp.233-252.

[78] Alexander, p.73.

[79] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008,* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.8.

[80] Ibid, p.8.

decline given rise to 'new concepts of identity and home' in Irish and Scottish texts.[81]

Despite the productive interactions evident between postcolonial and ecocritical studies, there are obvious problems involved in considering Scottish and Irish texts through postcolonial parameters. As Morris suggests, 'given its history of "plantations" of settler (Scottish and English) communities in Ulster in the seventeenth century, discriminatory landholding practices, warfare against a racialised Irish catholic "other", laws forbidding Catholics to hold high office and so on',[82] Irish literary studies have perhaps more comfortably aligned with the parameters of postcolonial criticism than with Scottish Literature due to Scotland's involvement within the wider British imperial project. Yet as Michael Gardiner suggests, the question as to whether or not Scotland can be classed as 'postcolonial' is both 'wearied and misleading' when one considers the ways in which the disciplines of Scottish Literature and postcolonial studies have responded to the 'decline of British consensus which set in during the global postcolonial shifts from the mid-1950s'.[83] Consequently, for Gardiner, the theoretical field of postcolonialism does not merely regard countries that have detached 'chronologically after decolonisation; it is also more fundamentally a critique working within various forms of empire, whether understood in terms of occupation, formal arrangements or epistemological dependency'[84]. In a related vein Lehner 'rejects the idea that postcolonialism must be primarily seen as a historical description, whereby the "post" often designates the reclamation of the national as the ultimate telos or logical end-point projected by the post-colonial'.[85] This study consequently does not seek to establish the extent to which Northern Ireland, Ireland, or Scotland can be considered 'postcolonial', but rather looks to the discourse of postcolonial studies as a means of addressing the ways in which modern Scottish and Irish texts can contribute to, and be informed

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[81] Ibid, p.8.
[82] Morris, p.44.
[83] Michael Gardiner, 'Introduction', *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner and Graeme MacDonald (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011), pp.1-12, (p.1).
[84] Ibid, p.1.
[85] Lehner, p.8.

by, perspectives that draw from 'aesthetic and philosophical debates over the matter of representation and the representation of matter'.[86]

This turn towards the material basis of culture and nature is of prime importance in the recent works of Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman, who advocate for a renewed attention to the various forms of 'matter' that constitute our world. Their definition of 'material ecocriticism' presents a new advancement of ecocritical perspectives that asks us to not only consider the relationship between nature and culture through the interaction of biotic beings, but looks to our relationship with a multiplicity of forces, agencies, and matter, including 'water, soil, stones, metals, minerals, bacteria, toxins, food, electricity, cells, atoms, all cultural objects and places'.[87] For Iovino and Oppermann our experience of place is not only shaped through social, cultural and political interactions, but necessarily responds to our entangled position within 'a vast network of agencies' constructed out of the 'world's material phenomena' that not only includes 'sentient animals or other biological organisms, but also impersonal agents, ranging from electricity to hurricanes, from metals to bacteria, from nuclear plants to information networks.[88] Their work suggests that we should not regard these nonhuman 'things' in isolation, but understand that our engagements with matter 'form complexes both natural and cultural', where the 'true dimension of matter is not that of static and passive substance or being, but of a generative becoming'.[89] Their work contributes to a growing trend of new materialism which suggests that it is only by recognising the innate vibrancy of matter that we might begin to counteract the traditional 'image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter [which] feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption'.[90] This sense of vibrancy derives from the work of Jane Bennett who prompts us to consider a range of matter, 'things' and stuff, not as inert or static objects, but as active substances: 'By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things [...] not only to impede or block the will and design of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with

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[86] Murkherjee, p.59.

[87] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency and Models of Narrativity', *Ecozono,* 3.1 (2012), 75-91, (p.83).

[88] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp.1-21, (pp.1-3).

[89] Ibid, p.83, p.77.

[90] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p.ix.

trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.[91] This is not to suggest that matter possesses a form of consciousness or subjectivity, but that material 'bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matte, landscapes and biological entities – intra-act with each other and with the human dimension' in a way that reveals their potential to shape and transform our experience of place.[92] In the chapters that follow the representation of matter and the matter of representation occupies a central place in the work of modern Scottish and Irish poets. Whether it be the shared physical geology of island groups, the eroded shores of the littoral zone, or the deadly circulation of ocean plastics, the contemplation of materials is a primary means through which modern Scottish and Irish poets respond to environmental crisis and articulate their relationship with a wider nonhuman world.

Chapters 1 and 2 pay attention to the role that island geology and other forms of 'vibrant matter' play in the advancement of archipelagic frameworks and narratives of place. Beginning with the works of Hugh MacDiarmid and Louis MacNeice in the 1930s and 1940s, Chapter 1 outlines the origins of a distinct, though problematic, archipelagic perspective that actively draws from the geological characteristics of Irish and Scottish coastlines. Working in response to Brannigan's concept of 'archipelagic modernism' this chapter focuses on thematic overlaps between MacNeice's and MacDiarmid's literary preoccupation with the Hebrides. Examining their travelogues, *The Islands of Scotland* (MacDiarmid 1939) and *I Crossed the Minch* (MacNeice 1938) in combination with their poetry collections *Stony Limits* (MacDiarmid 1934), *The Earth Compels* (MacNeice 1938) and *Holes in the Sky* (MacNeice 1948), the chapter traces their engagement with questions of community, belonging, and national identity. Through its intense observation and engagement with geological sciences and concepts of deep time MacDiarmid's work exhibits a marked interest in the burgeoning science and philosophy of ecology and consequently stands as a key instance in the development of a new form of poetry that actively explores constructions of self, other, and world through ecological theory. Chapter 2 develops the focus on island geologies through the work of the contemporary Northern Irish poets, Derek Mahon and Michael Longley. Their respective engagement with the islands of Scotland and the coastlines of the Irish West mark a continuation of the earlier

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[91] Bennett, p.xiii.
[92] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Stories Come to Matter', p.7.

work of MacNeice, in which the condition of being 'in-between' is paramount to questions of home and dwelling. While later chapters address the more recent and definitively ecological characteristics of Longley and Mahon's oeuvres, Chapter 2 explores their early encounters with the littoral zones of the Irish West in relation to the political violence of the Troubles, and suggests that their encounters with the shifting geologies of the coast allows for fruitful new considerations of the relationship between poetry and place within Northern Irish literature. The chapter is primarily concerned with the tropes of erosion and decay that arise across their respective works, suggesting that the context of the Troubles necessarily invites a precarious reading of place that is transposed onto the seemingly timeless and invulnerable space of the Irish West.

Where the opening two chapters focus on the physical geological qualities of the islands of the Scottish and Irish West, Chapters 3 and 4 turn towards the concept of entanglement as a means of exploring the inherently enmeshed and interwoven condition of the human within a wider environment of animals, plants, and abiotic matter. Recent discussions of ecopoetry have turned to the concept of 'entanglement' as a central motif of not only ecopoetics, but the wider school of ecocriticism. While the term is often used to signify conditions of interconnectivity and relation between human and nonhuman environments, the term also corresponds to a sense of confusion: 'A means of entangling; that by which a person or thing is entangled; an embarrassment, a snare; a circumstance that complicates or confuses a matter'.[93] The sense of entanglement thus not only pertains to a sense of connection, but also relates to a sense of being caught within a difficult, complicated, or compromising position. Chapter 3 takes a comparative approach to the recent work of Michael Longley and the Scottish poet Kathleen Jamie whose respective works display a marked attentiveness to the acoustic dimensions of place by way of listening to the natural soundscapes of local flora and fauna. Through their scrupulous attentions to the bioregions of Carrisgkeewaun, the River Tay, and the Fife coast their works alert us to both the intimacy of bioregional engagements with place, while remaining open to wider transnational scales of environmental decline and destruction. Despite the site-specific focus of their works, both Longley and Jamie recognise how these places

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[93] 'Entanglement, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62785?redirectedFrom=entanglement#eid>[accessed 23.02.2017].

are all inherently interconnected with one another through the ecological migration of birds, plants, animals and sea creatures that move between and across the archipelago. The chapter interrogates the bioregional politics of Jamie's works which in the early 2000s have been marked by an increased focus on questions of ecology and the relationship between nature and culture that some have read as an abandonment of her previously politically engaged poems. Tracing Jamie's apparent movement away from national constructions of place to the intimate acoustics of the bioregion, the chapter considers the role that scale plays with regards to forms of dwelling and belonging. Once again the political context of the Troubles remains salient for the work of Longley, whose repeated poetic 'retreat' to Carrigskeewaun has often been read as an active withdrawal from the violence of Northern Ireland. This chapter offers a re-reading of these critical concerns, suggesting that Longley's resonant soundscapes are acutely attentive to cross-border affinities between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, suggesting that for Longley the poem becomes a space in which to explore and challenge ecological boundaries and political borders.

In comparison to the intimate bioregional attentions of Longley and Jamie, the work of Derek Mahon and John Burnside exhibits a more uneasy sense of entanglement that corresponds with a more conflicted sense of political and ecological belonging. Chapter 4 engages concepts drawn from Timothy Morton's definition of the 'mesh' which he suggests 'is essential for thinking the ecological thought' as it highlights the 'interconnectedness of all living and non-living things [through] infinite connections and infinitesimal differences'.[94] For Morton, one of the key elements of ecological thinking is retaining a sense of alterity in which '[o]ur sense of place includes a sense of difference'.[95] As ecological interconnectedness dissolves 'the barrier between "over here" and "over there"' it does not produce sameness, but rather encourages us to recognise 'that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge'.[96] Thus, for Morton, encounters with the 'local' do not necessarily incite feelings of familiarity or even enable a sense of belonging, but instead induces the strange, the unfamiliar and the uncanny. This chapter focuses on Burnside and Mahon's respective fascination with seascapes and fluvial

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[94] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), italics in original, p.30, p.53.
[95] Ibid, p.53.
[96] Ibid, p.39.

environments as sites that enable important, yet hazardous, moments of bodily interconnection between human and nonhuman beings. For both Burnside and Mahon, the ensuing sense of estrangement, alienation and exile that emerges from these trans-corporeal relations generates productive poetic contemplations about being in, and writing about, the nonhuman world. This chapter further suggests that contemporary Scottish and Irish poets engage the ocean and seas of the archipelago, not only as powerful metaphorical tools, nor merely as fluid sites of cross-cultural connection, but as material sites that increasingly bear the traces of environmental decline.

Continuing this fascination with the spatial politics of the sea, chapters 5 and 6 are concerned with the role of the ocean within contemporary poetry, and engages with new theories and concepts that have recently emerged in line with the rise of the Blue Humanities. Chapter 5 examines the works of the Irish poets Mary O'Malley and Moya Cannon and their engagement with the coastal communities of the Irish West. The chapter proposes that their respective turn towards the Atlantic Ocean is in part a response to the landless inheritance of the Post-Celtic Tiger landscape, and argues that for both O'Malley and Cannon, the ocean becomes a site of a new cultural imaginary of expansive openness and mobility. The chapter provides essential new readings of these under-examined poets exploring their respective engagement with questions of language, land ownership, and migration, suggesting that their overt engagement with the economic and ecological impact of globalisation contributes to a thickening strand of environmentalist thought in modern Irish writing. Through their attentiveness to the oceans and seas that surround and connect the archipelago, both Cannon and O'Malley exhibit an express concern with the modes by which the histories of linguistic colonisation, and the control of contemporary economic systems are increasingly divesting Irish seascapes of cultural and ecological value. Chapter 6 continues this concern with the cultural and ecological value of the ocean in the discussion of work by the Scottish poets Jen Hadfield and Kathleen Jamie. Marked by engagements with marine materials that float in from the wider currents of the global ocean, their encounters with feathers, bones, and ocean plastics prompts us to recognise the ways in which intimate, local sites are increasingly linked 'to global networks of consumption, waste, and pollution'.[97]

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[97] Iovino and Oppermann, 'Stories Come to Matter', p.14.

Through their interactions with vibrant marine matter, their work acknowledges that both place and matter can no longer be viewed as passive, inert, or static. By tracing the flow of marine materials (both organic and inorganic) across the archipelago, their work exhibits a consciousness of the ways in which the local and the global are continuously drawn into relation with one another. Thus, while concerns with the cultural and material 'valuation' of the ocean are central to the work of both Hadfield and Jamie, their poetry is also attentive to the questions of scale and relation that are prompted by lyrical encounters with marine environments. Presenting saltwater space as the site of entangled human and nonhuman relations that are able to flow beyond national boundaries and borders to engage wider scales of planetary ecological threat, these concluding chapters suggest that the transnational poetics of contemporary Scottish and Irish writing actively engage the ocean as the site of ecological, political and cultural significance. In so doing, their poetry provides the opportunity for new narratives of place to arise; ones that are shaped by the material, mobile and mutable conditions of the sea.

As a whole this thesis is drawn time and again to the edge of the sea. While the opening chapters display an interest in the lively and vibrant natures of stone, the resonance of geological relation, and the phenomenological entanglements of humans and nonhumans, the continued presence of the ocean within Scottish and Irish texts is worthy of note. Rising sea levels are one of the most powerful signs of environmental change, where the impending displacement of all forms of living and non-living matter through ecosystem decline, extreme weather, and loss of land means that the previously alien ocean is suddenly at the forefront of human experience. While the use of saltwater space within contemporary poetry is significant for the purposes of this thesis, it must be noted that a wider hydrological focus has begun to emerge within the environmental humanities particularly in relation to questions surrounding fresh-water ecologies that revolve around issues of access, energy, and sanitation. The term 'blue ecology' was first coined by Michael Blackstock in 2005 in a paper examining the 'unifying role' of fresh water in a cross-cultural analysis of forest-related conflicts 'between First Nations and government agencies'.[98] Within his study, Blackstock presents the notion of 'blue ecology' as a mode of thought which 'acknowledges water's

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[98] Michael Blackstock, 'Blue Ecology: A Cross-cultural Approach to Reconciling Forest-related Conflicts', *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management,* 6.2 (2005), 28-54, (p.38).

life-enabling spirit, which has a central role in ecosystem function and encourages a collaborative water-first approach to teaching and practicing human interventions in our environment.'[99] Suggesting that freshwater holds functional, ecological, and spiritual properties, Blackstock's work outlines an ethics of engagement where 'respect for water and our climate is ubiquitous'.[100] While Blackstock's work is vital in its coinage of blue ecology, his discussion is limited in scope beyond the role of freshwater and its impact upon the immediate cultural and geographical characteristics of the Southern Interior Forest Region of British Columbia. While freshwater is of course a necessary and vital ecological element, it is peculiar that despite comprising nearly 75% of the Earth's surface and consisting of over 97% of the earth's total water reserves, saltwater has drawn relatively little ecocritical discussion within contemporary contexts.[101] This inattention to saltwater is surprising given that the oceans and seas play such a vital role not only in regards to climate change, but to the literary imaginary of the British and Irish isles.

The recent rise of the Blue Humanities seeks to address the understudied ecological and cultural value of oceans and seas, suggesting that engagements with 'salt-water environment[s] can produce a more complex, less anthropocentric understanding of how literary forms imagine human beings in nature'.[102] As a site that is formed by, and constituted through, the continual flow and movement of water, the ocean can perhaps be understood as the embodiment of the forms of ecological dynamism outlined earlier by Ursula Heise. Concerned with the 'invisible submarine world of shoals, shelves, banks, sands, and tides', the emergent discourse of the Blue Humanities engages the ever mobile qualities of saltwater space as a means of accessing more 'dynamic', 'changing' and protean notions of place.[103] For Steve Mentz, the long history of literary engagements with the world's oceans has led to the development of several 'master tropes' within Anglophone literature, where the 'perils of

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[99] Michael Blackstock, 'Blue Ecology and Climate Change', *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management,* 9.1 (2008), 12-16, (p.13).

[100] Ibid, p.15.

[101] Sangham Shresta and Prasama Singh, 'Global Climate System, Energy Balance and the Hydrological Cycle', *Climate Change and Water Resources*, ed. by Sangam Shrestha, Mukand S. Babel, Vishnue Prassad Pandey, (Boca Raton: Taylor Francis, 2014), pp.1-31, (p.7).

[102] Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas, 'Introduction: "The Hungry Ocean"', *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture*, ed. by Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.1-15, (p.9).

[103] Daniel Brayton, *Shakespeare's Ocean: An Ecocritical Exploration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p.198.

shipwreck to the frustrations of navigation, can serve as powerful antidotes to pastoralism and other representations of landed stability.'[104] As a site that is constituted by different 'vectors of movement - tides, currents, and waves' the ocean problematises our traditional concepts of place as derived through terrestrial coordinates. [105] For Daniel Brayton, the 'significance of depths, tides, coastal environments, whales, fish, and winds'[106] within the world's oceans presents a serious challenge to forms of ecocritical scholarship that have traditionally centred upon human engagements with the land. Literary encounters with seas and oceans thus provides a crucial critique of grounded, landed and terrestrial ecologies, in which the '*oikos* of ecology too often gets imagined as a house built for people, a world fit for living in if not controlling. The sting of salt remind us that the world isn't a happy story.'[107] In a similar mode, the geographers Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters note how the discipline of geography has traditionally stemmed from terrestrial and earth-based discourses within which the oceans and seas are 'not accorded the status of "place" worthy of scholarly study.'[108] The dismissal of the seas and oceans within geographical study has consequently characterised them as 'a quintessential wilderness, a void without community other than that temporarily established on boats crewed by those with the shared experience of being tossed about on its surface'.[109] This portrayal problematises conceptions of saltwater bodies as 'empty', void of history (both human and non), 'a space not a place'.[110] For Anderson and Peters, the undulating characteristics of the oceans and seas are cast in opposition to a form of 'sedentary metaphysics' in which the process of place-making 'involves carving out '*Permanences*' which correspond to territorial categorisations of the world as 'fixed, static and durable'.[111]

While the examination of saltwater is important in refocusing our attention on relatively neglected and understudied elements of literary ecocriticism, the

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[104] Steve Mentz, 'Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature', *Literature Compass*, 6.5 (2009a), 997-1013, (p.1007).

[105] Phillip Steinberg, 'Foreword: On Thalassography', *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Oxon: Ashgate, 2014), pp.xiii-xvii, (p.xv).

[106] Brayton, p.198.

[107] Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009b), p.97.

[108] Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, 'A Perfect and Absolute Blank', *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean,* ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Oxon: Ashgate, 2014), pp.3-23, (p.3).

[109] John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p.17.

[110] Ibid, p.16.

[111] Anderson and Peters, p.11.

'corrective' model employed by this body of work risks establishing a false dichotomy that forces ecocritical perspectives to engage either land or water, but seemingly not both. Rather than choosing land *or* sea, archipelagic perspectives allow us to mediate between the oceanic and terrestrial coordinates of place. Rather than presenting a false dichotomy between land and sea in which saltwater bodies are defined in 'negative relationality to the land', archipelagic perspectives allow us to consider the ways in which the sea is 'intrinsically connected to and absorbed within a broader network of spaces (earth and air) which are also [...] porous, open and convergent with each other'.[112] This form of thinking presents a conception of place that responds to the global fluidity of modernity, where the forces of globalisation necessitate the production of new narratives of place that are porous, fluid and open. This thesis thus understands blue ecological texts to be those that not only actively engage the materiality of saltwater, nor those that merely perceive the ocean to be a conduit for transnational relation, but works that exhibit a concern with the ways in which saltwater affects and shapes our relationships with place and with the nonhuman. Presenting a form of poetic practice in which the site of dwelling, the *oikos,* is neither durable, nor dry, the poets under consideration here work to create new forms of archipelagic relation that actively respond to and acknowledge our responsibility towards the blue.

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[112] Ibid, p.8.

'Free of All Roots': The Archipelagic Modernism of Hugh MacDiarmid and Louis MacNeice

In the summer of 1896 the poets W.B. Yeats and Arthur Symons took a trip to Inishmore, the largest of Ireland's Aran Islands located off the coast of Galway. The islands were to play a great part in the aesthetic and political project of the Celtic Revival as their significance within folklore through tales of Tír na nÓg and the lost 'Atlantis' of Hy Brasil, not to mention the religious significance of the islands as sites of Christian pilgrimage, meant that the western islands of Ireland appealed greatly to 'cultural nationalists and literary revivalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[1] For John Wilson Foster, the visions of a pre-modern 'passionate communality such as we had all lived before cities, industry, class and warring systems' evident in the works of Lady Gregory, Yeats and Symons harbour a close kinship with emergent discourses of cultural nationalism in the late 1890s that increasingly looked to the islands as a means of constructing 'the appearance [...] of a unified, pre-conquest civilization' Ireland.[2] Lauded as sites of 'continuity with an unconquered Celtic Ireland' the Aran Islands and the Blasket Islands provided both a symbolic, and actual, site upon which writers were able to establish 'a new Creation myth for an imminent new order. [Where the] western island[s] came to represent Ireland's mythic unity before the Chaos of conquest'.[3] Romantic depictions of the islands as reservoirs of history, language and culture were not uncommon during the Revival. Indeed, Symons' description of his trip to the Aran Islands in *Cities and Sea-Coasts and Islands* (1908) overtly employs the language of dream and fantasy: 'I seemed to have stepped out of some strange, half-magical, almost real dream, through which I had been consciously moving on the other side of that grey, disturbed sea, upon those grey and peaceful islands in the Atlantic.'[4] For many scholars, the initial journey undertaken by Yeats and Symons marks a significant point within the literary history of the Irish West, as their respective works were to influence not only the

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[1] John Foster, 'Certain Set Apart: The Western Island in the Irish Renaissance', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 66.264 (Winter 1977), 261-274, (p.264).
[2] Ibid, p.268.
[3] Ibid, pp.264-5.
[4] Arthur Symons, *Cities and Sea-Coasts and Islands* (Illinois: The Marlboro Press, 1998), p.302.

aesthetic project of the Celtic Revival, but inspired a literary fascination with the islands that has since extended into the later modernist and contemporary poetry of Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon and Michael Longley.[5] Drawn between narratives of allure and alienation, connection and isolation, purity and cosmopolitanism, the islands of the West serve as a key space from which to launch this chapter's examination of archipelagic poetics.

While the work of Mahon and Longley will be addressed in Chapter 2, this current chapter is concerned with the ways in which the work of Louis MacNeice and Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1930s and 1940s responds to and challenges the revivalist traditions of island writing that tended to describe the islands as 'primeval, primitive and sublime'.[6] As John Brannigan has recently argued, the discourse of romantic primitivism is only one aspect to arise from literary engagements with the Aran islands during the modernist period, as the islands 'became iconic of linguistic, cultural, and racial purity, at the same time as new forms of connection and new patterns of travel made it clear that they were bound by trade, migration and industry to coastal confederations which bore little relation to the conventional allegiances of nation, race, or religion'.[7] It is this paradoxical construction of the island as both an isolated and idealised reservoir of national culture, and an inherently connective and pluralising space that concerns the work of MacNeice and MacDiarmid. Across their travelogues and poems, the islands emerge as contested spaces that register 'the modernist's desire for primitive purity' while at the same time revealing that the 'primitivity of the Irish peasant' is nothing more than 'a fiction emanating from a complex network of anthropological, colonialist, and nationalist idealizations'.[8]

One cannot begin a discussion of islands in Irish Literature without mentioning the work of J.M. Synge whose repeated trips to the Aran Islands between 1898 and 1902, and subsequent publication of *The Aran Islands* (1906),

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[5] John Hutchinson identifies thee major elements of Yeats' revivalist project which can be traced to his encounters with the western islands: '[1] a myth of origins (the primordial era of organic folk community); [2] a myth of degeneration (the disintegration of community by the division of labour) [and 3] a myth of regeneration (the restoration of organic solidarity on a higher level)'. *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Routledge, 2012), p.132.

[6] Heather Clark, 'Leaving Barra, Leaving Inishmore: Islands in the Irish Protestant Imagination', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* 35.2 (Autumn 2009), 30-35, (p.30).

[7] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: EUP. 2015), p.39.

[8] Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p.149.

are frequently noted for their depiction of the 'Islanders as a wild and primitive, inherently noble people cut off from modern Europe'.[9] As Heather Clark suggests, Synge was 'fascinated by Symons' metaphysical evocation' of the islands and in part travelled there in order to find the same sense of 'spiritual completion and psychic unease' first experienced two years earlier by Symons and Yeats.[10] Synge's *The Aran Islands*, while liable to romantic descriptions not unlike Symons', draws explicitly from anthropological and evolutionary discourses[11] in an attempt to 'establish the distance proper to ethnographic observation and to write something like an ethnographic account'.[12] Across the text his use of 'fieldwork and ethnographic conventions of representation',[13] fuses the 'impersonal "laws" of science and the passionate subjectivity of the individual imagination'.[14] This is not to suggest that *The Aran Islands* is devoid of romantic primitivist visions, but rather suggests that Synge's sharp observance of the islanders and their landscape differs from earlier revivalist encounters with the Aran islands in a significant way. Indeed as Clark suggests, Synge's peculiar combination of science and imagination proved to be influential to later writers such as MacNeice whose travelogue *I Crossed the Minch* (1938)[15] similarly emerges as 'part exposé, part anthropological expedition'.[16] Engaging variously with discourses of primitivism, nostalgia and romanticism, MacNeice's travelogue grapples with the problematic construction of island space as a supposedly peripheral site somehow 'cut off' from the mainland. Across *Minch* MacNeice draws from the revivalist discourses of earlier writers such as Symons, Yeats and Lady Gregory, while also engaging with the ways in which 'the changing cultural patterns of life on the islands are directly connected to changing material circumstances'.[17] Poised between connection and solitude, MacNeice's work draws from the lived physical realities of the islands, and alerts us to the beginnings of a form of writing that John

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[9] Castle, p.101.

[10] Clark, p.30.

[11] Castle, p.98. Sinead Garrigan Mattar argues that 'Synge's engagement with evolutionary science, like Yeats's, must primarily be traced to his childhood interest in natural history' and further suggests that Synge's initial interest in 'biological evolutionism' soon extended into a fascination with forms of 'socio-cultural evolutionism' as found in the work of Herbert Spencer, James Frazer and Alfred Nutt. *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) p.148, p.155.

[12] Castle, p.98

[13] Ibid, p.99

[14] Sinead Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), p.134.

[15] Hereafter shortened to *Minch*.

[16] Clark, p.31.

[17] Brannigan, p.193.

Brannigan has recently termed 'archipelagic modernism'.[18] Within such writing, the islands are not merely understood as primitive sites of a pre-modern cultural purity, but are positioned as active sites that are increasingly open to channels of cross-cultural communication, trade, and ecological connection.

Fusing romantic idealisation and scientific study, the later works of MacNeice and MacDiarmid turn to the Scottish islands in order to explore environmental and political tensions that were becoming dominant in the wake of the struggle for Irish Independence and a growing Scottish Nationalist project. Their travelogues and poetic works engage variously with questions of place and displacement, language and nation, origins and exiles, which come to the fore of their encounters with the islands of Scotland. While their works focus on the cultural and ecological specificity of the Hebrides, they both draw from the cultural and symbolic legacy of the Aran Islands in order to explore new forms of archipelagic belonging. Thus, while their works draw from the revivalist construction of islands as reservoirs of 'cultural purity "undefiled" by Anglicisation and industry',[19] they do so with the knowledge that such discourses are ultimately insufficient when engaging with traumatic histories of famine, migration, and poverty that have shaped the environment and culture of the islands. Rather than aligning with the 'late romantic cult of isolation'[20] exhibited within the work of Yeats, Symons, Lady Gregory and other late-nineteenth century travel writing, MacNeice and MacDiarmid pursue the more scientific preoccupations employed by writers such as Synge whose close ethnographic observation of the Aran Islands 'incorporated the constructions of man's place in nature that came to him from extensive reading in comparative science into a primitivism that relied instinctively upon the notion of man as an organic part of the natural world'.[21] Thus while it is true that within their works the Hebrides are viewed as 'exemplars […] of independence', their interest in the islands moves beyond the purely symbolic and engages with burgeoning scientific discourses in geology, ecology and anthropology.[22] This chapter suggests that the works of MacDiarmid and MacNeice can be positioned alongside the rise of an early

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[18] Brannigan, p.4.
[19] John Kerrigan, 'Louis MacNeice Among the Islands', *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry,* ed. by Peter Mackay, Edna Longley, and Fran Brearton (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), pp.58-86, (p.62).
[20] Foster, p.269.
[21] Garrigan Mattar, p.130.
[22] Kerrigan, p.63.

environmental consciousness in Ireland and Scotland, where their encounters with island spaces and subsequent interaction with 'the various geological sections of littoral space – beaches, cliffs, eroded rocks, submarine forests – [provide] important material for their radical reconceptualisations of the natural world'.[23] Indeed, MacDiarmid's travelogue *The Islands of Scotland* (1939) and poetry collection *Stony Limit*s (1934) both exhibit a distinct fascination with the geological characteristics of the Hebrides, while MacNeice's travelogue and poetry collections *The Earth Compels* (1938), *Holes in the Sky* (1944), frequently address rock forms and coastlines in an attempt to engage with profound feelings of displacement. Through their respective fascination with the ecological and political interconnections between island spaces, their works engage with and adapt the legacy of revivalist island writing.

i. The Roots and Routes of Archipelagic Modernism

In his recent study of modern British and Irish literature, Brannigan defines 'archipelagic modernism' as a form of literature that 'comprises local as well as transnational geographies, and [...] prioritises a locational focus upon islands, coastlines and the sea'.[24] For Brannigan this turn towards island topographies not only produces a form of literature that is 'deeply concerned with understanding place and the environment', but is also sensitive to the geopolitical conditions of the twentieth century in which new modes of 'archipelagic communality' begin to emerge in the 'wake of a dissolving Empire and a weakening Union'.[25] As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Brannigan's archipelagic timeline maps onto the period between 1890 and 1960, during which the seemingly stable and singular frame of 'Britain' is consistently challenged by not only a flurry of (varyingly successful) nationalist movements, but by a complementary flow of literature that is fascinated with the question of place. Brannigan points to the various nationalist movements of the early 1920s and 1930s that draw from the 'fringe' spaces of the archipelago for aesthetic, political and literary inspiration in the production of new 'identities, cartographies and ecologies'.[26] Across such literature, the Scottish Isles and Irish Isles become conflicted cultural signifiers

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[23] Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter, 'Twixt Land and Sea: Approaches to Littoral Studies', *The Beach in Anglophone Literature: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (London: Routledge, 2015), pp.1-21, (p.7).
[24] Brannigan, p.13.
[25] Ibid, pp.15-16.
[26] Ibid, p.17.

which simultaneously harbour notions of independence, isolation, and national particularity, while at the same time suggesting forms of interconnection and multiplicity. This conflicted status of the spatial significance of islands is evident within the works of both MacNeice and MacDiarmid, whose poetic navigation of the Hebrides frequently presents them as irreconcilable sites that are poised between extreme notions of either rootedness or errantry.

Hinged between metaphor and materiality, across MacNeices's *Minch*, the Hebrides take on multiple significations that signal an overall fascination with, and need to engage with, constructions of place. The travelogue opens with a vehement rejection of the revivalist tropes of primitivism and purity, with the author warning: 'you will find in this book no picture of island Utopias'.[27] MacNeice's opening declaration imparts a conscious refusal to engage with the aesthetics of the classic tripper or tourist narrative, and instead promises to provide an alternative picture of island life as shaped by the discourse of documentary realism. Despite this assertion the text emerges as a highly conflicted narrative which both lambasts the figure of 'the tourist' who is described as a 'corruption' and one of many 'invading' forces from the mainland, while ironically noting that MacNeice himself is one such invading force.[28] While MacNeice exhibits a marked concern for the anglicisation and industrialisation of the Hebrides he does so through a text geared towards English audiences. The paradoxical positioning of MacNeice's literary voice, in which he is positioned as both a native and invasive force, is for many scholars a core element of MacNeice's oeuvre which is characterised by the liminal conditions of 'Anglo-Irish hybridity, exile, and migrancy'.[29]

As John Kerrigan suggests, the Hebrides were important to MacNeice, [30] as they were 'tied for him genealogically and experientially as well as culturally and

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[27] Louis MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch* (London: Longman Green and Co, 1938), p.8, p.14.
[28] Ibid, p.6.
[29] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.37.
[30] John Kerrigan traces the Irish resonances of the text as follows: 'As he travelled towards [the Hebrides] for the first time, he tells us in *Minch*, he remembered Omey off the coast of Co. Galway, where his father lived until the age of 9 (36). On Barra he recalled Achill (Co. Mayo), where he went with his first wife, his father and stepmother in 1929 (156). And again, at a dance on Lewis he thinks of Synge's Aran but adds "There was nothing very folk or peasant" about it, "none of Synge's hobnailed boots chasing girls" naked feet' (207). The observation is given point by MacNeice's awareness of the culturally given but also ideologically loaded association between these islands in the west. It was a conjunction which he could develop

symbolically, to the islands off the west of Ireland'.[31] His journey to the Hebrides is thus not only fuelled by his political interest as to how 'how far the Hebrides had, and could, resist anglicisation and commercialisation',[32] but was also fuelled by his desire to find on the islands a 'safe space to indulge his nostalgia for a lost past, and to explore the possibility of connection with his Celtic brethren'.[33] While the desire to encounter an enchanted islandscape as a 'ring of noisy foam, a welter of seals and black-haired Noble Celts. Like the first time [he] ever went to the West of Ireland' frames the opening of the text, the bare reality of the islands soon crushes MacNeice's initial 'romantic expectations'.[34] Over MacNeice's two journeys, the Hebrides soon reveal themselves to be nothing more than 'a monotony of heather' cast against a 'mere vomit of sea',[35] their bare reality failing to engender a sense of cultural heritage or sense of belonging. Rather than finding a healthy culture in which he might be able to 'escape [from] the confines of his alienated, Irish Protestant identity',[36] MacNeice finds the islands to be in decline. The text draws attention to the dwindling populations and traditional practices of the islands where the incursion of new mechanical devices and techniques has led to the decline of weaving practices and the subsequent 'disappearance of the song which attended them'.[37] Across the text, the loss of Gaelic voices is echoed by the haunting call of the corncrake that frequently pierces the text. Once pervasive, the corncrake population declined catastrophically during the twentieth century due to the mechanisation of agricultural processes and the subsequent destruction of the birds' breeding grounds. The corncrake's dwindling call serves MacNeice as an unwitting metaphor for the impending decline of island cultures while also serving as a connective thread between Scotland and Ireland where the bird's call stimulates recollections of childhood: 'Outside the corn-crake went on craking indefatigably [...] I am sentimental about corn-crakes, remembering them from my childhood and associating them with summer'.[38] Ultimately MacNeice is unable to find the cultural parallels he hoped to find, leading him to resolutely state that the book is

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more inventively in his later, fabulating mode. By the time we get to *The Mad Islands*, the Irish and Scottish islands have fused at the level of parable." (Kerrigan, 2011, p.62).

[31] Kerrigan, pp.62-3.
[32] Ibid, p.62.
[33] Clark, p.31.
[34] MacNeice, *Minch*, p.22, p.224.
[35] Ibid, p.22, p.68.
[36] Clark, p.31.
[37] Louis MacNeice, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.5.
[38] MacNeice, *Minch*, p.117.

'written by someone who was disappointed and tantalised by the islands and seduced by them only to be reminded that on that soil he will always be an outsider'.[39] Here MacNeice, conscious of his own agenda in going to the islands, discloses the central anxiety of the text: namely his desire to 'reconcile his cultural hybridity' through his own fantasy of island community.[40]

The poem 'Leaving Barra', first published in *Minch*, explores this sense of hybridity and externality through the perspective of the departing poetic figure leaving the Hebridean island of Barra (one of several islands visited by MacNeice during his tour). From its opening, the poem draws attention to the confluence of Scottish and Irish western landscapes in the lines 'The dazzle on the sea, my darling,|Leads from the western channel'.[41] Indeed, no such 'western channel' exists near Barra, as all ferry crossings move east rather than west. The poem's invocation of the west is thus more vectorial in nature, signifying a movement into an idealised, rather than an actual, space. As the figure takes 'My leave for ever of the island', the poem invokes a sense of melancholy and loss.[42] Having been unable to fully access the island 'with its easy tempo', for 'fretful even in leisure', the poetic voice declares that 'I shall never visit that island | Again'.[43] Here the poem echoes the opening sentiments of the travelogue 'I doubt if I shall ever visit the Western Islands again',[44] inserting a sense of disconnection and disappointment into the poem. This sense of alienation continues throughout, where the speaker feels more affinity with 'gulls on the wing for garbage'[45] than any connection to the island's Gaelic community. Fuelled by the desire to find his own 'sense of Celticism reflected and amplified in the islanders',[46] the poet becomes as 'Restless as a gull and haunted| By a hankering after Atlantis'.[47] Haunted by dreams of belonging and connection, the figure finally concedes that 'I do not know that Atlantis| Unseen and uncomprehended' recognising that this idealised sense of community can only ever be 'Felt with a phantom hunger'.[48]

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[39] MacNeice, *Minch*, p.7.
[40] Clark, p.32.
[41] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.88.
[42] Ibid, p.88.
[43] Ibid, p.88.
[44] MacNeice, *Minch*, p.7.
[45] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.88.
[46] Brannigan, p.189.
[47] MacNeice, *Collected,* p.88.
[48] Ibid, p.88.

With its unsubtle tones of disappointment, ironic narrative perspective, and satirical play-pieces, MacNeice's text displays the tensions inherent in his own tendency to idealise and romanticise the islands, only to find impoverished landscapes and deteriorating communities. By rejecting the aesthetics of 'gilt and whitewash' and instead presenting the 'right ratio of life and barrenness' MacNeice draws attention to the dwindling populations and decaying cultural practices of the Hebrides that have resulted from conditions 'imposed upon them from outside'.[49] In 'The Hebrides', MacNeice plays with this ratio of life and barrenness, opening the poem with the stark image of a 'gnarled| Rampart of gneiss' upon which 'houses straggle on the umber moors'.[50] The poem relates the experience of the 'folk-fancier and the friendly tourist', who arrives on the island expecting to find a space in which 'No one hurries' and where 'Ossianic salmon' fill the river beds, only to find discomforting images of stones, bones, and uncanny houses which 'crawl| Like black and legless beasts' across a knuckled landscape.[51] Across the collection the islands are depicted at one moment as the site of pastoral fantasy: 'The tethered cow grazes among orchises| And figures in blue calico turn by hand| The ground beyond the plough', and at another moment a bleak reality: 'Where many live on the dole or on old-age pensions| And many waste with consumption and some are drowned'.[52] Much like 'Leaving Barra', in 'The Hebrides', MacNeice's poetic voice is positioned outside of the island community. His encounter with the islandscape is 'always detached'; his voice that of the 'sceptical outsider' who perceives the landscape with a discerning and disgruntled eye.[53] This cynical and acutely observant perspective arises in response to the recognition that the touristic gaze initially adopted by the poet is ultimately unsustainable. MacNeice's externalised position subsequently transforms from the initial perspective of the objectifying 'folk-fancier and the friendly tourist' into a more reflective position that acknowledges how 'On those islands', 'There is still peace though not for me and not| Perhaps for long'.[54] This final recognition that the peace of the island is 'not for me and not| Perhaps for long' holds a dual significance within the poem as it reflects the speaker's desire

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[49] MacNeice, *Minch*, p.29, p.6.
[50] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.69.
[51] Ibid, p.70.
[52] Ibid, pp.70-1.
[53] Kennedy-Andrews, p.37.
[54] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.69.

to encounter an idealised space of leisure and renewal that is in itself a constructed fantasy.

Importantly, this dismantling of the revivalist fantasy allows MacNeice to explore the archipelagic, as opposed to insular, condition of island space. Towards the end of the poem, MacNeice's poetic eye begins to move in 'wider circles', and 'spreads out' beyond the confined images of island life.[55] Looking to 'enlarged portraits' of migratory communities, the poet acknowledges the diasporic condition of the islanders that have, for lack of opportunity at home, migrated across the Atlantic to 'Toronto or New York'.[56] The transatlantic motions of the departing figure allows MacNeice's poetic eye to move beyond the confines of the declining islandscape. As the island's inhabitants search for new anchorages across the Atlantic Ocean, following the 'Tilt of the river with a magnet's purpose',[57] the poem is torn between elegy and celebration. MacNeice finds an affinity with the newly migrant figures of the poem, their mutual 'lingering home-sickness'[58] accentuating MacNeice's own deracinated position. As Brannigan suggests 'Migration is a persistent theme and trope in MacNeice's poetry, but it is always a migration from ideas of place, as much as it is migration from places themselves'.[59] Indeed, across the poem both community and landscape are resolutely 'indifferent' to MacNeice's presence. The use of the refrain 'On those islands', highlights the external position of the poetic figure, while also accentuating the notion that 'those islands' have perhaps never existed.[60] Towards the end of the poem, MacNeice is conscious that this island of 'fragrant peat', is not viable as a sanctuary that is able to 'Preserve the Gaelic tunes unspoiled by contact', or 'preserve the knowledge of horse-flesh', and perhaps never was.[61] Shaped by a sense of longing for a place that does not exist, the poem is both a lamentation and a celebration for a form of imagined community that is either long past or inaccessible.

MacNeice's travelogue is one of several texts that highlight a growing tension in the literature of the 1930s, namely in regards to an active 'turn away

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[55] Ibid, p.70.
[56] Ibid, p.69.
[57] Ibid, p.69.
[58] Ibid, p.70.
[59] Brannigan, p.186.
[60] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.69.
[61] Ibid, p.70.

from the metaphorical and abstracting tendencies of high modernism, to forms of documentary realism' that are more 'phenomenological' in nature.[62] This movement away from metaphorical depictions of place is indeed evident across MacNeice's poems, yet arguably MacNeice's dismantling of the revivalist utopia results in the production of a different abstracted, 'hyper reality', one that is obsessed with realistic, rather than revivalist, portrayals of island life.[63] This turn towards the material and subsequent fetishisation of the 'real' is continued in the works of Hugh MacDiarmid whose travelogue *The Islands of Scotland*, similarly positions the islands as sites that both enable an extreme 'sense of rootedness, even timelessness' and 'extremes of social change, particularly in the case of rapid depopulation and emigration'.[64] Importantly, while for MacNeice the islands serve to inform his own political and poetic position within the archipelago, for MacDiarmid the islands serve a wider nationalist project in which poetry plays a vital role.

Stepping ashore on the island of Whalsay in 1933, MacDiarmid's movement from the city to the sea was considered by many as an act that sailed 'against the tide of urbanised modernity'.[65] His years spent on the Shetland Isles, coupled with frequent journeys to the Hebrides and Orkney, proved to be highly formative in terms of his poetic voice and fascination with language. In the opening note to *The Islands of Scotland,* MacDiarmid follows in the steps of MacNeice as he actively rejects populist forms of travel writing fuelled by the '*olla podrida* of "old wives" tales, day-trippers' ecstasies, trite moralisings, mawkish sentimentality, supernatural fancies, factual spinach, and outrageous banality'.[66] MacDiarmid's condemning tone continues throughout the preface to promise a different island-narrative from the 'type of descriptive manner generally churned out' which sentimentalises island space through the 'glory of pastel hues [of] Tír na nÓg'.[67] Like MacNeice, MacDiarmid uses the preface and poems contained within to counterpoise himself against the image of the tripper, that fleeting visitor from the mainland who travels in search of an idyllic environment. Across the text,

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[62] Brannigan, p.145.
[63] Tom Herron, 'Mayo Littoral: Michael Longley's Eco-elegies', *New Hibernia Review*, 14.4. (Winter 2010), 74-89, (p.74).
[64] Brannigan, p.147.
[65] Scott Lyall, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Poetry and Politics of Place: Imagining a Scottish Republic* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2006), p.116.
[66] Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Islands of Scotland: Hebrides, Orkney, and Shetlands* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1939), p.vii. Hereafter shortened to *Islands*.
[67] Ibid, p.vii.

MacDiarmid expresses a conscious resistance to picaresque modes of writing, and instead strives 'towards intimacy with the physical environment'.[68]

This distinction between artificiality and actuality feeds into one of the most significant poems contained within *The Islands of Scotland*, the much lauded 'Island Funeral'. Edna Longley considers MacDiarmid's 'Island Funeral' as an exemplar of the 1930s style 'docu-poem' in which 'the island poem as case study, is spoken in the voice of someone who reports and comments from the outside'.[69] Longley further notes how MacDiarmid's 'Island Funeral' is arguably influenced by MacNeice's 'The Hebrides' and one can easily see why; both poems are approached from an external poetic position, both express a distinct fascination with the slow decline of the island landscape in the face of encroaching modernity, and both exhibit a fascination with the geological characteristics of the local landscape. Furthermore, MacDiarmid's 'Island Funeral' exhibits the same paradoxical problem of MacNeice's work as shown through his tendency to engage revivalist motifs in his descriptions of the 'strange romances and gloomy secrets' of island space and community, while simultaneously recognising the inherent falsity of such depictions.[70]

The poem opens from a high vantage point looking down upon the island as a funeral 'procession winds like a little snake| Between the walls of irregular grey stones| Piled carelessly on one another.'[71] While the opening image instils a distance between the poet and the island community, the final line of the first stanza declares that the procession is in fact 'Quite near to us', contradicting the poem's initial distancing.[72] MacDiarmid continues to play with these shifting scales of distance and connection across the sequence, where the aerial view of the omnipresent poet is frequently grounded by the repeated stony images of the 'grey world' where the 'sea and sky| Are colourless as the grey stones' that litter the island.[73] The heaviness of the landscape draws the poetic eye down from the

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[68] Brannigan, p.170.
[69] Edna Longley, 'Irish and Scottish "Island Poems"', *Northern Lights, Northern Words* (2010), 143-61, (p.147).
[70] MacDiarmid, *Islands*, p.xvii.
[71] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems: Volume 1* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), p.575.
[72] Ibid, p.575.
[73] Ibid, p.575.

lofty heights which initially casts the funeral procession as a 'little snake', and brings the poet to a new viewpoint where:

> Seen in perspective, the walls
> Overlap each other
> As far as the skyline on the hill
> Hiding every blade of grass between them,
> So that all the island appears
> One jumble of grey boulders
> The last grey wall outlined on the sky
> Has a traceried effect
> Of a hedge of thorns in winter.[74]

This new perspective is resolutely tied to the physical realities of the island, and ultimately reveals it not to be a cohesive singular space, but rather an accumulation of various pieces. This overlapping, jumbled and 'traceried' landscape highlights the ways in which the island community is shown to be indelibly bound to the landscape, where the men wearing 'homespun clothes' of 'stiff material', and the women with their 'black shawls,| And black or crimson skirts' are almost indistinguishable from the island's 'grey slabs of limestone'.[75] Across the sequence, the island community is tightly knit to the rhythms and cycles of nature; they are 'weather beaten people' who have 'no distinction from the country'.[76] Much like MacNeice's 'The Hebrides', the community within 'Island Funeral' is shown to be shaped by the forces of death and weather. While for MacNeice, death brings a sense of community noting that upon a person's death 'The whole of the village goes into three-day mourning',[77] for MacDiarmid, the island burial 'is just an act of nature' reflecting the 'inborn certainty' of the islanders that 'in the midst of life we are in death'.[78] The poem is less concerned with the lives of the islanders than with their lived environment. Where MacNeice's 'In the Hebrides' appears to lament his externalised position, throughout 'Island Funeral', MacDiarmid revels in the position as an objective outsider, one imbued with a naturalist's gaze.

The 'close comradeship between living and dying' corresponds to a wider sense of decline and decay within the poem.[79] The decline of Gaelic communities

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[74] Ibid, p.576.
[75] Ibid, p.576.
[76] Ibid, p.577.
[77] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.71.
[78] MacDiarmid*, Complete Poems*, pp.577-8.
[79] Ibid, p.577.

during the first half of the twentieth century was of utmost concern to MacDiarmid who viewed the Hebrides as a source of a necessary 'revolution in morale, a return to our roots, a re-discovery of deep realities that we have neglected'.[80] While for MacNeice, the mythology of the west initially appeared to hold the key to his personal condition of 'Anglo-Irish hybridity, exile and migrancy',[81] for MacDiarmid the grey stony islands are considered as a literal 'bedrock' for the establishment of a new mode of cultural and political engagement for Scotland. Across *The Islands of Scotland*, MacDiarmid considers the islands as the solution to 'civilisation's urgent need [to] refresh and replenish itself at its original sources'.[82] Yet across 'Island Funeral', this sense of cultural rejuvenation and national 'revolution' is aligned through a culture that is repeatedly linked with death and dispersal. Across 'Island Funeral' the island is seen to be dwindling, where 'There are few and fewer people| On the island nowadays'.[83] The fragmented stony landscape highlights the general decay and decline of the island in which 'there are more ruins of old cottages| Than occupied homes'.[84] Across the poem, MacDiarmid reveals the island to be in disarray – the security of rock and ritual slowly eroding in the face of invasive persons 'Whose only thought looking over| These incomparable landscapes| Is what sport they will yield'.[85]

Poised between concepts of insularity and connection the island of 'Island Funeral' is depicted as a 'pure and very strong' landscape, in which the 'life of ordinary villages' is shaped by 'repose and settledness'.[86] The island becomes a retreat from 'the chaos of the modern world', its great grey slabs a shield against the corrosive action and eroding forces of modern life – yet the poem is necessarily international in its outlook, its main voice is that of the visiting poet, and its seemingly stable inhabitants are shown to variously 'scatter east and west'.[87] Across the poem, in a similar mode to MacNeice, MacDiarmid highlights the conflicted position of the externalised poetic figure, who is in many ways symbolic of the 'invasion of the Hebrides by town manners and town values'.[88]

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[80] MacDiarmid, *Islands*, p.xvii.
[81] Kennedy-Andrews, p.37.
[82] MacDiarmid, *Islands,* p.ix.
[83] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems,* p.578.
[84] Ibid, p.578.
[85] Ibid, p.581.
[86] Ibid, p.580.
[87] Ibid, p.578.
[88] MacDiamid, *Islands*, p.xvii.

However, like MacNeice, this declaration of MacDiarmid's is wholly paradoxical – his voice is positioned as that of an outsider objectively assessing the demise of Gaelic culture, lamenting the decline of their culture and language through a poem which is entirely written in English. The poem similarly presents an objectification of the island community and environment, often employing the same 'mawkish' revivalist motifs that MacDiarmid so vehemently rejects in his opening preface. Yet, while the poem does fall prey to the very forms of exploitation that MacDiarmid so actively wishes to resist, he nevertheless engages a form of writing that espouses a heightened sensitivity to the natural environment of the islands. In 'The Stone Called Saxagonus', one of several poems included in *The Islands of Scotland*, MacDiarmid identifies and rejects the literary tradition of the Celtic Twilight:

> Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser's Hebridean songs – the whole
> Celtic Twilight business – I abhor,
> [...] I have no use
> For 'the delightful taste of a pink sweet filled with snow,'
> The delicate pastel shades, the romantic nostalgia[89]

Here MacDiarmid, much like MacNeice, attempts to distance himself from revivalist motifs, citing Marjory Kennedy Fraser's *Songs of the Hebrides* (Vol 1. 1909, Vol 2. 1917, Vol 3. 1921), amongst others, as a key text in the romantic construction of Hebridean island space. For MacDiarmid, it is not merely that the revivalists have sentimentalised and trivialised the Gaelic communities, but that their nostalgic works have essentially 'bemused the geology of the islands'.[90] Across *The Islands of Scotland*, MacDiarmid draws attention to the geological particularities of the Scottish islands in an attempt to reconstitute the materiality of islands that have been configured as metaphorical spaces located outside of historical, political, and geological time.

Throughout the collection, MacDiarmid makes frequent reference to geological surveys conducted in Shetland during the 1930s, and uses this knowledge to restore a 'sense of *actuality*' rather than 'artificial allure' into the islands.[91] Across the collection, MacDiarmid takes great care to attend to the geological specificity of the islands, at one point noting that 'Iona belongs to the

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[89] MacDiarmid, *Islands*, p.xv.
[90] Ibid, p.xv.
[91] Ibid, p.7.

Laurentian gneiss, the oldest rock formation in the world'.[92] Across the collection, this lithic landscape is counterpoised against 'the fake glamour of the Hebrides' as espoused in earlier island narratives.[93] His interaction with the islands thus not only takes care to attend to the economic realities facing the island communities, but at certain points almost mimics the language of a geological survey:

> Whenever the sea is much agitated - and it is never still - the boulders are set in motion, and by their friction wear away the substance of the rocks and deepen the pools in which they lie. These boulders suggest two curious questions, the one for the geologist, the other for the hydrographer, viz. how came they there? and why are they not washed out of those bases, over the reef, and allowed to sink in the deep water alongside? [94]

MacDiarmid's fascination with the islands' geology signals an interesting development in his poetry of the 1930s, namely a burgeoning fascination with the natural sciences of geology and ecology. Looking to the geographical characteristics of the archipelago, MacDiarmid continues to note how the:

> Hebrides, the Orkneys and Shetlands, and the Faroes formed a sequence linked together by comings-and-goings and mutual interests of so many kinds that even now none of them can be thoroughly understood without adequate knowledge of the other links in that chain of islands, the different main groups of which today seem to have so little in common, to be so discrete; but that, in their pre-history even, there was a similar lineage, known to archaeologists [...] which embraced Cornwall, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys and the Shetlands.[95]

In drawing attention to the 'comings-and-goings' of the islands, MacDiarmid highlights archipelagic space as a mobile site formed through continually interwoven histories, communities and traditions. Importantly the archipelago is not only ideologically and culturally interconnected, but is physically joined through shared geological characteristics. Throughout his encounters with the islands of Scotland, MacDiarmid takes care to note the specific geological differences between the island clusters to the extent that the geological specificity of the islands comes to inform his political project. As Louisa Gairn notes, MacDiarmid often 'invokes Scottish biodiversity as a national metaphor',[96] and *The Islands of Scotland* provides a prime example of this. Across the text, the

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[92] Ibid, p.133.
[93] Ibid, p.7.
[94] Ibid, p.78.
[95] Ibid, p.2.
[96] Louisa Gairn, *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2008), p.79.

islands become representative of a new nationalist agenda, suggesting that Scottish culture stems less from a sense of holistic unity than from the individual 'shapes and colours of the rocks and their relationship with the sea'.[97]

The collection frequently adopts an aerial vantage point as a means of highlighting the vastly interconnected nature of Scotland's islands. Indeed, it is only from certain geological vantage points that MacDiarmid is able to discern the full scale of the archipelago, noting how 'The Ward Hill of Hoy is the highest in Orkney, 1565 feet, and from its summit the whole archipelago can be seen'.[98] Standing atop another peak in Shetland MacDiarmid exclaims: 'A most extensive view is obtained; the whole west coast of Shetland stretches out before us, like a continent of no mean dimensions; and several of the islands of Orkney can be distinctly discerned'.[99] This recognition of the archipelagic interconnections present within Scottish culture is in many ways tied to the modern advancement of not only the geological sciences, but modern machinery. As MacDiarmid states:

> It is only now, with the use of an aeroplane, that the Scottish islands (I am thinking particularly of the Hebrides) can be seen effectively at one and the same time in their individual completeness and in all their connections with each other and with the mainland.[100]

While MacDiarmid laments the intruding mechanisms of modernity that threaten the purity of island spaces, he himself acknowledges the importance of industrial and scientific advancement in the production of his poetry. As noted, the science of geology was of particular importance to MacDiarmid during this period as he observes within the travelogue that his visits to the islands occurred in part due to his relation to the H. M Geological Survey.[101] Through his geological attentions, MacDiarmid highlights the infinitely varied physicality of the island environments with their 'incomparable scenery' and 'vivifying [...] geological elements', and consequently complicates the construction of the island as a singular isolated site.[102] In so doing MacDiarmid presents a new configuration of the islands of Scotland as being essentially archipelagic, rather than discretely isolated, in nature. The text as a whole provides a reformulation of the island

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[97] MacDiarmid, *Islands,* p.55.
[98] Ibid, p.77.
[99] Ibid, p.9.
[100] Ibid, p.8.
[101] Ibid, p.1-2.
[102] Ibid, p.9.

metaphor. No longer positioned as isolated sites cut off from the mainland MacDiarmid's islands espouse a new metaphorical significance of plurality and interconnection.

While MacDiarmid's nationalist project inevitably shapes the majority of his island configurations, the scope of his poetry is continuously cosmopolitan, drawing the meshwork of Scottish island spaces outward across the globe through a 'renewal of Scandinavian connections' and continual references to other archipelagos in Greece, Greenland, Ireland, Iceland, and Tahiti.[103] MacDiarmid closes *The Islands of Scotland* on a message of cosmopolitan interconnection in which island spaces are seen as infinitely connective:

> There are invisible bridges from every one of the Scottish islands, I think, that cross as far as the mind of man can go and reach across whatever space lies between us and anything that has ever been or ever will be apprehensible by the minds of men.[104]

MacDiarmid's recognition of these island-island relations is indicative of an early archipelagic consciousness within modern Scottish poetry. Rather than espousing an insular ideology for political sovereignty, MacDiarmid looks to the islands as a means of speculating upon 'the very different course not only Scottish, and English, but World history would have taken if the whole of the mainland of Scotland had been severed from England and broken up into the component islands of a numerous archipelago'.[105] Indeed, MacDiarmid further acknowledges the striking differences between Scotland's island spaces where 'Islands as like each other as two peas […] can nevertheless give rise to the most unaccountable variations' urging his readers to make 'due allowance for the number, let alone the individual and group differences, of [Scotland's] islands'.[106] The constant motion of arrival and departure across the travelogue complicates the seemingly bounded status of islands and points towards the recognition of 'minute distinctions' where 'to know a whole lot of islands is like having a portfolio of pictures and an adjustable frame, which enables you to hang up any picture for a day, or a week, or a month'.[107] Further to this, the continued insistence upon the geological and cultural interrelations of the Western Isles complicates the notion

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[103] Ibid, p.43.
[104] Ibid, p.136.
[105] Ibid, p.8.
[106] Ibid, p.95, p.8.
[107] Ibid, p.26.

of any insular form of identity and further challenges 'a metropolitanism that subsumes difference and patronises or ignores what it terms the provinces'.[108] Through an insistence that he is no further from the '"centre of things"| In the Shetlands here than in London, New York or Tokio', MacDiarmid rejects the 'megapolitan madness'[109] of the modernist cityscape, preferring to embrace the interconnected cultural and historical flows of the archipelago. Connected through shared 'oceanic vistas, wind and rain, cliffs, rocks and hard places, bogs and moors, seabirds and seals'[110] both MacNeice and MacDiarmid reveal the island regions of Scotland and Ireland to be incredibly mobile not only in terms of their migratory human populations, but their ecological characteristics.

ii.   Western Landscapes and *Stony Limits*

Rather than constructing a solid basis for a new form of national life, the porous nature of the islands and their interconnected ecologies become a means of theorising place as a permeable construct. Looking to the chaotic vibrancy of the shoreline and the wider subterranean geological connection of the archipelago, MacDiarmid's essays and poems enable a 'reimagination of the (Scottish) nation as a kaleidoscopic, biodiverse, and yet still distinctly "national" environment'.[111] Both poets present the Western landscapes of the archipelago as a diverse littoral environment shaped by weather patterns, tides, and time. Across their respective travelogues, MacDiarmid's and MacNeice's works provide the coordinates for an early archipelagic sensibility that can be traced through more contemporary writing within Scotland and Ireland. Their interactions, and disappointments, with the Hebrides in particular prompt them to look out towards the wider archipelago as a productive means of conceiving a sense of place that is mobile, plural, and porous in nature. This archipelagic aesthetic is in many ways resultant from the geopolitical position of Scotland and Ireland during this period. As noted earlier the contemporaneous geopolitical climate of the 1920s and 1930s is presented as a significant factor in the rise of archipelagic thinking, wherein the 'common imaginative frame' of Britain was beginning to break down, necessitating new conceptions of place. Presenting the archipelago as a site of both cultural and ecological entanglements, both MacNeice's and MacDiarmid's

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[108] Lyall, p.135-6.
[109] MacDiarmid, *Islands*, p.xv, p.x.
[110] Longley, p.146.
[111] Carla Sassi, 'Hugh MacDiarmid's (Un)making of the Modern Scottish Nation', *Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011), pp.111-125, (p.119).

poems signal a new mode of writing in the 1930s, one that is attentive to both the environmental and political transformations of the archipelago.

We see this engagement with ecology and geology in MacNeice's early collections *Poems 1935*, *The Earth Compels* and later collection *Holes in the Sky*, all of which rove across 'the Hebrides and Ireland, Ulster, Achill, Connemara, London, Birmingham, Cumbernauld, Iceland and Norway'.[112] In *Poems 1935*, MacNeice imparts a distinct mobility into his poetic practice through close attention to the environmental characteristics of the Irish landscape. In 'Valediction', we see how through a 'dominant imagery […] of changeless, inanimate, unyielding rock, stone, metal', MacNeice presents an interesting critique on the Irish cultural landscape of the 1930s.[113] Within the poem the violence of the Dublin cityscape, shaped by 'arson and murder', is transposed onto the liminal space 'Between the islands', where the 'sleek and black and irrelevant' bodies of seals transform into men that have 'Died by gunshot under borrowed pennons'.[114] Moving from the islands to the violent streets of Dublin and the 'devout and profane and hard' space of Belfast the poem weaves between the newly created states of Northern Ireland and the Republic.[115] Throughout 'Valediction', MacNeice does not display any particular affinity to either Northern Ireland or the Republic. Thus while he describes Belfast as his 'mother-city', the city 'Built on reclaimed mud, hammers playing the shipyard' is essentially a 'Country of callous lava cooled to stone' that brings nothing but 'Indifference' to the poet.[116] The poem enacts a scathing critique of the whole of island of Ireland, presenting it as a fossilised site where 'history never dies' and perpetually produces a population of 'Hardening faces, veneering with a grey and speckled rime'.[117] Despite this cutting assessment MacNeice recognises that he himself is a product of 'this land', and admits 'I cannot deny my past to which my self is wed,| The woven figure cannot undo its thread'.[118] His 'valediction' is thus not directed towards Ireland, but to the repeating patterns and histories of cultural and political violence that ensures that 'The land will remain as it was'.[119] Similar

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[112] Tom Walker, *Louis MacNeice and the Irish Poetry of His Time* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), p.189.
[113] Kennedy-Andrews, p.41.
[114] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.8.
[115] Ibid, p.8-9.
[116] Ibid, p.8.
[117] Ibid, p.8.
[118] Ibid, p.8.
[119] Ibid, p.9.

geological images are employed in 'Belfast' where the 'hard cold fire of the northerner' is reflected in the elemental images of 'basalt', 'salt carrion', 'mica', 'marble', and 'Metal patents'.[120] The collection as a whole is driven 'by the fear of becoming stone',[121] and frequently laments the 'totalising versions of Irish identity that seek to erase difference through violence'.[122]

As the collection continues, MacNeice moves away from these fixed geological images and begins to embrace more mobile environments, that are 'Incorrigibly plural' in nature; in particular coastlines and train lines.[123] In the closing poem of the collection, 'Ode', the opening hardness and stability of the land is slowly eroded in the face of roaring 'yellow waves' and the 'endlessly curving sea'.[124] *Poems 1935*, is a key collection in the development of MacNeice's poetic voice as it expresses a poetic disparity 'between fixed, totalising forms of identity and more flexible selves open to otherness and change'.[125] At its close, the collection is caught by the mobility of the shore and the motion of trains that 'leave in all directions on wild rails', leading to a final declaration that the poet 'Must become the migrating bird following felt routes'.[126] These 'felt routes' guide MacNeice's interactions with the Irish landscape in his later collection *The Earth Compels*. The opening poem 'Carrickfergus' looks once again to the seemingly solidified landscapes of the North 'Where the bottle-neck harbour collects the mud which jams| The little boats beneath the Norman castle,| The pier shining with lumps of crystal salt'.[127] Despite the static images of rock and mud, the topographies of the Irish landscape in 'Carrickfergus' invoke a sense of liminality, as the poem opens 'in Belfast between the mountain and the gantries'.[128] Throughout 'Carrickfergus', the poetic figure is cast as an outsider that is only ever able to occupy a liminal condition. This sense of being 'between' has already been discussed in relation to MacNeice's poems 'The Hebrides' and 'Leaving Barra', both of which were later included in *The Earth Compels*. The liminal

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[120] Ibid, p.25.
[121] Ibid, p.28.
[122] Paul Robichaud, 'Louise MacNeice's Irish and Scottish Pasts, 1935-9', *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies: National Cosmopolitanisms,* 6.1 (2012), 51-73, (pp.53-4).
[123] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.24.
[124] Ibid, p.37.
[125] Robichaud, p.54.
[126] MacNeice, *Collected*, pp.36-7.
[127] Ibid, p.55.
[128] Ibid, p.55.

position of MacNeice's speaker helps to dismantle the idealisation of the West as a grounded and stable sanctuary, an:

> untouched wilderness that Revivalists venerated as the vestigial remains of authentic Ireland, the site of simple, antique cultural purity free from the pressures of the modern world, a primitive Eden largely unaffected culturally and linguistically by colonialism.[129]

Across *The Earth Compels*, we see how MacNeice is frequently torn between his desire to form a sense of 'continuity and rootedness' from his encounter with 'pristine site[s] where a pre-colonial Gaelic wholeness is still intact', and his understanding that this desire is wholly untenable when engaging with the lived realities of place.[130]

MacNeice's itinerant movements across the island spaces of Ireland, the Hebrides, and Iceland becomes a means of resisting these 'paralysed [...] roots'.[131] Throughout poems such as 'Iceland', 'Passage Steamer', 'The Hebrides', 'Eclogue from Iceland', 'Leaving Barra', 'Bagpipe Music' and 'Postscript to Iceland', we see MacNeice embrace the incorrigible plurality of his liminal condition, and follow the 'felt routes' of an increasingly nomadic poetic practice. This early archipelagic sensibility and poetic opposition to a fixed sense of place is extended in *Holes in the Sky*, a collection that contains a loose sequence of 'Achill poems', inspired by MacNeice's brief retreat to County Mayo.[132] This sequence crafts a 'topographical frame' of the 'seismic history' of Ireland, and again expresses a poetic condition that is 'Free of all roots'.[133] Across the collection MacNeice grapples with an identity that is 'embroiled with ocean', existing 'between moving dunes' and crafted through the 'random chemistry of soil and air'.[134]

The poem 'Carrick Revisited' returns us to the infant mountain and gantries of the poem 'Carrickfergus' and opens with a sense of temporal and topographical dislocation: 'Back to Carrick, the castle as plumb assured| As thirty years ago'

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[129] Kennedy-Andrews, p.44.
[130] Kim Boey, 'Sailing to an Island: Contemporary Irish Poetry visits the Western Islands', *Shima*, 2.2 (2008), 19-41, (p.22).
[131] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.84.
[132] Tom Walker suggests that a 'sequence of poems seems to run in *Holes in the Sky* from "Littoral" to "Western Landscape", all dated 1945 (some more specifically as June or July). "Under the Mountain" (undated) and "No More Sea" (October 1944), which follow, share similar preoccupations, as does "Woods" (1946), a few poems later'. Tom Walker, *Louis MacNeice and the Irish Poetry of His Time*, (Oxford: OUP, 2015).
[133] MacNeice, *Collected*, p.267.
[134] Ibid, p.262, p.269.

'Who was – and am – dumfounded to find myself| In a topographical frame – here, not there'.[135] From the very opening lines, the poem communicates the poet's inability to comfortably locate himself in a changed landscape where the seemingly 'plumb assured' historic site of Carrick castle is shown to have been reshaped by 'new villas' coded to a 'sizzling grid' of fresh topographical reference points.[136] Disorientated, the speaker is unable to comfortably locate himself within this changed landscape, left only with 'Glimpses' he 'cannot catch the words' of the environment around him, as the conditions of 'Time and place – our bridgeheads into reality' are inaccessible to the returning figure.[137] The poem closes with a bitter lament regarding this seemingly enforced nomadic status:

> Torn before birth from where my fathers dwelt,
> Schooled from the age of ten to a foreign voice,
> Yet neither western Ireland nor southern England
> Cancels this interlude [...] [138]

This 'interlude' status reflects the deracinated character of MacNeice's poetics. Poised between the seemingly stable sites of Western Ireland and Southern England, the poet does not comfortably exist within either space but exists either outside of, or in-between them. This tension between roots and routes continues throughout the collection's Achill sequence. For example, in opposition to the cemented images of Carrickfergus, Dublin and Belfast, the poem 'Littoral' turns to the 'unanalysable rhythms' of the ocean and the destabilising space of the littoral zone.[139] The poet's sense of place is not formed in relation to a stable landscape, but is instead attuned to the 'fingering foam| Tracing, erasing its runes, regardless| Of you and me'.[140] The poem's formal constructs echo the 'unanalysable rhythms' of the sea and 'sand with sand' through the use of a continually shifting rhyme scheme: 'sea' 'me', 'foam' 'home', 'fur' 'philosopher', 'sand' 'land', 'man' 'can', 'ignore' 'seashore'.[141] Similarly in 'No more Sea', the once stable mountain vista of Carrickfergus transforms into 'Dove-melting mountains, ridges gashed with water' and ringed by 'Itinerant clouds'.[142] The silted floors of the 'ocean bed' develops the sense of instability invoked in 'Littoral' and indicates

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[135] Ibid, p.261.
[136] Ibid, p.262.
[137] Ibid, p.262.
[138] Ibid, p.262.
[139] Ibid, p.259.
[140] Ibid, p.259.
[141] Ibid, pp.260-1.
[142] Ibid, p.268.

a poetic fascination with the physical inconsistence of coastal space. Indeed, MacNeice contrasts the image of an 'atavistic scholar| Plodding that dry tight-packed world' against the undulating action of the ocean, embracing the active motions of the 'self-moving' coast in opposition to the 'fossil' like stasis of the mountain.[143] MacNeice's littoral poems are shaped by a lively sense of motion and interconnection, his continued invocation of the shoreline signalling the paradoxes inherent in his understanding of place as something oscillating between stasis and fluidity, roots and routes, home and exile.

MacNeice's poem 'Western Landscape' is perhaps the most effective poetic exploration of this sense of displacement and dispersal within the Achill sequence. Beginning 'In doggerel and stout let me honour this country', MacNeice sets a sardonic tone for his poem which seeks to access, and assess, revivalist visions of the West.[144] The opening environment is painted in a tranquil tone with the air 'so soft that it smudges the words', where the 'climate is Lethe,| the smoky taste of cooking on turf is lotus' and 'the kiss of the past is narcotic, the ocean| Lollingly lullingly [...]| Proves and disproves what it wants'.[145] These hazy seductive images quickly shift into the jarring image of a 'taut-necked donkey's neurotic-asthmatic-erotic lamenting'.[146] The poem enacts a deconstruction of an idealised Western landscape, describing the environment as 'grail of emerald passing light'.[147] Prohibited from a stable dwelling place the figure is encased by 'neither floor nor ceiling', and instead encounters place 'on tiptoes' as 'promontories that are themselves a-tiptoe| Reluctant to be land'.[148] Denied 'the right to residence' the figure becomes 'disenfranchised| In the constituencies of quartz and bog-oak'.[149]

No longer existing as a mythical source of lulling images, the landscape is transformed by a 'grain of sea and loom of wind| Weavingly laughingly leavingly weepingly| Webs that will last and will not' where ultimately the dream of 'permanence' shatters into 'tumbled screes, to tumbling seas| The ribboned

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[143] Ibid, p.269.
[144] Ibid, p.265.
[145] Ibid, p.265.
[146] Ibid, p.266.
[147] Ibid, p.266.
[148] Ibid, p.267.
[149] Ibid, p.267.

wrack, and moor to mist'.[150] Across the poem, the Western landscape is no longer envisioned as a secure site upon which to build a solid 'Irish' identity, whatever this may be, but is instead embraced as a liminal zone that is hinged between land and sea, in which land becomes a 'permanent show| Flitting evolving dissolving but never quitting'.[151] The repeated use of 'let me' throughout the final stanza again accentuates the externalised position of the intrusive poetic voice; the 'constituencies' of the west become a space that the figure, 'a bastard| Out of the West by urban civilisation' must be given access to.[152] The culmination of the poem asserts that the 'west of Ireland is| brute and ghost at once', highlighting the internal conflict of the speaker who encounters the West as both a harsh reality, and an ephemeral dream.[153] Throughout the piece the poetic speaker is aligned with the movements of the 'un-homing up-anchoring' figure of the voyaging monk, St Brendan.[154] The final images of the 'tip-toe' promontories and dissolving littoral coastline of the West reflects the deracinated position of the speaker who beseechingly asks: 'let me who am neither Brandan| Free of all roots nor yet a rooted peasant| Here add one cairn to the indifferent stone'.[155] Hinged between fantasy and reality, North and West, MacNeice's poems enable the construction of a new cultural mythology of the islands and littoral spaces of the archipelago; positioning them as a site of continued mutability and uncertainty that reflects the instability of the modern moment, and the seeming indifference of the natural world.

When considering the significance of shorelines in the work of Hugh MacDiarmid, we can see how the littoral zone becomes a key space for the construction of new political and poetic engagements with place. In particular, MacDiarmid's earlier collection *Stony Limits* expresses an overt fascination with the geological characteristics of Scotland's coastal landscapes. The collection was the first to be published in the wake of MacDiarmid's move to Shetland, and contains a series of poems that directly respond to the landscape of the islands. Importantly, in comparison with MacNeice, MacDiarmid's poems do not simply gloss over the ecological significance of the landscape with its 'indifferent stone'

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[150] Ibid, p.266.
[151] Ibid, p.267.
[152] Ibid, p.267.
[153] Ibid, p.267.
[154] Ibid, p.267.
[155] Ibid, p.267.

or sea that move 'regardless of you or me'.[156] Rather the littoral spaces and islandscapes of *Stony Limits* arguably come to complement and inform MacDiarmid's engagement with contemporary developments in the natural sciences, particularly geology and the emergent field of scientific ecology. Indeed, Louisa Gairn suggests that 'MacDiarmid's fascination with Scottish rural life and the natural world is not merely latent Romanticism, but neither is it significant solely as a feature of his nationalist project' and proposes that MacDiarmid 'found it "necessary" to draw on the Scottish landscape in his work and thought because of the new insights to be gleaned from ecological thought'.[157] Writing in his autobiography, *Lucky Poet* (1945), MacDiarmid suggests that 'modern ecology has destroyed the delusion which encouraged people to jeer at any suggestion of geographic "control" and human "response" to such control'.[158] He continues to declare that the 'world consciousness' of his work thus derives not only from a variety of cosmopolitan sources, but specifically derives from an 'insistence on a poetry of facts' that is cultivated through an interest in 'geology, biochemistry, plant ecology, physiology, psychology and philosophy'.[159]

This conscious turn towards the natural sciences prompts us to read the poetry of this period with new ecocritical eyes. For Michael H. Whitworth, MacDiarmid's poetry during the early 1930s and 1940s is marked by this fascination with a 'poetry of facts', where many of his works are formed through the 'incorporation of specialist vocabularies and of near verbatim quotation from scientific writing' from publications such as the *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* as well as articles from the *Geological Magazine* published in 1927.[160] Looking to 'Stony Limits', an elegy dedicated to the memory of the travel writer Charles Doughty, this engagement with obfuscating scientific terms is apparent throughout the piece. The initial four stanzas of the poem are directly attentive to the act of burial and employ a range of geological images to connote death and remembrance: 'A stone less of nature's shaping than of ours| To mark the unfrequented place', 'Anchor of truth, facile as granite you lie'.[161] Yet in the fifth

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[156] Ibid, p.267, p.259.
[157] Gairn, p.79.
[158] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet: A Self-study in Literature and Political Ideas* (London: Methuen, 1943), p.310.
[159] Ibid, p.188, p.46.
[160] Michael H. Whitworth, 'The Use of Science in MacDiarmid's Later Poetry', *Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011) pp.97-111, (pp.99-101).
[161] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.420.

stanza the use of geological terms is not related to the memorialisation of the deceased figure but is instead directed towards the form and function of poetry itself: 'The poem that would praise you must be| Like the glass of some rock, sleek brown, crowded| With dark incipient crystal growths, we see'.[162] In the fifth stanza the geological qualities of the natural landscape are surpassed by the incursion of increasingly alienating scientific and geological terms:

> [...] few pyroxenes twinned
> On the orthopinacoid and hour-glass scheme,
> Fine striae, microline cross-hatchings, and this wind
> Blowing plumes of vapour forever it would seem
> From cone after cone diminishing sterile and grey
> In the distance; dun sands in ever-changing squalls;
> Crush breccias and overthrusts; and such little array
> Of Geology's favourite fal-de-lals
> And demolitions and entrenchments of weather
> As any turn of my eyes brings together.[163]

The poem is arguably presented as an 'offering', not merely of remembrance, but of a new poetic mode that takes the natural world as its primary point of concern. As Whitworth notes, MacDiarmid's plagiaristic practice 'creates phrases that seem plausible to non-specialist readers, but would furrow the brows of geologists'.[164] Likely sourcing these obfuscating terms from articles in *Geological Magazine*, MacDiarmid's work transforms the 'technical' and 'neutrally descriptive' language of geological science into elegy.[165] The question for MacDiarmid thus, is not how poetry is able to recreate the rigour of scientific experiment, but rather how poetry might be considered as a suitable medium for engaging and furthering scientific or 'factual' thought. Consequently, while 'MacDiarmid's plagiaristic strategy means that we are left uncertain as to how well and in what way he understood [his sources]', we cannot deny his ability to shape scientific language into poetic form.[166] Indeed, the poem as a whole follows a rigid rhyme scheme throughout (ABABCDCDEE). Here MacDiarmid marries thematic concerns to formal patterning in a way that elides full semantic recognition, displaying his ability to control and shape language, if not fully understand the terms he is using. Ultimately, through his employment of scientific vocabulary and overt attention to the physiological condition of the

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[162] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.420.
[163] Ibid, p.421.
[164] Whitworth, p.103.
[165] Ibid, p.102.
[166] Ibid, p.105.

landscape, MacDiarmid's poetry of this period inverts 'the traditional poetic fallacy of the Romantics, where landscapes are infused with human qualities.'[167] The alienating phrases and technical terms employed throughout *Stony Limits*, incurs a movement away from anthropocentric poetic engagements with the environment, and necessitates a new mode of poetic encounter, one that acknowledges 'that there is a relation, a functional relation between an organism and its environment'.[168]

While MacDiarmid's fascination with stone often arises in conjunction with bleak existential or elegiac ruminations (as within his 'Shetland Lyrics' sequence in which the landscape feeds a sense of geographic isolation and difference from the 'primitive minds' of the locals) his poems do not divest geological materials of vitality, but rather recognises them as a form of what Jane Bennett has termed 'vibrant matter'.[169] Defined variously as: 'to be agitated with anger or emotion; to move or act with rapidity and energy; to brandish or flourish; moving or quivering rapidly; a vivid or exotic colour; or a sound characterised by exhibiting vibration and resonance',[170] the term 'vibrant' offers the potential for us to conceive of matter in new ways. For Bennet, the concept of 'vibrant matter' allows us to newly understand materials as possessing an inherent 'liveliness' and vitality, in which previously lifeless and inert materials are recognised as holding the capacity to 'impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.[171] For Bennett, it is only by recognising that materials do not exist in a state of inertia, but are interwoven within a broad assemblage of 'living, throbbing confederations', that we may begin to overcome 'our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption'.[172] By recognising that materials, such as stone, possess a force of their own, we can begin to conceive of new ecological relationships with the earth.

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[167] Louisa Gairn, 'MacDiarmid and Ecology', *Edinburgh Companion to Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. by Scott Lyall and Margery Palmer McCulloch (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011), pp.82 -97, (p.88).
[168] MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, p.310.
[169] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), p.viii.
[170] 'Vibrant' *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223053?redirectedFrom=vibrant#eid> [accessed 18.02.2016].
[171] Bennett, p.viii.
[172] Ibid, p.23, p.xiii.

With its sustained attempts to understand how to 'get into this stone word', and insistence that 'We must reconcile ourselves to the stones| Not the stones to us',[173] MacDiarmid's poem 'On a Raised Beach' can be seen to express ideas that are currently common place within material ecocriticism. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the 'material turn' within contemporary ecocritical scholarship has begun to emphasise the lively entanglements of the 'world's material phenomena'.[174] This mode of ecocritical thought illustrates the extent to which the environment is shaped by abiotic forces, elements, and materials 'which visibly or imperceptibly, merge with the life of our bodies and places'.[175] Looking beyond the 'verdant hues' of the classically 'green' aspects of ecocritical discussion, material ecocriticism encourages us to encounter place through an intra-active 'prism' of organic and inorganic matter.[176] As noted earlier, ecological materialism is in part fuelled by an ethical impulse, in which the recognition that seemingly inert matter has the capacity to drastically affect the world around it prompts us to reconsider how we currently value and respond to abiotic material such as stone, plastic, or water. By 'including geologic material in the realm of the world's "actants", such perspectives urge us to break with modern habits of assuming and behaving as if the matter that composes the earth is passive stuff, raw, brute, or inert'.[177] Across 'On a Raised Beach', MacDiarmid's sustained interaction with the seemingly lifeless shore of the 'storm beach' reveals it to be both lithic and oceanic, fluid and static, as he moves between anthropocentric and geological time scales.[178]

As Scott Lyall notes, 'On a Raised Beach' most likely derives is inspiration from a 'three-day stay alone on the uninhabited West Linga, with its raised beach at Croo Wick, an island west of Whalsay', and further draws 'sustenance from the 1933 geological survey of Shetland'.[179] A 'raised beach' is defined as 'a relict depositional landform comprising [of] mostly wave-transported sedimentary

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[173] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems,* p.427.

[174] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp.1-21, (p.1).

[175] Ibid, p.3.

[176] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p.34.

[177] Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse, 'Introduction' *Making the Geologic Now: Responses to Material Conditions of Contemporary Life*, ed. by Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse (New York: Punctum Books, 2013), pp.5-24, (p.11).

[178] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.428.

[179] Lyall, p.121.

material and preserved above and landward of the active shoreline.'[180] The term was first used in an article by T. F. Jamieson in *Geological Magazine* (1908) in relation to the geological characteristics of Scotland, and Ireland, which are described as having 'raised beaches all around'.[181] As Michael Whitworth has noted, MacDiarmid was an avid reader of *Geological Magazine*, and thus it is not unlikely that Jamieson's article was to have influenced the scientific content of 'On a Raised Beach'. Significantly, Jamieson's article avidly notes the vibrancy and vitality of geological matter:

> The earth is such a large solid mass that we are apt to look upon it as perfectly immovable and rigid, and for all practical purposes no doubt it may be so considered. But the great operations of nature with which geology has to deal such is not the case, and changes of pressure so small as to produce no visible effect to ordinary observation will, when continued for thousands of years, occasion changes that are manifest to all.[182]

As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes 'stone is fluid when viewed within its proper duration'.[183] Here, Jamieson invokes the nohuman scales of deep time, urging us to view our relationship with the earth in relation to geological rather than anthropological time frames. This recognition of the vitality and fluidity of geological matter filters into the poem in which the figure's interaction with the 'shoreline opens an adventure in deep time and inhuman forces: slow sedimentation of alluvium and volcanic ash, grinding tectonic shift, crushing mass and epochal compaction, infernal heat, relentless turbidity of the sea'.[184] The second stanza of the poem opens with a sense of 'Deep conviction' in which the poetic figure lying upon 'this shingle shelf',[185] is 'compelled to historicise human life on evolutionary and genetic scales which make futile the "imaginings of men"'.[186] This sense of deranging temporality and increased awareness of the limits of human scales of attention is apparent in the lines: 'Nothing has stirred| Since I lay down this morning an eternity ago'.[187] Upon the raised beach, time is experienced simultaneously on scales that are both immediate ('this morning')

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[180] 'Raised Beach', *Encyclopaedia of Geomorphology Volume 2*, ed. by A. S. Goudie (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.827-8, (p.827).

[181] T. F. Jamieson, 'On Changes of Level and the Production of Raised Beaches', *Geological Magazine,* 5.5 (1908), 206-9, (p.207).

[182] Ibid, p.207.

[183] Cohen, p.34.

[184] Ibid, p.4.

[185] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.423.

[186] Brannigan, p.168.

[187] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.423.

and distant ('eternity ago'). Positioned as but one element of a wider ecological system that includes stones and birds, the human figure understands the brevity of human existence in relation to the deep histories of geological time: 'Already I feel all that can perish perishing in me| As so much has perished and all will yet perish in these stones'.[188] The continued 'perishing' of the stones that 'will yet' undergo further metamorphic change allows the poetic figure to contemplate the transience of 'humanity' where 'Men cannot hope| To survive the fall of the mountains| Which they will no more see than they saw their rise'.[189]

The figure's impassioned plea to 'get into this stone world now', thus stems from a desire to craft a form of poetry that responds to the quality of 'These stones that go through Man, straight to God, if there is one'.[190] While the theological significance of the stones is important, it is the ecological implications of the poem that are most interesting. MacDiarmid's call to 'get into this stone world now', to 'reconcile ourselves to the stones,| Not the stones to us' prompts the need to reckon with a new understanding of the role of the human, expressing 'the need to make contact with elemental nature, to accept the non-human'.[191] Declaring that 'This is no heap of broken images',[192] the raised beach becomes a catalyst for reorientating anthropocentric visions of time and place where the immensity of the geologic incites 'the vertigo of inhuman scale, the discomfort of unfamiliar intimacy'.[193] The invocation of T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' is important here as MacDiarmid actively rejects Eliot's dismissal of 'stony rubbish', asserting the need to form an ecology that includes stone.[194] Rather than signifying the barrenness of modern life, for MacDiarmid, the stones provide an essential means through which to comprehend man's place in the universe. The poem's rumination on deep time enables new modes of ecological relation to emerge in which stone becomes an origin point for recasting the ingrained superiority of the human figure. Through the interlacing of life and death, human and nonhuman, MacDiarmid draws the poetic figure and the raised beach into a

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[188] Ibid, p.424.
[189] Ibid, p.427.
[190] Ibid, p.427.
[191] Gairn, 'MacDiarmid and Ecology', p.103.
[192] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.428.
[193] Cohen, p.24.
[194] T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), p.61.

participatory ecology in which matter is given distinct importance in not only the landscape, but the production of poetry.

From the very opening of the poem, MacDiarmid highlights the ability of stone to reformulate the hierarchy of anthropocentric modes of being. The opening line presents a complex reorientation of human subjectivity, declaring 'All is lithogenesis – or Lochia'.[195] This parataxic positioning of 'lithogenesis' (the formation of sedimentary rock) 'or lochia' (the fluid discharged after birth) synonymises the processes of birth and lithic formation. Rather than presenting birth and lithic sedimentation as separate processes, the use of the 'or' establishes a relational quality between geological and biological matter, drawing an intimacy between language, landscape and humanity. Importantly, this relation is not equal, but rather casts the human figure into a purposefully subordinate position. The poem effectively recognises the transience of humanity in comparison with the stones which lived, and will continue to live beyond 'Empires, civilisations, aeons'.[196] For MacDiarmid, it is only through poetry that the figure can begin to 'reach them| Cold, undistracted, eternal and sublime'.[197] Across the piece, MacDiarmid explores the somatic function of language in an attempt to consider the central question of ecopoiesis regarding 'the possibility of reconciling humans and the world of nature through the medium of writing'.[198]

While the sustained use of geological vocabulary in the opening lines echoes the technique of scientific plagiarism employed in 'Stony Limits', in 'On a Raised Beach', MacDiarmid is more explicitly drawn to the tactile and sonic quality of geological substances. Across the course of the poem animate and inanimate lives are drawn into a pronounced intimacy, where 'My fingers over you, arris by arris, burr by burr| Slickensides, truite, rugas foveoles| [...] angle-titch to all your corrugations and coigns' invokes a haptic relation between the human and the nonhuman.[199] The acoustic dimensions of the poem explore the material vitality of the stones that are described as 'volatile yet determined'.[200] In highlighting the 'intense vibration in the stones',[201] MacDiarmid effectively recognises the stones

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[195] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.422.
[196] Ibid, p.427.
[197] Ibid, p.427.
[198] Gairn, 'MacDiarmid and Ecology', p.82.
[199] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems*, p.423.
[200] Ibid, p.426.
[201] Ibid, p.426.

in a manner akin to Bennet's concept of 'vibrant matter'. Through its relational modality the term 'vibrant' is deeply bonded to sensations both tactile and sonic and implicitly engages both human and nonhuman resonances. Defined as the 'reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection or by the synchronous vibration of a surrounding space or a neighbouring object', resonance is a sonic action which directly engages and reflects the surrounding landscape. [202] This sense of resonance and vibrancy emerges most distinctly within the acoustic environment of the poem, in which the linguistic resonance of geological terms allows the poem to 'uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances – sounds and sights that echo and bounce far more than would be possible were the universe to have a hierarchical structure'.[203] This vibrant resonance between the animate and inanimate is evident throughout 'On a Raised Beach' where the opening emphasis on consonant and guttural sounds marks an entry point into a form of resonant ecology:

> Carpolite fruit of the forbidden tree,
> Stones blacker than any in the Caaba,
> Cream-coloured caen-stone, chatoyant pieces,
> Celadon and corbeau, bistre and beige,
> Glaucous, hoar, enfouldered, cyathiform[204]

The range of stones invoked on the beach roves from the fossilised 'carpolite' fruit of Genesis, to the Black Stone of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, to 'caen-stone' from Normandy, and points us towards the theological and cultural significance of stone as opposed to any robust geological understanding of these materials. As with 'Stony Limits', here MacDiarmid's command of unfamiliar terms displays his ability to shape poetic form from the surrounding fragments of the geological landscape. Embedding the poetic figure within this relational soundscape, MacDiarmid attempts to overcome the nature culture divide by presenting poetry as a suitable means to explore the ecological entanglements between human and nonhuman realms. The raised beach is revealed to be the point of an emergent participatory ecology as shaped through the vibrant resonances of:

> Ratchel, striae, relationships of tesserae,

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[202] 'Resonance, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/163743?redirectedFrom=resonance#eid> [accessed 18.02.2016].
[203] Bennet, p.99.
[204] MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems,* p.422.

> Innumerable shades of grey,
> Innumerable shapes,
> And beneath them all a stupendous unity,
> Infinite movement visibly defending itself
> Against all the assaults of weather and water,
> Simultaneously mobilised at full strength
> At every point of the universal front,
> Always at the pitch of its powers,
> The foundation and end of all life.[205]

The stony shore invokes a relational quality through the interlinking mosaic 'of tesserae', where 'inummerable' shapes and shades mix together to form a subterranean 'stupendous unity', conjoining and disrupting the seeming boundaries between life and death, human and nonhuman.

Across *Stony Limits,* MacDiarmid's engagement with the geological and ecological sciences allows his poetry to become a mode through which to construct new relationships between human and nonhuman realms. The raised beach of MacDiarmid's text becomes a materialist ecological assemblage which 'relocates the human species in broader natural-cultural environments of inorganic material forces such as electricity, electro-magnetic fields, metals, stones, plastic, and garbage.'[206] Akin to MacNeice, his scientific encounters with the coast produce a new cultural mythology of island landscapes. MacDiarmid's factual, scientific, and stony ruminations work to provide an alternative vision of the Scottish landscape, one that is not only conscious of its indebtedness to revivalist traditions, but is attentive to the material qualities of place. His turn towards the science of geology in particular allows him to enact a demystifying and discursive authority over the beach space, transforming associated island metaphors from a site of leisure and retreat, to a new imaginary of ecological interconnection.

Across both poet's works, the littoral landscapes of Scotland and Ireland emerge as deeply plural and entangled sites that resonate with human and nonhuman beings across a wider archipelagic environment. This open, porous and plural understanding of place becomes vital when considering the work of contemporary poetry in the Archipelago. For as Neal Alexander and David Cooper remind us, in the context of poetry, the resonant qualities of *poiesis*

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[205] Ibid, pp.426-7.

[206] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman, 'Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity', *Ecozono*, 3.1. (2012), 75-91, (p.84).

(place-making) alert us to the fact that 'places do not simply exist but are made or remade by forces and processes that are at once historical, social and cultural', and material, in nature.[207] The recognition that places do not simply occur in isolation, but are in fact shaped and affected by a range of human and nonhuman processes and forces, prompts us to consider how modern Scottish and Irish poetry navigates place as either 'stable, permanent and intimately familiar, [or] as unsettled, in process and radically open to change'.[208] Their texts work to construct a new cultural imaginary of the islands. Through their engagement with the decline of Gaelic culture, the itinerant qualities of the littoral zone and the relational dimensions of geological matter, their works espouse an understanding of island cultures as inherently interconnected and markedly sensitive to environmental transformation.

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[207] Neal Alexander and David Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', *Poetry & Geography: Space & Place in Post-war Poetry,* ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp.2-18, (p.5).
[208] Ibid, pp.5-6.

CHAPTER TWO
'Working on the Circumference': Michael Longley's and Derek Mahon's Littoral Landscapes

Writing in his recently collected book of essays, *One Wide Expanse*, the Northern Irish poet Michael Longley recalls how in 1965 he and his wife hitchhiked with his friend and fellow poet, Derek Mahon, to Connemara.[1] Drawn to the '*idea* of the place', for Longley their initial brief sojourn 'turned out to be a prelude to hundreds of journeys along the roads to [the West]', and is noted as an integral part of the development of both poets' 'inner mythology' as both of their first published collections 'contain poems about the Aran Islands'.[2] Negotiating their position as 'visitors, as strangers, as outsiders',[3] Longley suggests that both his and Mahon's early work follows on from the writings of Louis MacNeice and J. M. Synge, their debut collections *No Continuing City* (Longley 1969) and *Twelve Poems* (Mahon 1965) contributing to a 'continually evolving Irish Protestant identity' developed through 'encounters with Gaelic islands'.[4] For Heather Clark, within this 'tradition' the western islands are engaged as a paradoxical space that allows for the contemplation of questions concerning 'engagement and disengagement, home versus exile'.[5] When looking to the early work of Mahon and Longley, one can see a continuation and reconfiguration of both MacDiarmid and MacNeice's poetic engagement with the Atlantic archipelago, as extended through encounters with the littoral landscapes of the Irish West.

The poetic consideration of place and home has long attracted critics to the work of Longley and Mahon whose poetry is often viewed in relation to the 'inaugurated decades of violence and radical change'[6] that shaped the cultural

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[1] Michael Longley, *One Wide Expanse* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015), italics in original, p.44.
[2] Ibid, p.44.
[3] Ibid, p.44.
[4] Heather Clark, 'Leaving Barra, Leaving Inishmore: Islands in the Irish Protestant Imagination', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies,* 35.2 (Autumn 2009), 30-35, (p.30).
[5] Ibid, p.30.
[6] Terrence Brown, 'Mahon and Longley: Place and Placelessness', *The Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Irish Poetry*, ed. by Matthew Campbell (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) pp.133-148, (p.133).

and political landscape of Northern Ireland during the 1960s and 1970s. For Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, the question of place within the Northern Irish context 'remains contested, the cultural landscape a palimpsest [that is] capable of being read in different ways'.[7] Within the early works of Longley and Mahon, landscapes of the Irish West are often invoked as a means of exploring the contested status of place and identity within Northern Irish culture. Often viewed in opposition to the apparent 'rootedness, authenticity and ontological security' of the Irish West, Northern Ireland is frequently associated with fraught cityscapes that violently encounter 'essentialist binary habits of mind which perpetuate exclusivist notions of place, identity and community'.[8] This chapter is concerned with the means by which both Longley and Mahon respectively filter the geopolitical violence and uncertainty of Northern Ireland into their Western landscapes. In so doing, their poetry destabilises not only the essentialist binaries of place (North and South, urban and rural) but actively contribute to an understanding of place as 'marked by mobility, openness, change, hybridity and indeterminacy rather than boundedness and immutability'.[9] Importantly, this translation of violence from the North into the West not only destabilises the stability and security of place, but signals an increasing concern with the ecological status of place in the work of both poets.

Through their respective fascination with the landscapes of the Irish West, particularly the Aran Islands, Longley and Mahon arguably use their poetry to negotiate questions of place that are increasingly sensitive to the ways in which human figures are instrumental in perpetuating environmental change. For Eóin Flannery, contemporary Irish writing is in many ways attuned to this capacity of the human to enact significant environmental change. The work of authors such as Derek Mahon, Paula Meehan, Tim Robinson and Moya Cannon exhibits a marked fascination with the current period of the Anthropocene, understood as 'a period in which humans have become "geological agents", influencing the planet's long-term climatic equilibrium'.[10] Similarly, for Sam Solnick, contemporary British and Irish poetry has begun to display a distinct and

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[7] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.1-2.
[8] Ibid, p.8.
[9] Ibid, p.9.
[10] Eóin Flannery, *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History and Environmental Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.27.

provocative engagement with the concept of the Anthropocene where poets such as Ted Hughes, Derek Mahon and Jeremy Prynne, frequently use their work to explore the ways in which 'humanity and its technologies have the capacity to disrupt (but not control) biological and ecological processes across multiple scales'.[11] This chapter examines the extent to which Longley's and Mahon's early works can be aligned with a burgeoning environmental consciousness, in which the continued infliction of violence upon the natural landscape recognises, and critiques, the construction of the human and poetic figure as a 'geological agent' capable of transformative (and often destructive) environmental change.[12]

For Flannery, Mahon is positioned as the 'chronicler of the Anthropocene Epoch and of its effects, operations, and latterly, the possible deceleration of its worst legacies', where his early fascination with desolate seascapes littered with the flotsam of the modern world gives way to an 'engaged ecological conscience'.[13] This recent ecocritical turn towards the work of Mahon is particularly welcome as, in comparison with his contemporaries, very little ecocritical scholarship has been produced on his work. Ecocritical discussion of Mahon usually centres on his most recent collections *Harbour Lights* (2005), *Life on Earth* (2008) and *An Autumn Wind* (2010), which explicitly engage with ecological issues such as waste, extreme weather and scientific concepts such as James Lovelock's 'Gaia hypothesis'.[14] While the significance of these recent works will be explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis, this chapter's current concern is directed towards Mahon's earlier collections as compiled in the *Collected Poems* (1999). Collections such as *Night-Crossing* (1965), *Ecclesiastes* (1970), and *Snow Party* (1975), present a series of significant encounters with the Irish West, resulting in a form of poetry that is shaped by 'an edge of political anger, and cultural critique [that is] born of a sense of damage that has become increasingly ecological'.[15] These earlier works will be placed in dialogue with those of Michael Longley whose oeuvre has tended to attract more sustained ecological discussions than Mahon's. Yet the current ecocritical scholarship on Longley is by no means exhaustive. Writing in a recent study attending to the soundscapes of Northern

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[11] Sam Solnick, *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, Biology and Technology in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), p.4.
[12] Ibid, p.5.
[13] Flannery, p.27.
[14] Mahon's title *Life on Earth* is a direct reference to Lovelock's publication *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: OUP, 1979).
[15] Hugh Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.18.

Irish poets, Julia Obert suggests that Longley's work on the 'soundscape of Carrigskeewaun [...] warrants further study'.[16] Similarly John Wilson Foster suggests that 'it is likely that Michael Longley would begin to assume a greater significance [in ecocriticism] than he does now as a contemporary poet.'[17] While the 'soundscape of Carrigskeewaun' will be the primary site of analysis in Chapter 3, this current chapter will highlight the under-studied ecological aspects of Longley's earlier work, drawing a comparative reading of his and Mahon's respective fascination with the Irish West.

Across both Mahon's and Longley's early collections, the littoral landscapes of the Irish West are abundant and often coincide with difficult poetic contemplations of dwelling and place, conjuring visions of home as a site 'of division and dispute arising from conflicting claims to ownership and control'.[18] As Elmer Kennedy-Andrews suggests, the 'history of Northern Ireland is bloody testimony to the trouble that arises when discourses of "home", "belonging" and "nation" are linked to territory and bounded place'.[19] As we will see, this 'trouble' with home and place is most explicitly explored in sites located outside of the 'bounded' territory of Northern Ireland. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this poetics of displacement can be traced back to the work of Louis MacNeice whose earlier interactions with the western coast of Ireland have since established a sense of unease and dislocation within modern Northern Irish writing. Indeed, as Heather Clark notes, it was at a reading honouring the publication of the *Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice* in 1966 in Glengormley, Co. Antrim that both Longley and Mahon revealed 'in an act of kinship and homage, MacNeice's influence upon their own work'.[20] For Clark, this 'act of kinship and homage' stems from a mutual feeling of being 'a product of two cultures'.[21] Importantly, this is not to say that Longley and Mahon engage with MacNeice in the same way, nor do they simply mirror his aesthetic, rather they are both 'the heir[s] and disinheritor[s] of MacNeice – starting at the point where

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[16] Julia C. Obert, *Postcolonial Overtures: The Politics of Sound in Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), p.4.
[17] John Wilson Foster, 'Challenges to an Irish Eco-Criticism', *Journal of* Ecocriticism, 5.2 (July 2013), 1-13, (p.7).
[18] Kennedy-Andrews, p.2.
[19] Ibid, p.2.
[20] Heather Clark, 'Revising MacNeice', *Cambridge Quarterly,* 31.1 (2002), 77-92, (p.77).
[21] Ibid, p.78.

MacNeice leaves off'.[22] For Tom Paulin, MacNeice's deracinated poetry is 'always crossing the water' and is often accompanied by a 'feeling of unease and displacement, of moving between different cultures and nationalisms, which he paradoxically returns to in his poetry'.[23] This paradoxical return 'means that [MacNeice's] imagination is essentially fluid, maritime and elusively free. He cannot identify himself exclusively with one or other part of the island'.[24] This inability, or indeed active resistance, towards identifying resolutely with 'one or other part of the island' can be felt distinctly within the early western landscapes of both Mahon and Longley. Often contemplating 'home' from places beyond the boundaries and borders of the North, both Longley and Mahon engage and reformulate the legacy of MacNeice in the sense that 'it is their mobility rather than their stability in place which is the condition of their writing'.[25] Their work engages the shifting littoral landscapes of the west as a means of crafting a sense of place that is porous, connective, and permeable.

i.   'So far from home': Western Landscapes in the Archipelago

As we have seen in *Chapter 1*, the littoral zone is particularly suited to crises and questions surrounding place and identity within the Atlantic archipelago. As a space that is constantly in flux, the littoral zone is constantly shaped and reshaped by the passage of time, meteorological conditions and the passage of various creatures through the landscape. Characterised by mobility and transience, for both Longley and Mahon the shifting and porous nature of the littoral zone is attached to a poetic critique of certain constructions of place, particularly the notion that 'place is the essential ground of identity and a continuous, unified Irish culture'.[26] Within their collections, the poetic engagement with the littoral landscapes of the west opens up necessary considerations of dwelling, temporality and transformation. Resisting the exclusivist sense of place often invoked through the legacy of Irish revivalist traditions, Mahon and Longley's engagement with the west presents place as a process rather than a product. This sense of permeability and relation emerges

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[22] Edna Longley, 'Review: Derek Mahon *Night Crossing*', *The Honest Ulsterman,* (December 1968), 27-8 (p.27).
[23] Tom Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1984), pp.75-6.
[24] Ibid, p.76.
[25] Kennedy-Andrews, p.284.
[26] Ibid, p.2.

most clearly in Mahon's and Longley's western landscapes which frequently emerge as both 'outsider and native'.[27]

For many scholars, the landscape of the Irish West is understood as 'the Irish poetic space par excellence'.[28] Due to its continued magnetism, the West has for many scholars and poets become 'the most enduring legacy of the Revivalists', and is frequently configured within Irish literature as a 'place unscarred by the divisions that marked other locations, most notably those that deformed the northern statelet from its birth in 1921, but also the class and wealth divisions across the entire island'.[29] Across such work, the

> landscapes, placenames, flora and fauna, traditional culture, and—to a strikingly limited degree—the people of the West, provide a realm in which signs are taken as marvels and where the artist figure can dwell, albeit temporarily, in a satisfyingly holistic relationship to an environment supposedly distinct from all other locations on the island.[30]

For Kim Boey, this vectorial focus on the West is characteristic of not only revivalist but modern Irish poetry that actively seeks to avoid 'the discontinuity characteristic of metropolitan modernity' by turning to '[r]emote landscapes like County Mayo in the west and the islands in the Atlantic'.[31] Across such poetry, the islands and western coastline are typically regarded as 'pristine site[s] where a pre-colonial Gaelic wholeness is still intact'.[32] For Irish writers, these intact (usually, island) sites offer a 'stable past, where sacramental ways can be relived' and are characterised by a sense of 'continuity and rootedness', albeit a constructed one.[33] When looking to the work of Longley and Mahon, this assured rootedness, continuity and stability of the West is actively contested. Continuing in the deracinated and fluid tradition of Louis MacNeice, their interactions with the West are far more fraught and pluralistic than the seemingly stable and 'holistic' revivalist fantasy of the West viewed as a 'primitive Eden largely unaffected culturally and linguistically by colonialism'.[34] This opening section is

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[27] Kim Boey, 'Sailing to an Island: Contemporary Irish Poetry visits the Western Isles', *Shima*, 2.2 (2008), 19-41, (p.26).
[28] Tom Herron, 'Mayo Littoral: Michael Longley's Eco-elegies', *New Hibernia Review*, 14.4 (Winter 2010), 74-89, (p.76).
[29] Ibid, p.76.
[30] Ibid, p.75.
[31] Boey, p.22.
[32] Ibid, p.22.
[33] Ibid, p.22.
[34] Kennedy-Andrews, p.44.

concerned with the ways in which Longley's and Mahon's engagement with the Irish West confirms or destabilises the revivalist construction of the West as a space that enables authors to establish a mode of dwelling that is tied to holistic, unbroken and continuous relationships with the environment.

Across their early works, both Mahon and Longley present a series of island poems that reference their joint journeys to the Aran Islands in 1965 and 1966. Longley's first collection *No Continuing City* is fascinated with island narratives, both material and mythical. The collection makes various references to *The Tempest*, *The Odyssey*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* alongside poems about Longley's personal trips to the Hebrides and the Aran Isles. While the mythical seascapes and islandscapes traversed in poems such as 'Odyssey', 'Nausicaa', 'Circe', 'Narcissus', and 'Man Friday' signal towards a poetic fascination with voyaging, transformation, metamorphosis, and homecoming it is in 'The Hebrides' and 'Leaving Inishmore' that Longley's fascination with the West takes root. As Fran Brearton suggests '"Leaving Inishmore" is really the first poem which suggests the importance the West of Ireland – and "elsewhere" – will have for Longley, particularly when it is remembered and re-imagined from the perspective of the North'.[35] Longley's 'Leaving Inishmore' recalls MacNeice's earlier 'Leaving Barra' and similarly relates the transitional and destabilised position of a poetic figure caught in the act of departure. As Heather Clark notes, both poems share an affinity for the 'space in-between',[36] choosing to focus on channels, ports, and 'folk on the move between shore and shore' rather than the island itself.[37] Located 'Miles from the brimming enclave of the bay', the poetic speaker initially loses a sense of balance and stability as the boat populated by 'crooked walkers' on a 'tilting floor' begin to view 'whole hillsides' shifting in the wake of departure.[38] The shifting and tilting landscapes of the island instils a sense of imbalance and impermanence to the poem, which contrasts with the revivalist aesthetic of islands that are poetically preserved as static sites 'iconic of linguistic, cultural and racial purity'.[39] Through his use of a constant iambic pentameter and continuous rhyme scheme (ABABA), Longley's formal choices

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[35] Fran Brearton, *Reading Michael Longley* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2006), p.44.
[36] Clark, 'Leaving Barra', p.33.
[37] Michael Longley, *Collected Poems* (London: Cape, 2006), p.35.
[38] Ibid, p.35.
[39] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970,* (Edinburgh: EUP. 2015), p.39.

instil a sense of movement in the piece that echo the transitional movements of the departing poetic figure.

Yet, these formal elements of the poem can also be seen to underpin a sense of consistency and stability that contrasts with the sense of destabilisation already highlighted by the tilting boat. For Fran Brearton, Longley's formulaic construction results in 'each stanza [becoming] a self-contained invocation of a perfected moment'.[40] The first three stanzas in particular fit this mould of self-contained perfection, as the transient images of shifting hillsides and tilting passengers are contrasted with a rigid rhyme scheme and end-stopped stanzas. Here, the constant rhythm and settled rhyme scheme instils each stanza with a sense of consistency and containment that seems at odds with the abundancy of fluid images used in the poem. When looking to the concluding two stanzas we see an inversion, or rather a fragmentation, of this 'self-contained' formulaic construction. Within these concluding 'moments' the fluid images of the 'island awash in wave and anthem' give way to scenes of anchorage with the once mobile 'boat in a perfect standstill'.[41] Yet while the poem's images become increasingly 'icebound' in these final stanzas, one can see how the formal constraints of the preceding stanzas begin to unwind, as the previously rigid full-rhymes begin to soften into the half rhymes of 'heat', 'hurt', and 'heart'.[42] In the concluding stanzas, Longley no longer employs end-stopped lines and instead uses enjambment to connect the opening 'point of no return' to the concluding image of 'excursion'.[43] The fact that Longley chooses to move beyond this self-named 'point of no return' into a final image of overspilling 'excursion' precludes the sense of closure or containment nominally attached to acts of departure that usually signify a sense of finitude and ending as with MacNeice's 'Leving Barra'.[44] Throughout 'Leaving Inishmore' Longley's formal and stylistic choices are seen to play 'Quiet variations on an urgent theme', in which the contrast of the formal and descriptive elements of the poem reflect a deep sense of being suspended 'between' conditions of stasis and movement.[45] By refusing to end the poem on a scene of finitude the poem corresponds with a construction of both the island and

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[40] Brearton, p.45.
[41] Longley, *Collected*, p.35.
[42] Ibid, p.35.
[43] Ibid, p.35.
[44] Ibid, p.35.
[45] Ibid, p.35.

the poem as spaces that cannot truly be a 'self-contained invocation of a perfected moment', but are instead suited to conditions of openness, of transitions 'between' and explorations of the 'Interim'.[46] Across the poem, the continued navigation between stasis and movement, departure and arrival, past and present ultimately 'destabilises the poet's sense of belonging in terms of a particular place and time (north or west, anchored or moving, past, present or future)'.[47]

As Brearton suggests, Longley's depiction of a 'fluid and shifting landscape and its implicit placing of the self on the (stable and unstable) "boat between", share[s] something with Derek Mahon's sensibility in *Night Crossing*'.[48] In *Night Crossing,* Mahon's poem 'Recalling Aran', later retitled 'Thinking of Inis Oírr in Cambridge, Mass.' in *Collected Poems,* addresses the same island visit of Longley's 'Leaving Inishmore'. While the geography addressed may be the same, Mahon's poem presents an alternative island imagining to that of Longley:

> A dream of limestone in sea-light
> Where gulls have placed their perfect prints.
> Reflection in that final sky
> Shames vision into simple sight;
> Into pure sense, experience.
> Atlantic leagues away tonight,
> Conceived beyond such innocence,
> I clutch the memory still, and I
> Have measured everything with it since.[49]

While both Mahon and Longley invoke the functions of memory and distance within their poems, Mahon's island emerges as an abstracted idealised space rather than a tangible physical place. While Longley's work is anchored to the present moment and tuned to the physical realities of sea-crossings, Mahon's poem draws from the more intangible reservoirs of 'dream', 'vision' and 'memory'. The transatlantic position of the poetic figure, 'Recalling Aran' from both geographic and temporal distance, precludes any sense of permanent place-attachment. By 'Recalling Aran' from a distant geographical position 'Atlantic leagues away' on the Eastern seaboard of the USA, Mahon instils a sense of estrangement into the poem where the image of the poet, desperately clutching at the memory of 'limestone', invokes a sense of both significance and

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[46] Longley, *Collected*, p.35.
[47] Brearton, p.46.
[48] Ibid, pp.44-5.
[49] Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 1999), p.29.

precariousness in the scene. As a sedimentary rock limestone is partially soluble and liable to erosion. The description of limestone dreams thus adds a further sense of precariousness into the scene, as the physical dimensions of the island are themselves liable to disappear, not only through distortions of memory but the passing of geological time.

This sense of estrangement and insecurity is continued across Mahon's later island poems 'Aran' and 'Rathlin'. In 'Aran', first published in *Ecclesiastes* (1970) under the title 'In the Aran Islands', Mahon once again engages the island environment to explore feelings of estrangement and isolation. The poem opens with the image of a figure 'earthed to his girl' with 'one hand fastened| in hers', presenting an initial sense of solidity and security that slowly deteriorates across the course of the poem.[50] Closing the pub door behind him, the poetic figure moves away from the initial scene of the lovers holding hands and enters into the turbulent island environment, in which the 'song goes out| And a gull creaks off from the tin roof| Of an outhouse'.[51] The comforting intimacy of the singing islanders immediately gives way to the 'hoarse inchoate| Screaming' of the gull overhead.[52] The transitional position of the poetic figure moving from inside to outside, and transmutation of the poem's acoustic environment from comforting song to piercing scream, 'offers a stark sketch of an exposed life lived on the rim of Europe'.[53] Here Mahon crafts not only internal divisions in the poem (inside and outside, native and visitor, human and bird), but his own poetic practice. His poetic voice appears torn between the 'earthed' figures who emerge as symbols of 'tradition' and 'the land', and the voice of the 'planing' gull that soars and screams overhead.[54] This division is not only apparent in the images invoked in the poem, but can be traced within the formalistic techniques employed by Mahon. As both Clark and Obert note, the sudden influx of end rhymes in the second stanza reflects an 'incantory, almost liturgical quality',[55] which 'emphasises the speaker's sense of reverie' and reverence for the islander community.[56] The carefully selected rhymes reflect the poet's ability to 'dream myself to that tradition',[57] but

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[50] Ibid, p.37.
[51] Ibid, p.37.
[52] Ibid, p.37.
[53] Haughton, p.66.
[54] Mahon, p.37.
[55] Obert, p.86.
[56] Clark, 'Leaving Barra', p.34.
[57] Mahon, p.37.

to not actually live within it. While this poem can be read as an attempt by Mahon to insert, or 'dream' himself into the tradition of the island community, arguably the poem equally draws attention to the literary construction of island culture. Indeed, the speaker's 'imagination' ultimately breaks down in the concluding stanza, where the opening image of the 'earthed' lovers is contrasted with the 'Unearthly' gull that transforms the 'echo-prolonging poet' into a 'cracked-voice rock-marauder, scavenger, fierce'.[58]

Similarly, in 'Rathlin', Mahon's verse once again 'shatters the dream-time' of the island imaginary, constituting a 'forceful revision of the Irish island as a symbol of authentic, untainted identity'.[59] While Rathlin island is located in Northern Ireland and not the Irish West, the poem nevertheless continues Mahon's deconstruction of the western imaginary. Akin to 'Aran' the poet is seen to be fascinated by the island inhabitants both human and nonhuman: in this case the haunted 'screams of the Rathlin women' which echo in the 'cry of the shearwater'.[60] Poised between 'natural' and 'unnatural silence', the poem acknowledges, and laments, the transformation of the island from a human domain into a bird 'sanctuary' populated by 'the shearwater, by the sporadic| Conversation of crickets'.[61] In so doing, the poem highlights a sense of division within the island space, where the revivalist images of the 'Cerulean distance, an oceanic haze' is contrasted with the 'unspeakable violence' of historical massacres that are embedded in the island's history.[62] Despite the poem's assertion that on the island 'they are through with history', the poem is preoccupied with the 'roar' and 'silence' of historical and contemporary violence, in which the 'screams of Rathlin women' occupy the same space as bombs that 'doze in the housing estates'.[63] Here Mahon critiques depictions of the island as a space located beyond the reach of mainland politics. Detailing the 'Conversation of crickets', Mahon appears to invoke the revivalist works of W.B. Yeats whose utopian vision of island life in the poem 'The Lake of Innisfree' similarly notes the singing of crickets.[64] Unlike the isolation and security invoked by Yeats's poetic figure who

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[58] Ibid, p.37.
[59] Clark, 'Leaving Barra', p.34.
[60] Mahon, p.107.
[61] Ibid, p.37.
[62] Ibid, p.107.
[63] Ibid, p.137.
[64] W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, (Hertfodshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2001), p.69.

lives in a 'small cabin' 'alone in the bee-loud glade',[65] Mahon's habitat is threatened by dozing bombs and disturbed by the buzzing of 'an outboard motor'.[66] The sense of serenity and harmony put forth by Yeats is absent from Mahon's islandscape in which the constant motion of the 'turbulent sea' leaves the poet 'Unsure among the pitching surfaces| Whether the future lies before us or behind'.[67] Thus the opening touristic figure of the poet who arrives 'As if we were the first visitors there', does not enter a pastoral dreamscape but instead encounters sounds and histories that 'Disturb the singular peace'.[68] Across all three poems Mahon's use of, and encounter with, the islands provides the poet with the opportunity to reflect not only on the constructed tradition of the Irish West, but to reflect on his own attachment to place and fraught concept of 'home'.

While both Longley and Mahon's island poems signal a conscious discomfort with the fantastical construction of the Irish West, it is important to note that both poets do in fact sustain many of the revivalist aesthetics that they wish to reject. For example, in Longley's 'To Derek Mahon', one of three 'Letters to Three Irish Poets', Longley recalls their journey to Inisheer. In the poem Longley recounts how upon arrival the poets feel like 'strangers in that parish', 'tongue-tied| Companions of the island's dead'.[69] In so doing Longley sets up an opposition between poet and islander, in which the poetic figures become an invasive force; 'Eavesdropping' in an attempt to enter 'conversations| With a Jesus who spoke Irish', but only ever able to find companionship with the deads.[70] Instead of critiquing the depiction of the island and its inhabitants as a reservoir of some innate 'Irish' culture, here Longley seems to be searching for such an image, at one point invoking pastoral scenes of cutting 'the watery sod' in the hopes of becoming 'islanders ourselves'.[71] Across their pieces, both Mahon and Longley use 'several stock Revivalist motifs as [they] describ[e] the islanders' carefree natures, folk wisdom and intuitive connection with nature' which ultimately support, rather than dismantle the idealisation of the West.[72] Indeed, the opening of 'To Derek Mahon' suggests that the poets go to the island in search

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[65] Ibid, p.69.
[66] Mahon, p.137.
[67] Ibid, p.137.
[68] Ibid, p.137.
[69] Longley, *Collected,* p.59.
[70] Ibid, p.59.
[71] Ibid, p.59.
[72] Clark, 'Leaving Barra', p.32.

of an 'imaginary Peace Line' that they are ultimately unable to trace back through the 'burnt-out houses' in Northern Ireland.[73] Notably, in both poets' work, sustained encounters with islanders are absent. Across all poems discussed, the residents of the islands are either singing or dead, their voices either silenced or altered into the disturbing cries of seabirds. This is particularly the case within Mahon's island poems in which the sound of seabirds often takes precedence over the voice of the island's human population. For Tom Herron, this absence of the human figure places the work of Longley and Mahon in 'accordance with the Western sublime registered by Revivalists and post Revivalists alike' in which 'the ecological relationship captured within the poetry neglects, almost entirely, local intra-human contact, as if human beings were somehow exempt from ecological consideration'.[74] We will return to this apparent exemption of the human from ecological consideration in the closing parts of the chapter, however for now it is important to note that through their avoidance of the human figure both Longley and Mahon appear to encounter the islands as spaces for their own personal reflection, rather than as sites of habitation and community.

This anxiety regarding community is perhaps most apparent in Longley's 'The Hebrides' and Mahon's 'The Sea in Winter' in which both poets position themselves as external subjects to island communities that exist on the 'rim of the Atlantic'.[75] In 'The Sea in Winter', the themes of home and uncertainty are once again paramount to Mahon's poetic 'interest in being in two places at once'.[76] In 'The Sea in Winter' Mahon is seen to occupy and sustain an externalised position in which he works 'on the circumference' of place.[77] 'The Sea in Winter' makes many intertextual allusions to other littoral and literary sites which broadens the scope of the text to include spaces and cultures beyond the boundaries of Northern Ireland.[78] Across the poem we encounter a vast array of geographical sites from the Northern Irish coast of 'Portstewart, Portrush, Portballintrae', across to 'that Hebridean sunset' and beyond into 'Asia Minor', encountering

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[73] Longley, *Collected*, p.59.
[74] Herron, p.80.
[75] Longley, *Collected*, p.59.
[76] Haughton, p.141.
[77] Mahon, p.116.
[78] These intertextual references include the sand dune headlands of 'Nineveh and Tyre' from Rudyard Kipling's 'Recessional', scenes from *Hamlet* where the sea 'vents its displeasure on the rocks; there is something rotten in the state/infects the innocent', and the 'distant northern sea' of Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach'. Fran Brearton further notes that the 'Far-shining star of dark-blue earth' is probably taken from Pindar (2007: 139).

Damascus and 'The moon of Nineveh and Tyre', while also meeting the Greek islands of Naxos and Naousa.[79] The sheer array of places and cultures invoked by Mahon's encounter with the Northern coastline inversely reveals an innate discomfort with the concept of place, where the continued metamorphosis and transformation of the North into varying littoral sites allows the figure to experience 'the weird|facticity of this strange seaboard [...]| of living on the edge of space'.[80] Denied a sense of direct belonging, the poem expresses Mahon's 'self-professed liminality',[81] in which the speaker's position on the edge of the circumference allows him to 'pretend not to be here at all'.[82] Indeed 'Mahon's description of peripheral landscapes— in particular seashores—turns out to be the ideal medium to express a pervading sense of loss and estrangement and more generally the ambivalent affiliation between his self and place'.[83] The externalised, and exiled position of the figure allows for Mahon to access the North without necessitating a solid or lasting attachment to it. The poem is filled with not only geographical transformations, but temporal transitions, moving from moon-filled nights to dusk and dawn in the space of a few lines. The coastal space here seems to prohibit a sense of chronological progress, forcing the figure to occupy 'transitional moments'.[84] This transitional quality is also highlighted by the attention to debris and decay within the poem. Described as a 'rotten state' the depiction of the rocky coastline moves away from the opening images of the 'white island in the south' transforming into a landscape of 'wrecked technologies' and 'condemned hotels'.[85] For Mahon the littoral zone is both an immersive and exclusionary site; one that continually allows him to explore the poetic and political conditions of liminality and transition.

Longley is similarly concerned with the conditions of the littoral zone as a space that fosters conditions of transformation and connection. Across his early collections, his poems pay constant attention to the topographies of the archipelago, roving from the Aran Islands to the Galway coast and Co. Mayo, and continue on past the Hebrides to Skara Brae in Orkney. In his five-part sequence

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[79] Mahon, pp.115-7.
[80] Ibid, p.117.
[81] Obert, p.80.
[82] Ibid, p.115.
[83] Christelle Serée-Chaussinand, 'Derek Mahon's Literal Littorals', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles*, 25.2, (2012), 51-8, (p.51).
[84] Ibid, p.51.
[85] Mahon, p.115-7.

'The Hebrides', a poem that recalls MacNeice's 'In the Hebrides', Longley contemplates his own 'island circumstance'.[86] The opening stanzas of the poem reflect the precarious positioning of the poetic figure at the edge of the Atlantic:

> The winds' enclosure, Atlantic's premises,
> Last balconies
> Above the waves, The Hebrides
> Too long did I postpone
> Presbyterian granite and the lack of trees,
> This orphaned stone
>
> Day in, day out colliding with the sea.
> Weather forecast,
> Compass nor ordnance survey
> Arranges my welcome
> For, on my own, I have lost my way at last,
> So far from home [87]

Despite the seemingly stable images of 'granite', 'enclosure', and 'stone' that punctuate the opening sequence, the erosive action of the sea 'Day in, day out colliding' with the 'orphaned stone' destabilises any sense of solidity, so that 'the land itself becomes as fluid and shifting as the sea'.[88] The poem attempts to locate stable coordinates against which the speaker may plot his place in the world, however the usual means through which such coordinates may be found are withheld from him so that neither 'Weather forecast, Compass nor ordnance survey| Arranges my welcome'. The instability of the poet's position in 'The Hebrides' recalls elements of 'Leaving Inishmore' as Longley explores the paradoxical status of the island that continually roves between fixity and instability, continuity and rupture, 'flux and poise'.[89] Throughout the piece, Longley's figure occupies a liminal position within the littoral zone:

> Here at the edge of my experience
>   Another tide
> Along the broken shore extends
>   A lifetime's wrack and ruin –
> No Flotsam I may beachcomb now can hide
>   That water line.[90]

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[86] Longley, *Collected*, p.22.
[87] Ibid, p.22.
[88] Brearton, p.28.
[89] Longley, *Collected*, p.24.
[90] Longley, *Collected*, p.24.

Inhabiting the 'edge' of the 'broken shore' and attentive to the continually changing 'water line', Longley's speaker resists any sense of 'enclosure' or fixity. Instead the figure embraces the ability of the shoreline to continually accumulate and rearrange the voices, histories, and creatures of the islands. Through the aggregation of 'Jettisoned' and shipwrecked materials the speaker is able to 'Read like a palimpsest| My past – those landmarks and that scenery'.[91] The gradual accumulation of materials that wash ashore allows the figure to 'alter my perspective', in which the privileging of 'anchorage' and 'balance' gives way to a destabilising sense of 'vertigo'.[92] 'Losing foothold' the figure appears to dismiss land in favour of other the elemental conditions of place, namely water and air. Adopting 'the vantage point of elsewhere', Longley's waterlogged and windswept condition embraces the paradoxical condition of the coast in which the only constant is continuous change.[93] Yet while Mahon's fascination with debris and decay reflects an alienated sense of place, Longley's interaction with the coast signals a more interconnected and relational position. The initial image of the lost figure 'orphaned' by compass, map and broadcast, transforms so the opening sense of insularity is contested by the interconnected ecologies of human and nonhuman lives. Across the sequence we encounter numerous coastal creatures: otters, gulls, whelk and barnacle, cormorant, oyster-catcher and osprey, lobsters, plankton, porpoises, seals, cockle beds, and a (silent) community of sailors. Looking to those creatures that occupy both land and sea, the figure tethers himself to the dishevelled atmosphere of the littoral zone through which he is able to 'discern| My sea levels'.[94]

As Neal Alexander suggests, the littoral zones of Michael Longley's poems distinctly problematise 'the Heideggerian discourse of "dwelling" that is common in much contemporary environmental criticism'.[95] For Alexander, Heideggerian ecopoetics stem from the understanding of 'dwelling' as a 'kind of rooted being that may overcome difference and disparity, promoting a mode of mutual coexistence founded upon simple unity'.[96] In relation to the geopolitical context of

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[91] Ibid, p.25.
[92] Ibid, p.25.
[93] Brearton, p.28.
[94] Longley, *Collected*, p.24.
[95] Neal Alexander, 'Shorelines: Littoral Landscapes in the Poetry of Michael Longley and Robert Minhinnick', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), pp.71-87, (p.72).
[96] Ibid, p.73.

Ireland, and the cultural significance of Northern Irish poetry, this concept of dwelling as correlating with 'simple unity' holds significant implications. The holistic semantics of this form of ecopoetics has drawn critique in recent years. Ursula Heise in particular has noted how the 'urgency of developing a holistic understanding of ecological connectedness' was one of the 'founding impulses of the modern environmentalist movement' in the 1960s.[97] For Heise, while the understanding of global ecological connectivity remains central to contemporary ecocritical discussion, the cultural legacy of the initial relegation of complex ecological systems into 'relatively simple and concrete images that foreground synthesis, holism and connectedness' has become problematic as the 'efficacy of these tropes depended not only on their neglect of political and cultural heterogeneity [...] but also on a conception of global ecology as harmonious, balanced, and self-regenerating'.[98] This neglect of cultural, political, and indeed even environmental heterogeneity is perhaps one of the largest critiques levied at 'first wave' ecocritical notions of ecological systems and literatures.[99] The move towards a 'more complex image of ecosystems as dynamic, perpetually changing, and often far from stable or balanced' has thus informed more recent ecocritical engagements with poetry.[100] Consequently, the concepts of 'universal connectedness, stability and harmony' as characterised by Heideggerian ecopoetics, has recently incited critiques which problematise their continued insistence upon notions of unity.[101] As a site that is consistently hinged between different states of being due to the constant flux of water and wind, the littoral zone is perhaps the key site within contemporary Irish poetry through which to consider more 'dynamic and capricious' configurations of ecopoetic practice.[102] Thus while both Longley's and Mahon's works seek to '[ground] human existence

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[97] Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p.22.

[98] Ibid, p.63.

[99] The concept of 'first wave' ecocriticism is used here in reference to Laurence Buell's initial discussion of ecocritical 'waves' in which, after presenting the term in relation to 'waves' of feminist theory, he almost immediately suggests that the term 'palimpsest' is more accurate: 'No definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies can [...] be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines marking an evolution from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or newer revisionist wave or waves increasingly evident today. This first–second wave distinction should not, however, be taken as implying a tidy, distinct succession. [...] In this sense, "palimpsest" would be a better metaphor than "wave"', *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.17. For a more recent tracing of the 'waves' of ecocriticism, or the ecocritical 'palimpsest', see: Scott Slovic, 'The Third Wave of Ecocriticism: North American Reflections on the Current Phase of the Discipline', *Ecozono*, 1.1. (2010), 4-10.

[100] Ursula Heise, 'The Hitchhikers Guide to Ecocriticism', *PMLA,* 121.2 (2006), 503-516, (p.510).

[101] Ibid, p.510.

[102] Solnick, p.13.

in sensuous and responsible engagements with material reality', their works ultimately recognise that this 'ground' is dynamic and always shifting.[103] As we have seen, while their poetic focus is drawn to comparable images and scenes, their works approach this 'ground' in different ways. Notably the largest distinction that can be made between Longley and Mahon is in terms of the scales of their poetic attention.

Across these poems one can see how for 'both poets, and in stark contrast to Seamus Heaney's characteristic digging deeper into the one place, identity is permanently transitional, split between here and elsewhere'.[104] While Heaney's works are very well suited to ecocritical readings with many of his works exhibiting both an archipelagic and a geological inflection, his oeuvre has drawn sustained ecocritical attention over the years while relatively little has emerged on his equally important and influential contemporaries.[105] In particular Heaney's bog poems: 'Bogland', 'The Tollund Man', 'Bog Queen', 'The Grauballe Man', 'Punishment' and 'Strange Fruit', would be well suited to questions regarding place and the recognition of the poet as a 'geological agent'. Indeed, Heaney himself described his poems as 'elements of continuity, with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds, [viewing] poetry as a dig, a dig that ends up bearing plants'.[106] For Kennedy-Andrews, Heaney's archaeological or 'digging' poems present a series of 'haunted, whispering landscapes' that allow for readings that are 'politically or historically' attentive to 'lost identity, lost relations and lost certainties' that are often located in a 'particular (Gaelic) era of the rural past'.[107] Yet the act of digging necessarily entails a rootedness in a specific place. While that place may move vertically through time as the poet encounters history through unearthing lost or buried relations, the act of digging nevertheless necessitates the poet to stay put. This rooted excavation is thus

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[103] Alexander, p.73.

[104] Brearton, p.45.

[105] For ecocritical responses to Heaney's works see: Greg Garrad, 'Heidegger, Heaney and the Problem of Dwelling', *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed, 1998) pp.167-81; Susanna Lidström and Greg Garrard '"Images Adequate to our Predicament": Ecology, Environment and Ecopoetics', *Environmental Humanities,* 5.1 (2014), pp.35-53. John Kerrigan, 'Earth writing: Seamus Heaney and Ciaran Carson', *Essays in Criticism*, 48. 2 (1998), pp.144-168; Susanna Lidström, *Nature, Environment and Poetry: Ecocriticism and the Poetics of Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes* (New York: Routledge, 2015); J.R. Padilla, 'Seamus Heaney's Elemental Ecopoetics: Earth, Water, Air and Fire', *Journal of Ecocriticism*, 1.2 (2009), pp.21-30.

[106] Seamus Heaney, 'Feeling into Words', *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978,* (London: Faber, 1980), p.41.

[107] Kennedy-Andrews, p.138.

distinctly opposed to the littoral meanderings of Longley and Mahon who instead encounter history as an accumulation of lost materials and memories at the fluctuating shoreline.

For both Longley and Mahon, the shore emerges as a fecund site through which to explore conditions of place and displacement. Their respective work looks to the length and breadth of the archipelago as a means of counteracting the violence and territorial compression associated with the violence of the North, as through their encounters with littoral space they are able to occupy numerous places and times at once. Neither resolutely east or west, north or south, their position within the archipelago is continually transformative and transitional. Refusing to belong to one place, for both poets the West becomes a 'home from home', a site invested with significance which allows for the development of 'ecological belonging in the face of political alienation'.[108] Across their early collections, the connective mobility of the archipelago is embraced as a space that allows both poets to contemplate the resonances of global ecological crises, while simultaneously exploring more localised questions of home and place. The concluding section of this chapter thus seeks to explore this sense of 'ecological belonging' more intensely within Longley and Mahon's littoral sites, paying specific attention to the poetics of disintegration, that 'strange poetry of decay' that permeates their shorelines.[109]

ii.   A 'strange poetry of decay'

The question of duality or 'fractured belonging and uncertainty' has been highlighted by many critics as a defining feature of Northern Irish writing, which is increasingly characterised by the 'poetics and politics of displacement, mobility, openness and pluralism'.[110] As we have seen, the littoral spaces explored in the works of Longley and Mahon are distinctly exhibitive of this poetics of dispersal. The final sections of this chapter explore more fully how this sense of displacement is reflected not only in the physical characteristics of the littoral zone, but is invoked through a deep ecopoetic engagement with the coastal environment within both poets' works. As we shall see, their general anxieties with regards to questions of place, home, and roots, is translated into a broader

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[108] Obert, p.121.
[109] Mahon, p.116.
[110] Kennedy-Andrews, p.2.

environmental anxiety regarding the ecological status of places that are seen to be threatened by external figures. Within their work, the themes of transformation and metamorphosis are transposed onto images of '[in]organic decomposition', 'sedimentation', waste, erosion, and decay.[111] The significance of decay within Mahon's work in particular has been noted by numerous scholars, with Hugh Haughton going so far as to describe Mahon as 'both a natural ecologist and a connoisseur of rubbish'.[112] While Mahon's engagement with disintegration is explored through poetic encounters with waste, detritus, and rubbish, within the work of Longley the theme of disintegration is more often attached to atmospheric conditions regarding coastal erosion and self-erasure. Engaging motifs of erosion and collapse, Longley's elegiac poems exhibit a concern with regards to the role of the human in the corruption and pollution of the environment. This concluding section will discuss the means through which both poets' earlier fragmentary relationships with 'home' and the Irish West are extended via an ecological consideration of the disintegration of the environment.

Across his works, Longley brings an overall awareness of the 'impermanence of things' so that within his poetry 'both place and identity are regarded as fundamentally transient and unsettled'.[113] In *Snow Water* (2004), this sense of troubling environmental transformation and loss is invoked throughout. The titular poem 'Snow Water' signals an overriding theme of transformation through the inclusion of all three states of water; the poem traces the melting of solid 'snow', into a variety of teapots that transform the water into 'steam' and 'mist'.[114] This sense of transformation and fluidity continues throughout the collection with a series of poems that see Longley return over and over again, to his favourite landscape, his 'home from home', Carrigskeewaun. This poetic return to Carrigskeewaun is important, as the seeming constancy of this almost sacred place, slowly erodes in the face of death and weather. This erosion of place is felt most strongly in the poems 'Flight Feathers', 'Above Dooaghtry', 'Petalwort', 'Level Pegging', and 'Shadows'. Across these pieces Longley returns to the eroded image of a 'tide-digested burial mound' that has

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[111] Flannery, p.39.
[112] Hugh Haughton, 'Bright Garbage on the Incoming Wave: Rubbish in the Poetry of Derek Mahon', *Textual Practice*, 16.1 (2002), pp.323-343, (p.334).
[113] Alexander, p.77.
[114] Longley, *Collected*, p.287.

'been erased by wind and sea'.[115] While the loss of the ancient burial ground through a 'wind-and-wave-inspired| Vanishing act' signals an overall concern with the loss of history and culture, the elegiac sensibilities expressed through Longley's continually eroding landscapes do not simply correspond to the loss of anthropocentric engagements with the land.[116] By this I mean to suggest that within his poems instances of death, erosion, and injury do not merely refer to the loss of a specific person, nor the idea of 'home' and its associated history, but instead exhibit a wider concern for the degradation of the surrounding environment.

As Donna Potts suggests, Longley's 'fear of 'losing [his] place' arises not merely from a personal sense of loss but from a complex consideration of the ramifications of losing *place* in comprehensive terms'.[117] This 'comprehensive' sense of place not only stems from the human and poetic figures of the poems, but significantly focuses on the ways in which these figures impact an environment that is gradually 'Growing stranger and more vulnerable'.[118] This impact is often revealed through instances of violence in which the human figure unwittingly creates moments of 'catastrophic' destruction within the Mayo environment.[119] In 'Two Pheasants', Longley highlights the 'elegance and pain' of a pheasant 'crushed' by a car, and in doing so acknowledges the often destructive impact that human figures have on the environment.[120] This recognition continues throughout the collection in which we see Longley mourn 'all the birds that have disappeared', 'the otters we haven't seen in years', and the 'betrayal' of 'neighbours in Donegal| Who poured petrol into a badger's sett'.[121] Yet, by instilling the human figure with a destructive capacity Longley effectively reinstates the distance between human and nonhuman that his poems so often attempt to overcome. This weakness in his practice does not dilute the overall ecological potency of his work, but rather signals the difficulty of overcoming the nature/culture divide through poetry. His poems often attempt to provide a space which confirms his understanding that the 'poet is part of nature. Language is

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[115] Ibid, pp.288-9.
[116] Ibid p.289.
[117] Donna Potts, *Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2011), italics in original, p.77.
[118] Longley, *Collected*, p.295.
[119] Ibid, p.288.
[120] Ibid, p.298.
[121] Ibid, p.288, p.292, p.295.

part of nature'.[122] One way in which Longley attempts to counteract the violent incursion of the human figure into the landscape is to present the poetic voice as an inconspicuous entity embedded within a wider environment. In poems such as 'Petalwort' and 'After Tra-Na-Rossan', Longley expresses a desire for the poet to occupy a condition of 'Self-effacement in the sand'.[123] The sandy shore becomes a site that is able to 'wash the traces| of transgression from the secret places', where the continued action of the tide removes any hint of human intrusion.[124] However, as the figure travels up the shore, he sees that there is 'too much to hide', effectively suggesting that figure's incursion into the environment has become too significant to overcome through natural means.[125] Thus while many read Longley's poetic residences in the West as a form of 'escape', in which the western landscape is positioned in opposition to the 'chaos' and violence of the North, through his elegiac erosions we see how the West is also shown to bear the brunt of human inflicted violence and natural decay.[126]

For Donna Potts, *Snow Water* as a collection signals an overall maturation of Longley's poetic voice, in which he moves 'further away from anthropocentric elegy to a more comprehensive effort to figuratively restore lost life'.[127] For Potts, 'while Longley elegizes the lives lost to violence in the North, the true source of his elegiac lament ultimately lies in the environment from which those lives arose in the first place'.[128] We see this sense of elegiac interconnection in 'Petalwort', a poem dedicated to the Irish journalist and naturalist Michael Viney, in which Longley crafts an entanglement of human and nonhuman lives. The poem opens with the declaration that:

> You want your ashes to swirl along the strand
> At Thallabaun – amongst clockwork, approachable,
> Circumabulatory sanderlings, crab shells,
> Baldderwrack, phosphorescence at spring tide – [129]

Mimicking the sedimentation of sand and the bright phosphoresce of plankton, here the granular ashes of the deceased figure mingle with the geological and

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[122] Michael Longley, 'Interview: Michael Longley and Jody Allen Randolph', *Colby Quarterly*, 39.3 (September 2003), 294-308, (p.307).
[123] Longley, *Collected*, p.290.
[124] Ibid, p.293.
[125] Ibid, p.293.
[126] Herron, p.79.
[127] Potts, p.97.
[128] Ibid, p.77.
[129] Longley, *Collected,* p.290.

biological characteristics of the shore, becoming one with the ecosystem of the beach at Thallabaun. The significance of spreading the ashes in the 'spring tide' reflects the idea of death as being but one part of a natural cycle. This transformation and reintegration of the human body into the ecosystem is invoked in the majority of the collection's elegies in which deceased friends and influential figures transform respectively into a butterfly, lapwing, skylark, heron and a snipe. Ultimately 'entangling ourselves' within a wider ecological community, Longley's elegies acknowledge that death, loss and erosion are but one part of a continuing ecological cycle 'which sees humans as part of a changing natural environment [that] deliberately includes instances of loss and destruction as natural and inevitable occurrences.'[130] His poetry thus blurs not only the geographical boundaries of place, but continually erodes the binaries between human and nonhuman beings. His fascination with erosion and instances of environmental decline, coupled with his continued attention to scenes of political and historical violence reveals both nature and culture to be inherently interconnected.

In contrast to Longley's eroded landscapes, Mahon's verse is frequently drawn to waste spaces and materials. While his recent collections exhibit a conscious engagement with environmental politics and have consequently drawn focused critical engagement from ecocritical scholars, there is relatively little ecocritical discussion of Mahon's earlier collections. Yet, one can easily identify an early strand of ecological fascination within his early works as revealed through 'a pervasive fascination with the detritus of industrial modernity which, from vehicles to condoms, accumulates on the poetry's streets, fields and shorelines'.[131] In *The Snow Party* (1975), Mahon's interest in sites of disintegration and decay corresponds with a burgeoning ecological consciousness that pays attention to 'the voices of ostensibly mute phenomena' and in doing so reveals 'that our lived environment is in fact *living*' and vulnerable.[132] The collection as a whole is concerned with the question of environmental afterlives, in which a 'sense of ecological catastrophe is consistently intertwined with

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[130]Anne-Julia Zwierlein, '"Gripping to a Wet Rock": Coastal Erosion and the Land-Sea divide as Existentialist/Ecocritical Tropes in Contemporary British and Irish Fiction', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), pp.53-71, (p.55)
[131] Solnick, p.109
[132] Obert, p.88

historical disaster'.[133] From the opening poem, 'Afterlives', Mahon's characteristic transient figure is invoked, moving from a dark flat in London, to Belfast 'a city so changed| By five years of war'.[134] The concluding lines of the second half of the poem can be seen as a guiding force for the collection as a whole:

> Perhaps if I'd stayed behind
> And lived it bomb by bomb
> I might have grown up at last
> And learnt what is meant by home.

Intrigued by the way both violence and time transform place, the collection presents a series of ruminations over waste materials and 'waste|ground'.[135] The collection exhibits an overall concern for the ways in which 'natural and man-made ruination' conjoin within poetic space.[136] We see this confluence of natural and manufactured destruction in the poem 'Gipsies' in which Mahon turns to the derelict site, and sight, of a traveller community 'on television'.[137] The poem plays with the externalisation of violence in which the televised images of a traveller community that occupies 'waste| ground beside motorways' whose caravans and crockery are wrecked and rocked by 'dark police', is contrasted with the poet's seemingly secure position behind 'double glazing'.[138] Acknowledging the privilege of his poetic positon the speaker notes how they feel 'ashamed; fed,| clothed, housed and ashamed' in contrast with those who do not occupy the same secure space.[139] However, Mahon soon subverts the seeming security of the poetic positon:

> You might be interested
> to hear, though, that on
> stormy nights our strong
> double glazing groans with
> foreknowledge of death,
> the fridge with a great wound,
> and not surprised to know
> the fate you have so long
> endured is ours also.[140]

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[133] Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon*, p.93.
[134] Mahon, p.59.
[135] Ibid, p.67.
[136] Flanner, p.26.
[137] Mahon, p.67.
[138] Ibid, p.67.
[139] Ibid, p.67.
[140] Ibid, p.67.

Accosted by a storm, here the 'strong' house 'groans' with 'the foreknowledge of death', and the apparent safety of the poet's position disintegrates. The familiar comforts of the domestic space transform into a 'great wound', allowing the poet to acknowledge his shared 'fate' with the travellers. The closing image of 'the heap| of scrap metal in my| garden grows daily' reflects this newly realised kinship between the travellers and the poet and further imparts an overall focus and affinity between rejected figures and objects.[141] The closing substitution of 'mineral accumulation [for] vegetable growth' within the garden space corresponds to Mahon's continued fascination with the relationship between waste places and waste products, and points to a growing concern with consumer culture.[142]

Similar to Longley, Mahon's poetry expresses a concern for the ways in which human interactions with the environment often result in forms of violence and destruction. While Longley filters this concern through the use of elegy and a continued theme of erosion, Mahon's early poems focus more intently on concepts of value and waste. In the 'The Apotheosis of Tins', this concern with material waste is at the forefront of his encounter with littoral space. In the poem, Mahon speaks 'in the voice of a sophisticated chorus of self-reflexive tins',[143] which having 'spent the night in sewer of precognition' now adorn the beach of an unnamed coastal site.[144] As with 'Gipsies' the poem explores the mutual condition of rejection forced upon both the poetic voice and material objects. Speaking from the position of the wasted tins who 'wake among shoelaces and white wood', Mahon playfully recalibrates the poetic valuation of waste material as a topic that is often not considered 'worthy' of high artistic contemplation.[145] Within the poem, rubbish subsequently emerges as 'Promoted artifacts' that continue to hold a cultural importance despite the 'dereliction' of their condition:

> Deprived of use, we are safe now
> from the historical nightmare
> and may give our attention at last
> to things of the spirit,
> noticing for example the consanguinity
> of sand and stone, how they are thicker than water.[146]

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[141] Ibid, p.60.
[142] Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon*, p.107.
[143] Ibid, p.108.
[144] Mahon, p.69.
[145] Ibid, p.69.
[146] Ibid, p.69.

Through 'the erosion of labels' the tins are subsequently 'deprived of use' which safely places them outside of the 'historical nightmare'. No longer able to access 'the value of self-definition' through the act of labelling, the tins are unable to trace a legible past and thus appear to operate outside of the realm of both culture and history. However, Mahon soon subverts this seeming ahistorical position of the tins by acknowledging their wider environmental impact. Indeed, the construction of the tins as 'artefacts' prompts us to recognise these seemingly worthless objects, not merely as waste products, but as possessing a disconcerting form of cultural and historical value.

As scholars of ecological materialism suggest, the afterlife, and history, of waste products is an increasingly worrying issue, where the longevity of manufactured waste products such as heavy metals, radioactive waste, plastics, pesticides and other materials continue to persist within the environment for centuries. The deep futures of this 'accumulating pile of lively and potentially dangerous matter' thus continues to create 'lively streams of chemicals and volatile' relations with other objects and ecosystems long beyond their intended use. [147] Mahon's transformation of the tins from mute phenomena into vocal 'artefacts', reveals the vitalism of the material world. By investing his littoral space with littered products that continue to live beyond their initial 'use' Mahon acknowledges the danger and corrosive agency of discarded matter. The inevitability of the line: 'we shall be with you while there are beaches| Imperishable by-products of the perishable will' is particularly effective in this regard. [148] In suggesting that the cans will 'be with you while there are beaches' Mahon acknowledges the ubiquitous nature of waste materials that are becoming a pervasive presence across the world's oceans and coastlines. Consequently, as the tins become symbolic of the 'permanence and flux of sensation| and crisis' Mahon's transformation of the initially useless tins into poetic 'artifacts' (at one point likening the tins to Halmet's soliloquy on Yorick's skull: 'we shall lie like skulls in the hands| of soliloquists'), reveals an overall awareness of their lasting environmental impact. [149] Declaring in the final line of the poem that 'perhaps we can learn from them', Mahon's bleak rumination ends on the possibility of future

[147] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp.vii-viii.
[148] Mahon, p.69.
[149] Ibid, p.69.

change.[150] The tins' 'Apotheosis' does not lie within their original construction as a containers that aid the act of consumption,[151] but within their final configuration as an ecological warning sign that recognises 'the culpability of humanity in the history of environmental degradation'.[152]

Throughout *The Snow Party*, Mahon expresses a 'fascination with those obsolete objects and abandoned spaces which highlight the transience of individuals and civilisations' whereby the fleeting nature of humanity is paradoxically invoked through the long afterlives of waste.[153] The persistence of manufactured waste within these littered littoral environments presents an uncanny continuation of the notably absent and rejected human figure. Across the collection, poems such as 'The Banished Gods' and 'A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford', similarly acknowledge the ability of waste to persist beyond the timescales of human history. Importantly the collection not only plays with scales of time, but also scales of place. In 'The Banished Gods' vast 'nuclear skies' and the 'forlorn cries of lost species' are shown to filter across geopolitical borders.[154] Similarly, in 'A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford', scales of time and place expand in line with the 'slow clock of condensation' where the confined space of the shed opens outwards through time and space to encounter both the wider 'world waltzing in its bowl of cloud' and the 'Lost people of Treblinka and Pompeii'.[155] The abundance of waste places, products and persons within these poems are imbued with an uncanny afterlife which extends beyond the lifetimes of not only human timescales, but persists into 'lost futures'. Arguably, Mahon's fascination with the afterlives of rubbish extends the notions of geological deep time that we have previously encountered upon the stony beaches of Louis MacNeice and Hugh MacDiarmid. While these earlier works exhibit a fascination with geological materials as the signifiers of deep time and environmental longevity, across Mahon's works the littered littoral zones of the West expose the 'surreally malevolent' afterlives of waste products which originally 'intended for

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[150] Ibid, p.69.
[151] Defined as the 'action, process, or fact of ranking, or of being ranked, among the gods; transformation into a god, deification; elevation to divine status'. 'Apotheosis', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9468?redirectedFrom=apotheosis#eid> [accessed 27.01.2017].
[152] Flannery, p.26.
[153] Solnick, p.109.
[154] Mahon, pp.86-7.
[155] Ibid, p.90.

momentary human use, [now] pollute for eternity'.[156] Across these early works, Mahon's poetic preoccupation with waste, rubbish, garbage and decay signals a growing unease with the polluted deep futures of modernity.

Across this 'strange poetry of decay' both Longley and Mahon position the poetic figure, and humanity more generally, as force that is able to enact significant (and often violent) change upon the natural world. Through their respective fascinations with erosion and waste, both poets recognise the force of the human as a 'geological agent' with the ability to shape not only the immediate environments of the archipelago, but wider planetary scales of both time and place.[157] Through their work both Mahon's and Longley's inherent discomfort with the stability of place and history arises through a general 'anxiety about complicity'.[158] Often calling attention to the detrimental impact of the human population upon the natural world, their work frequently operates 'at different spatial and temporal scales to conventional notions of human agency'.[159] In many ways, their recognition of, and subsequent anxiety around the construction of the human figure as a source of environmental violence makes visible the forms of 'slow violence' recently outlined by Rob Nixon.[160] For Nixon, the concept of 'slow violence' refers to a 'violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space'.[161] Seen in opposition to customary perceptions of violence 'conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility', slow violence is 'incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales'.[162] Through their respective fascination with the gradual processes of erosion and decay, both Mahon and Longley arguably transpose the political, historical, and sensational violence of the North onto the seemingly 'timeless' spaces of the West. In so doing their works tentatively make visible, and audible, the slow processes of 'Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermath of wars, [and]

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[156] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2016), p.130.
[157] Flannery, p.4.
[158] Solnick, p.109.
[159] Ibid, p.116.
[160] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), p.2.
[161] Ibid, p.2.
[162] Nixon, p.2.

acidifying oceans' that are altering the planetary environment.[163] Ultimately within their early works, both poets' engagement with the Western landscapes of Ireland alert us to the condition of the poet and the human as entangled beings within a fluctuating archipelagic environment that is increasingly threatened by human-enacted environmental destruction. While these early collections do not engage fully with the science of environmentalism, we shall see in the following chapters how both Longley's and Mahon's ecopoetic engagements develop and evolve from these significant early beginnings on the Western coast.

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[163] Ibid, p.2.

'Cocooning us in their whisper of contact': Acoustic Entanglements in Michael Longley and Kathleen Jamie

Across the works of modern Scottish and Irish poets, relationships between place, culture and identity are often intimate and complex. For the authors examined thus far, place is not merely employed as a metaphorical tool within their poetry, but is understood as a lively material reality. In attempting to establish an understanding of place that is both living, dynamic and interactive, while remaining specific, heterogeneous, and distinctively local, this body of work consequently grapples with questions of scale and relation, borders and boundaries, of responsibility and ownership. Drawn to specific environmental and geological features (beaches, islands, watersheds) the work of modern Scottish and Irish poetry is repeatedly concerned with questions of 'belonging to the locality – however locality is defined: housing estate or village, suburb or parish, a street or an island'.[1] This mode of writing has in some circles been best described as a bioregional mode of writing, proposing 'that human identity may be constituted by our residence in a larger community of natural beings – our local bioregion – rather than, or at least supplementary to, nation, state, ethnic, or other more common bases of identity'.[2] Marked by an acute attentiveness to the environmental particularities of place, bioregional writing allows 'residents of a place to recognize their bioregions as culturally and ecologically distinct and value them as such', while also forming a sense of place that 'considers nonhuman as well as human members of the community, the ugly as well as the beautiful, and above all refuses the false comfort of seeing [their] land as an "island" disconnected from other places around the globe'.[3] Characterised by a sense of 'vulnerability and flux', bioregional writing thus acknowledges that despite their particular locality, 'regions remain permeable to shock waves

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[1] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), p.254.

[2] Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Ambruster, 'Introduction', *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place,* ed. by Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Ambruster (London: University of Georgia Press, 2012), pp.1-33, (p.4).

[3] Ibid, p.13.

potentially extending worldwide [...] the locale cannot shut itself off from translocal forces even if it wanted to'.[4] In the work of contemporary poets Michael Longley and Kathleen Jamie, the bioregion becomes a key means of addressing new modes of political belonging and ecological relation that arise from intimate and vulnerable relationships with the land.

Across their work, both Longley and Jamie exhibit a pronounced fascination with the acoustic dimensions of place. By 'tuning in' to the acoustic coordinates of their specific sites, their work enables the poetic figure to 'uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances – sounds and sights that echo and bounce far more than would be possible were the universe to have a hierarchical structure'.[5] By closely attending to the acoustic dimensions of the natural world, both Longley and Jamie attempt to renegotiate the hierarchical structures that position the human figure in a superior position to the nonhuman realm, while further advocating for an understanding of place that is sensitive both to its particularities and its permeability. Through an ethical practice of 'listening with attention' their poems trace the resonant connections between human and nonhuman, and present poetry as an essential mode of fostering new forms of ecological relation, and new narratives of political belonging.[6] Thus, in addition to examining their particular aural navigation of the nonhuman world, this chapter suggests that the condition of entanglement (first outlined in the introduction to this thesis) allows these poets to not only attend to local instances of environmental crisis, but broader narratives of political change. Reading through the lens of the bioregion, this chapter proposes that the entangled characteristics of Longley's and Jamie's poetry contests previous readings of their work as exhibiting a 'strategic retreat' from conditions of political violence or political change.[7] While Longley's repeated visitations to Carrigskeewaun, 'a tract of land measuring no more than two kilometres square', for many scholars has signalled his physical and philosophical retreat from the violence of the Troubles, I suggest his continued concern with victims of violence (whether this be political

[4] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.88.

[5] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p.99.

[6] Kathleen Jamie, 'In the Nature of Things', *The Guardian* [online], (18 June 2005) <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jun/18/featuresreviews.guardianreview15> [accessed 13.02.2017] (para 43 of 69)

[7] Donna Potts, *Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), p.12.

or environmental violence) forms a relation between his poetry of the North and West.[8] Where numerous critics suggest his 'adopted homeland in "the wilds" of Mayo is presented as a safe haven (non-colonial realm)', I suggest his continued engagement with victims and vulnerable landscapes within his Carrigskeewaun poems necessitates an alternative reading of this pastoral imaginary.[9] Indeed, for Donna Potts, Longley's use of the elegy can be 'regarded as the means by which he conveys his attitude toward violence in Northern Ireland' as manifested through notions of 'interconnectedness'.[10] Longley himself has suggested that his ecological poetics are in part fuelled by the desire to place the Troubles in perspective: 'In my Mayo poems I am not trying to escape from political violence. I want the light from Carrigskeewaun to irradiate the northern darkness'.[11] His poetic withdrawal to Carrigskeewaun is thus not symptomatic of the desire to enact escape or departure, but rather is used in order to form, and inform, new ideas of community and belonging that may be able to withstand the destructive violence of the North.

Kathleen Jamie's poetry similarly exhibits a heightened sensitivity towards not only environmental crisis, but political change. Her collections *Jizzen* (1999) and *The Tree House* (2004) for many critics signal 'a turning point [in her work] between questions of national identity and a focus on a world that is more than human, and not restricted by traditional identity rubrics'.[12] Rather than forming a sense of place and associated identity through the lens of 'unrestrained cultural nationalism', Jamie's recent work extends from the phenomenological immersion of the poetic subject within a specific environment, most often the Firth of Tay, but also specific islands such as St Kilda or the Monach islands.[13] Through her attentions to these specific sites, her poetry attempts to explore a sense of identity as constituted and affected by the inherent entanglement of person and place, nature and culture. Within Jamie's work, her scrupulous observation of the

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[8] Tom Herron, 'Mayo Littoral: Michael Longley's Eco-elegies', *New Hibernia Review*, 14.4. (Winter 2010), 74-89, (p.83).

[9] James McElroy, 'Northern Ireland ←→ Global South', *Ecocriticism of the Global South,* ed. by Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, Vidya Sarveswaran (London: Lexington Books, 2015), pp.151-161, (p.155).

[10] Potts, p.76.

[11] Michael Longley, interviewed by Jody Allen Randolph, 'Interview: Michael Longley and Jody Allen Randolph', *Colby Quarterly*, 39.3, (September 2003), 294-308, (p.305).

[12] Timothy Baker, '"An Orderly Rabble': Plural Identities in *Jizzen*', *Kathleen Jamie: Essays and Poems on her Work*, ed. by Rachel Falconer (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), pp.62-71, (p.65).

[13] Matt McGuire, 'Kathleen Jamie', *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry,* ed. by Matt McGuire and Colin Nicholson (Edinburgh: EUP, 2009), pp.141-154, (p.143).

natural world leads towards an emphasis on the sound and feel of place that allows her to contemplate new forms of belonging and dwelling that are shaped by notions of scale and intimacy. Where Longley turns to the bioregion of Carrigskeewaun in order to negotiate alternative narratives of belonging that resist the violence and division of the North, Jamie's scrupulous engagements with her selected sites are similarly invoked as a means of fostering alternative models of community and forms of belonging. Her attentive engagements with the nonhuman realm highlight a sense of interdependence and interconnection, where moments of biotic entanglement reflect an understanding of place that 'allow[s] for permeable boundaries, and recognise[s] the connections between places as intrinsic to the well-being of any one place'.[14]

This sense of interconnection arising from encounters with specific 'biomes and watersheds',[15] arises in her two-line poem 'On the Design Chosen for the New Scottish Parliament Building by Architect Enric Miralles', in which she describes the newly devolved Scottish parliament building as 'An upturned boat| - a watershed'.[16] The 14-word title juxtaposed against the 5-word poem plays with questions of scale and economy while also satirising the 'self-importance and long-windedness' of political narratives.[17] As McGuire suggests, the description of the new parliament as a 'watershed [also] evinces a measured ambiguity, both celebration and warning. At long last the boat has been righted, a new voyage has begun'.[18] Yet an upturned boat is ostensibly not 'righted', and is in fact unable to voyage anywhere. The upturned boat might be better understood as signalling the end of a voyage, with the boat providing a new roof of a dwelling place, beckoning a new watershed of political relationships with place. The ambiguity of the poem alerts us to a rising concern of Jamie's post-devolution writing, regarding the 'connections between place-based knowledge and global environmental change, the interdependence of local ecology and global economies'[19] In describing the building as a 'watershed', understood as a both a turning point and a bioregion, Jamie emphasises a need to move away from purely national dimensions of identity and to embrace a new form of community as informed by 'orbits and

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[14] Mitchell Thomashow, 'Towards a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism', *Bioregionalism*, ed. by Michael Vincent MicGinnis (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.121-133, (p.129).
[15] Ibid, p.129
[16] Kathleen Jamie, *Jizzen* (London: Picador, 1999) p.48
[17] McGuire, p.143
[18] Ibid, p.143
[19] Thomashow, p.124

connections that integrate mind and landscape, self and ecosystem, psyche and planet'. [20] As Louisa Gairn suggests, the act of devolution 'gave Jamie permission to move on from the political preoccupations of [her earlier collections] in order to tackle other questions'. [21] The poem dedicated to the new parliament encapsulates not only a sense of political change, but gestures towards a thematic change within Jamie's own work. Importantly, this change does not erase the political dimension of Jamie's poems, but rather signals a change in the scale of her poetic interactions with place. No longer bound by the 'constraints of nationalism', [22] her work is able to oscillate between the distinctly local, and the wider global.

Importantly this oscillating sense of place 'is not only spatial but sonorous'. [23] Through their acoustic attentions to the local environment both Longley and Jamie exhibit a form of writing that seeks to reconcile not only human and nonhuman relations, but also attempts to renegotiate totalising constructions of national identity. It is by looking to, or rather attentively *listening* to, the nonhuman realm that both Longley and Jamie attempt to form a sense of identity and place as formed through relation and interconnection. As Matt McGuire suggests, much 'as drought, hurricanes and severe weather have little respect for national boundaries, [so] Jamie's writing disrupts the demarcation of lines within recent Scottish criticism'. [24] Across their respective works, Longley and Jamie craft an ecopoetic practice that responds to multi-scalar forms of reading place, not only in terms of scales of time and place, but acoustic scales that attend to the resonance of nonhuman sounds and voices. This form of resonance is noted within Jonathan Bate's definition of ecopoetry as '*poiesis* (Greek "making") of the *oikos* (Greek "home" or "dwelling-place")':

> it could be that poiesis in the sense of verse-making is language's most direct path of return to the *oikos,* the place of dwelling because metre itself – a quiet and persistent music, a recurring cycle, a heartbeat – is an answer to nature's own rhythms, an echoing of the song of the earth itself. [25]

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[20] Thomashow, p.121.

[21] Louisa Gairn, 'Clearing Space: Kathleen Jamie and Ecology', *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Berthold Schoene (Edinburgh: EUP 2007), pp.236-245, (p.241).

[22] Ibid, p.241.

[23] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.167.

[24] McGuire, p.142.

[25] Jonathan Bate, *Song of the Earth* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2000), p.245, pp.75-6.

Through its written and aural dimensions, ecopoetry attempts to provide 'not a description of dwelling with the earth, not a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it'.[26] For Bate, the sensorial engagement with place is a fundamental component of an ecopoetics that understands 'that harmonious dwelling with the earth is a matter of *staying put* and *listening in*'.[27] While the concept of 'listening in' will prove a central theme for the following analysis of both Longley and Jamie, the caveat of 'staying put' is problematic when viewed in conjunction with the condition of entanglement which relies upon an innate sense of active interconnection. As sound is continuously on the move, so too are Jamie's and Longley's poems. Their lyrical exploration of place often depicts the poetic figure at the moment of encounter, describing their entry into and movement through a specific bioregion. Their work is shaped by a sense of resonance and dynamism, where the constant mobility and interaction of human and nonhuman sounds provides alternative understandings of community and ecological relation. Through an 'instinctive musical vitality', both Longley and Jamie employ the 'living and dynamic process'[28] of poetry as a means of recognising and responding to the condition of entanglement in which human and nonhuman lives are seen to actively vibrate and resonate against, and with, one another.

i.   Michael Longley's Provisional Dwellings

The question of reconciliation between human and nonhuman worlds through poetry has been a central concern for Michael Longley whose continued fascination with the soundscape of Carrigskeewaun allows him to reckon with new narratives of place. Having visited Carrigskeewaun consistently over the past forty years, his residential excursions to Mayo often coincide with periods of prolific poetic output. Unsurprisingly, the cottage and surrounding landscapes of Carrigskeewaun have come to form a central component of his poetic practice as they allow Longley to 'open [his] mind to the endless intricacies of the landscape'.[29] In his recently collected book of essays, he is surprised to find that

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[26] Ibid, p.42.

[27] Ibid, p.29.

[28] Maria Johnston, '"We Do Language Like Spiders Do Webs": Kathleen Jamie and Michael Longley in Conversation', *Kathleen Jamie: Essays and Poems on her Work*, ed. by Rachel Falconer (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), pp.168-179, (p.168).

[29] Longley, 'Interview', p.307.

'one third' of his entire oeuvre is dedicated to, and indebted to, the landscapes of 'South-West Mayo':

> I'm still only scratching the surface of this small townland. Every time I leave, I wonder will there be any more Mayo poems; but the poems keep arriving. My forthcoming collection, *A Hundred Doors*, will contain another *eighteen*, more than ever [...] Carrigskeewaun provides me with the template for experiencing all other places and keeps me sensitive, I hope, to the nuances of locality. The human habitat in that part of Mayo is precarious, isolated and vulnerable: its history complex. The landscape is haunted by grown-over potato-drills, the ghosts of lazy-beds abandoned during the Famine. The bones of the landscape make me feel in my own bones how provisional dwelling and home are.[30]

Keenly sensitive to the 'nuances of locality', Longley's poetry often belies a sense of provisionality in which place is understood as something 'precarious, isolated and vulnerable'. As Tom Herron suggests, Longley's poetry of this 'diminutive' West, often 'articulates a desire for eco-relationship, for equitable living with animals in a terrain in which they are at "home" and in which he is the visitor'.[31] Indeed, Longley often recognises his position as that of an outsider, a fleeting (though recurring) visitor to a landscape that is populated not only with vulnerable creatures and plants, but also shaped by a complex history of colonial plantation and Famine. Consequently, Longley's Mayo poems often explore the vulnerable dimensions of both human and nonhuman lives, fostering a sense of humility and understanding through entanglement and interconnection.

In 'Carrigskeewaun', this sense of humility and provisionality is evident throughout the sequence. Taken from Longley's second collection *An Exploded View* (1973) and dedicated to the Irish ornithologist David Cabot, 'Carrigskeewaun' charts the landscape across five specific localities: 'The mountain', 'The path', 'The strand', 'The Wall' and 'The lake'.[32] Across the sestets, the poem attempts to promote a sense of community between the human and the nonhuman, one that draws from a mutual sense of vulnerability and openness. The opening stanza describes 'The Mountain' as 'raven's territory, skulls, bones' within which the human figure stands 'alone' atop a pinnacle in the 'upper air'.[33] Perched above the 'marrow of these boulders' the human figure is able to observe

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[30] Michael Longley, *One Wide Expanse* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015), p.54.
[31] Herron, p.80.
[32] Michael Longley, *Collected Poems* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p.68.
[33] Ibid, p.68.

all around him, and able to 'gather children about me,| A collection of picnic things, my voice| Filling the district as I call their names'.[34] This opening stanza presents a division between the human and nonhuman realms where the territory of the raven – a bird noted for its cry – is silenced in the face of the human voice that fills the 'district'. This sense of division between the human and nonhuman continues within the second stanza 'The Path', where the opening line acknowledges the disruptive force of the human figure: 'With my first step I dislodge the mallards'.[35] The entry of the human figure into the landscape displaces numerous resident birds including lapwings, curlews, snipe and kittiwake, until 'I am left with only one swan to nudge| To the far side of its gradual disdain'.[36] The sense of 'gradual disdain' imparts an interesting ethical dimension into the flight of the birds, suggesting that it is not only fear that causes them to scatter, but a sense of indignation. The *OED* defines the term 'disdain' as the 'feeling entertained towards that which one thinks unworthy of notice or beneath one's dignity'.[37] By declaring that the swan experiences 'gradual disdain' due to the action of the human figure, Longley inverts the anthropocentric hierarchies that often cast the natural world as something 'unworthy of notice'.[38]

Thus, while the opening of the poem positions the human figure 'alone' and above nature, here Longley's lyrical 'I' adopts a new perspective of attentiveness in the third and fourth stanzas in which the figure is seen to 'discover', 'notice' and 'join' the nonhuman realm.[39] Tracing the 'remaindered' paths of cattle and 'a sanderling's tiny trail' which merge with the 'footprints of the children and my own| Linking the dunes to the water's edge', the newly attentive position of the poet draws minute, delicate connections between the human and nonhuman world.[40] By entangling the footprints of cattle, sanderlings, and humans with 'dry shells, the toe-| And fingernail parings of the sea',[41] the later stanzas of the poem attempt to reconcile the initial estrangement and division between the human

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[34] Ibid, p.68.
[35] Ibid, p.68.
[36] Ibid, p.68.
[37] 'Disdain, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54122?rskey=t6IO4i&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 17.02.2017].
[38] Longley, *Collected*, p.68.
[39] Ibid, pp.68-9.
[40] Ibid, p.68.
[41] Ibid, p.68.

and nonhuman. This reconciliation continues to the point at which the lyrical 'I' almost completely disappears from the piece, subsumed by 'the mare and her foal,| The heron, all such special visitors' in the concluding stanza.[42] Despite the opening supremacy of the human figure, here at the poem's close, the poet becomes just one of many 'special visitors' within the landscape. The closing description of animals visiting the 'tilted' surface of the lake 'For a few minutes every evening' ensures that this sense of reconciliation remains indefinite and fleeting. The poem presents Carrigskeewaun as a space that enables the poet to 'notice', 'join', and 'receive' the nonhuman realm, but only for a 'few minutes' at the close of the day. This small time scale necessitates the poet to shift into a state of attentive reciprocity, where the poetic figure transforms from an observing dominant presence into an attentive and relational being, entangled in the landscape.

Longley's poems often present a sense of precariousness and vulnerability that allows him to remain sensitive to instances of environmental change and transformation. While this sensitivity is usually directed towards the nonhuman, his work also responds to the 'precarious, isolated and vulnerable' histories of human inhabitants within the region.[43] In the fourth stanza of the sequence, 'The Wall', Longley insinuates himself into the human history of Carrigskeewaun: 'I join all the men who have squatted here'.[44] The use of 'squatted' is important as it does not reflect a sense of comfort or permanency. As previously noted, much of Longley's poetic practice is driven by conditions of transformation, metamorphosis and change. For Tom Herron however, Carrigskeewaun is a 'place seemingly outside history in which nature and the natural predominate'.[45] Here, Herron's assessment establishes a problematic division between human and 'natural history' within Longley's poetry, effectively aligning human history with the political violence of the North, and not within the 'natural' landscapes of Co. Mayo.[46] In a similar vein Kim Boey suggests that while Longley's 'ecological miniatures' provide a space for the castigation of 'human ignorance and waste', they are essentially 'unburdened by history and images of the past' focusing

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[42] Ibid, p.69.
[43] Longley, 'Interview', p.305.
[44] Longley, *Collected*, p.69.
[45] Heron, p.80.
[46] Ibid, p.85.

instead 'on the immediate present and its grasp of biodiversity'.[47] Likewise, Elmer Kennedy-Andrews suggests that in his western landscapes Longley 'has no interest in either politicising the terrain or in reading it politically or historically'.[48] Yet, when looking more intently to the acoustic ecologies of Longley's Carrigskeewaun poems, the contested relationships between human and natural history is often at the forefront of his poetic practice. Rather than establishing a division between human and natural history, Longley's poems directly register and respond to the ways in which natural and human histories affect and influence one another.

In response to questions regarding the politics of nature poetry, Longley has declared that for him the:

> most urgent political problems are ecological: how we share the planet with the plants and the other animals. My nature writing is my most political. In my Mayo poems I am not trying to escape from political violence.[49]

He further asserts that his poetry does not 'dwell among the calls of water birds and the psychedelic blaze of summer flowers to escape from Ulster's political violence', but rather looks to these ecosystems as a means of forming alternative relationships with violently and politically divided places.[50] Through themes of loss, violence, and disruption, Longley's descriptions of the natural world retain a political potency that ensures his Mayo poems are 'as much about the North' as they are of the West.[51] Indeed, in his very first Mayo poem, 'The West' Longley highlights the interconnections between the Western and Northern landscapes:

> Beneath the gas-mantle that moths bombard,
> Light that powders at a touch, dusty wings,
> I listen for news through the atmospherics,
> A crackle of sea-wrack, spinning driftwood,
> Waves like distant traffic, news from home,[52]

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[47] Kim Boey, 'Sailing to an Island: Contemporary Irish Poetry visits the Western Islands', *Shima*, 2.2 (2008), 19-41, (p.33).
[48] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.138.
[49] Longley, 'Interview', p.305.
[50] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.55.
[51] Ibid, p.55.
[52] Longley, *Collected*, p.69.

Through a confluence of natural and manufactured sounds the poem forms acoustic links between human and nonhuman beings, but also forms connections between Northern and Western geographies where the 'crackle of sea-wrack' echoes the static of the radio, the bombardment of moths recalls bombs in Belfast, and the sea's waves invoke the sound of 'distant traffic'. In so doing, Longley ensures that '"the West" is not [understood as] a pastoral domain outside history and violence',[53] but instead emerges as an inherently relational and connected space that is shaped by wider discourses of violence and change. Longley aligns his work within a long tradition of encountering political violence through Western landscapes, citing Yeats' 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' and MacNeice's 'The Closing Album', as means of addressing how 'The Civil War, the Anglo-Irish War, two World Wars, [and] the Troubles have all been refracted through the West'.[54] This sense of refraction is important as it presents poetry as a resonant force that is able to cross political, historical, and geographical boundaries. The attention to environmental sound across his poems holds both ecological and political significance as 'sound-signals can cross visual boundaries in a deeply divided Ulster' his poems become 'a breeding ground for unexpected, perhaps even unwelcome, cross-border affinities and affiliations'.[55] Through his 'meticulous' aural attentiveness to the biotic environment, Longley's resonant soundscapes expose both the inadequacy of 'political certainties – Green Ireland, Orange Ulster' and advocate for more relational and inclusive forms of belonging.[56] The sonic dimensions of Longley's work thus not only 'notice' the ecological interconnections and resonances between the human and the nonhuman, but also present the possibility to counteract the essentialism and exclusivism of sectarian constructions of place.

As Potts suggests, Longley's 'references to biological interconnectedness suggest that along with his need to traverse social, cultural, and political boundaries is the need to challenge the boundaries traditionally posited between the self and nature' whereby his 'emphasis on interconnectedness obviously suggests an alternative to Northern Ireland's legacy of sectarian violence'.[57] In 'The Ice-Cream Man', Longley again 'brings together the two parts of Ireland [...]

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[53] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.55.
[54] Ibid, p.55.
[55] Julia Obert, *Postcolonial Overtures: The Politics of Sound in Contemporary Northern Irish Poetry* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015), p.15.
[56] Ibid, p.55.
[57] Potts, p.76.

Belfast and the Western seaboard' through an 'aural wreath' written in memory of the murder of the local ice-cream man on Lisburn Road.[58] The poem presents a catalogue of ice-cream flavours 'Rum and raisin, vanilla, butterscotch, walnut, peach' alongside a litany of local wildflowers:

> I named for you all the wild flowers of the Burren
> I had seen in one day: thyme, valerian, loosestrife,
> Meadowsweet, tway blade, crowfoot, ling, angelica,
> Herb robert, marjoram, cow parsley, sundew, vetch,
> Mountain avens, wood sage, ragged robin, stitchwort,
> Yarrow, lady's bedstraw, bindweed, bog pimpernel.[59]

For Longley, the poem is presented as a commemorative 'prayer' that recognises the murder of the ice-cream man as a violation of 'all nature. The poem is also, partly, an elegy for the flowers themselves, which are under increasing threat'.[60] While the listing of flavours and flowers forms a sense of connection between the human and the nonhuman, notably the list of plants is nearly five times as long. Indeed, Longley provides us with twenty-one specific botanical names while the murdered figure remains unidentified. For Herron, the omission of human community within Longley's poems is problematic as it 'neglects, almost entirely, local intra-human contact, as if human beings were somehow exempt from ecological consideration'.[61] I suggest that the omission of the ice-cream man's name arguably reflects Longley's assertion that in his work he is 'not writing about a cosy community', but rather seeks to 'understand and explore [...] the darkness and violence [of] community'.[62]

Across Longley's Mayo poems, the human figure is often depicted as the source of ecological violence; a disruptive figure that violates and dislodges 'all nature'. While this configuration of humanity as the source of environmental destruction is problematic (implying that ecological systems can only remain intact through the absence of humans), the sublimation of political violence into ecological violence within his most recent poems explores the shared condition of vulnerability that extends across both human and nonhuman lives. In his more recent collection, *A Hundred Doors* (2011), his exploration of political violence gives way to a more overt ecological concern with place, actively exploring ways

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[58] Longley, *One Wide Expanse,* p.55.
[59] Longley, *Collected,* p.192.
[60] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.56.
[61] Herron, pp.80-1.
[62] Longley, 'Interview', p.303.

to 'share the planet with the plants and the other animals'.[63] The opening poem of the collection, titled 'Call', plays with the cadence of human and nonhuman vocalisations as Longley imagines a friend 'Alone at Carrigskeewaun for the millennium' awaiting his phone call: 'Is it too late to phone him? Is it midnight yet?| That could be me, a meadow pipit calling out'.[64] Forging an acoustic convergence between phone call and bird call, the poem presents Carrigskeewaun as a site of sonic entanglement where despite the opening assertion that the figure is 'Alone', we see they are in fact joined by a host of animal and bird life, including otters, mallards, widgeons, and dolphins. The attention to time within this piece is significant as Longley is drawn both to the immediate moment of the phone call between two friends and the longer timescale of the passing millennium. Across the poem, the passing of time is mirrored by the counting of wildlife in which the speaker notes the specific numbers of animals that wind their way through the terrain.

Indeed, the collection as a whole is shaped by questions of time and 'passing', dealing with themes of birth and death, absence and presence, calls and counting. Perhaps the most pervasive theme of the collection however is a sense of listening and being listened to, of call and response. Poems such as 'At Dawn', 'Lullaby', 'Otter Cubs' and 'Hedge-Jug' draw acoustic relations between the human and nonhuman where both human and animal are shown to be equally attentive to one another's calls. In 'Lullaby', Longley asserts that 'The vixen will hear you cry', in 'Otter Cubs' the poet recalls the sound of otters through memories of 'their gasps and sneezes', in 'At Dawn', waking from a 'grandfatherly nightmare' Longley listens as 'The westerly blew me wren-song, then| Wing-music. Five swans creaking towards| Corragaun Lake would have been enough', and in 'Hedge-Jug' the song of local birds accompany Longley as he brings his infant grandson into the domestic space: 'Cocooning us in their whisper of contact-| Calls as I carry you into the house, seven| Or six long-tailed tits flitter out of the hedge'.[65] The small numbers of animals and birds noted in the poems may of course be due to the 'diminutive' scale of Longley's poems, but equally they may reflect a wider consciousness of ecological threat. In a lecture delivered at the University College Dublin in 2010, Longley notes how the ecological

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[63] Ibid, p.305.
[64] Michael Longley, *A Hundred Doors* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p.1.
[65] Ibid, p.11, p.6, p.4, p.12.

transformation of not only Carrigskeewaun, but Ireland as a whole has come to directly affect the history and memory of place:

> The whole island is under threat: contaminated lakes, fish-kills, ruthless overgrazing, 'bungalow blight', chemical overkill, building on flood plains, oil spills, inappropriately sited motorways. We are methodically turning beauty spots into eyesores. Even Carrigskeewaun is changing. The stony boreen that leads to the Owennadornaun River has been tarmacadamed. Where we used to wade with our bundles there is now a concrete bridge. We might have seen dippers and sandmartins and sandpipers there, and, in the meadow beyond, butterfly orchids. But the meadow has been turned into a carpark.[66]

This transformation of Carrigskeewaun from a thriving ecosystem, lively with birds and plants into a concrete, 'tarmacadamed', carpark reflects a shift in Longley's most recent works. No longer threatened by the violence of bombs and gunshots, the threat of violence arises in new guises in the form of 'motorways and high rises that jeopardize sacred sites; global warming which endangers local flora and fauna' or acid rain and other pollutants that permeate the ecosphere'.[67] The continued counting of creatures within *A Hundred Doors*, in many ways responds to this sense of environmental transformation where the need to accurately count the specific numbers of particular species in Carrigskeewaun recalls ecological field methods, such as bird counts, that are used to estimate and track population size. The three most common forms of field methods for bird counting are mapping, line transects and point transects.[68] Longley's poems seem to align with line transect counting where 'a line transect involves traveling a predetermined route and recording birds on either side of the observer. The distance a bird is seen or heard from the transect line is normally recorded as an absolute measure, or in distance bands.'[69] Across his poems, the act of counting momentary intersections between the human and the nonhuman, becomes an ecological refrain that draws our attention to the declining nonhuman populations of the territory.

In 'The Leveret' and 'The Wren', first published in *Selected Poems* (2006), Longley continues to display a concern with the longevity of the environment.

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[66] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.56.

[67] Potts, p.13.

[68] Richard D. Gregory, David W. Gibbons and Paul F. Donald, 'Bird Census and Survey Techniques', *Bird Ecology and Conservation: A Handbook for Techniques,* ed. by William J. Sutherland, Ian Newton and Rhys E. Green (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp.17-57, (p.36).

[69] Ibid, p.39.

The poems present a conflation between animal life, 'bird life and emerging human generations' as a means of charting the changing conditions of both human and natural history. [70] In 'The Leveret' – referring to a hare in its first year – Longley draws an analogy between various forms of young life such as his one-year-old grandson, a leveret, and a tufted duck's 'hatchlings, pompoms| A day old and already learning to dive'.[71] The opening and closing lines of the poem – 'This is your first night in Carrigskeewaun' – do not only address the arrival of Longley's grandson at the cottage, but the other young birds and creatures that are experiencing the landscape for the first time.[72] Across the piece, Longley prompts his progeny to attend to the landscape as he does: 'Did you hear the wind in the fluffy chimney?| Do you hear the wind tonight, and the rain| And a shore bird calling from the mussel reefs?'[73] By encouraging his young grandson to notice the acoustic dimensions of the landscape 'The Leveret' invokes a sense of environmental legacy, where Longley's young grandson presents an opportunity for the poet to continue his ethical practice of ecological attentiveness.

In 'The Wren', Longley's self-reflective opening line highlights this desire for ecological continuity: 'I am writing too much about Carrigskeewaun,| I think, until you two come along, my grandsons'. [74] The initial statement that 'I am writing too much about Carrigskeewaun', can be understood as both a self-conscious apology, while also indicating a deeper sense that his ability to write about Carrigskeewaun may be drawing to a close. The entry of his young grandsons into the frame of the poem presents the opportunity for him to continue his work, and pass on the ethics of attention he has cultivated throughout his time at Carrigskeewaun. Again time scales shift from the momentary to the infinite here, with Longley punning on the nature of 'wild thyme' as 'A day here represents a life-time'.[75] The fascination with ecological sound and nonhuman 'calls' also remains evident throughout 'The Wren' through Longley's use of iambic hexameter. The use of hexameters and alexandrines is a common feature of Longley's work as he proclaims their form provides 'more

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[70] Christine Cusick, 'A Capacity for Sustained Flight: Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Ecology of Avian Encounter', *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture,* ed. by Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), pp.182-196, (p.190).
[71] Longley, *A Hundred Doors*, p.7.
[72] Ibid, p.7.
[73] Ibid, p.7.
[74] Ibid, p.10.
[75] Ibid, p.10.

room for strange sound effects – the sort of clashes and remote harmonies you get in Homer', or indeed in birdsong.[76] Through the poem's lively mixture of human and nonhuman sounds, Longley crafts a shared history of human and animal existence in which the 'outreach to natural history is juxtaposed with the speaker's desire to take a place in his grandsons' memory'.[77]

Unlike the figure in 'Carrisgkeewaun', in 'The Wren' Longley does not dislodge the avian community, but rather attempts to form a 'contrapuntal runnel' to the biotic soundscape formed through the flows of bird song and 'brackish water'. The poem is shaped by the shared 'burble' of human and nonhuman life, with the final sentence of the poem declaring:

> I want you both to remember me
> And what the wind-tousled wren has been saying
> All day long from fence posts and the fuschia depths,
> A brain-rattling bramble-song inside a knothole.[78]

The call to both 'remember me' and the 'wind-tousled wren', directly links human and natural history through the act of listening. The ability to listen and recall is a vital dynamic within the collection where poetry is understood as a vehicle for both memorialisation but also future action. The act of counting thus becomes another means of recounting, of reckoning with forms of environmental relation. His continued attention to the numbers and sounds of nonhuman creatures reflects the function of the lyric poem which attempts to recount, and contemplate, the unfolding of a single moment. The intimate scale of Longley's bird counts opens his site-specific poems to grander scales of extinction and environmental decline. While his work gravitates towards the specific contours of Carrigskeewaun he remains attentive to the 'great migrations [taking] place [...] "above our heads" and the other heroic odysseys beneath the waves'.[79] By acknowledging the migratory arrivals and departures of birds, dolphins, and other creatures that also visit Carrigskeewaun, Longley ensures that his works open the otherwise diminutive scales of his Mayo poems.

Despite their localism, Longley's poems 'compose a territorial assemblage of constant becoming, a forward-moving process that engages the earth's force:

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[76] Longley, 'Interview', p.306.
[77] Cusick, p.190.
[78] Longley, *A Hundred Doors*, p.10.
[79] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.61.

its movement, expansion, and contraction; slippage and disjunction; geological drift and ecosystemic conflict'.[80] For example, in 'Wren' the appearance of 'whooper swans| From the tundra' 'and the Saharan| Wheatear' remind both poet and reader that the cottage at Carrigskeewaun is not only home to sedentary species but is also visited by migratory birds.[81] Exploring the connections between local and migratory species, Longley's works avoid the parochial tendencies of place-specific poetry by remaining attentive to the wider, transnational biological entanglements of place. Through his references to biotic interconnection and exploration of acoustic resonance, Longley's Carrigskeewaun poems present the terrain as a series of 'rhizomatic relationships [...] mediated by the ear'.[82] Consequently, 'Carrisgkeewaun is not really a "remote corner": it is a focal point, a nerve centre',[83] that enables Longley to encounter a 'rhizomatic series of "takes", instances, fleetings, movements, becomings and unbecomings that, over time, build into a loosely defined map or log of moments of intense engagements with animals and the landscape'.[84] His description of Carrigskeewaun as his 'home from home' acknowledges that both place and personal identity are formed through multiple lines of flight and ecological connections that extend ever-outwards, beyond the borders of the Mayo bioregion.[85]

The final poem of the collection, 'Greenshank', highlights this sense of flux and relation as Longley alerts us to the precarious future of Carrigskeewaun, asking at one point: 'How long will Corragaun remain a lake?'.[86] The collection ends with the acknowledgement that someday soon Longley will leave 'Carrigskeewaun for the last time',[87] necessitating him to pass on his ecological responsibilities with the region. He selects the 'esturial flutings' of the greenshank's 'bird call' as a means of 'reminding' his grandsons of their duty. [88] Again Longley highlights the significance of acts of noticing and counting, declaring 'I hope you discover something I've overlooked,| Greenshanks, say, two

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[80] Donna Ellard, 'Going Interspecies, Going Interlingual, and Flying Away with the Phoenix', *Exemplaria*, 23.3 (2011), 268-292, (p.272).
[81] Longley, *A Hundred Doors*, p.10.
[82] Obert, p.88.
[83] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.61.
[84] Herron, p.84.
[85] Longley, *Collected*, p.69.
[86] Longley, *A Hundred Doors,* p.48.
[87] Ibid, p.48.
[88] Ibid, p.48.

or three, elegantly probing'. [89] Despite its elegiac undertones, Longley's suggestion that the new generation will be able to see something he has 'overlooked' in combination with the incremental numbers of greenshanks ('two or three'), the collection ends on a sense of possible growth and renewal. Across the collection, Longley's poems present a potent and scrupulous engagement with the nuanced localities of Co. Mayo and sensitively attend to the changing conditions of the biotic community, revealing human and natural history to be ineffaceably intertwined and relational.

ii.   Titled Dwellings in *The Tree House*

At a reading for the 'Friendship of Poets' symposium held at Queen's University Belfast in 2006, Michael Longley describes the acoustic dimensions of Jamie's work as possessing 'perfect pitch, a natural sense of cadence, and verbal melody that helps to give her work the feel of organic inevitability'. [90] He goes on to note that 'her poetry is full of body words, English and Scots, her poetry is full of sky and hills, rock pools, glimmerings, plum trees, holly, birds and birds nest, lochs [and makes] reluctant room too for supermarkets and multi-storey carparks' and further suggests her poetic exploration of 'identity and nationality is of even more interest now that Scotland has its own parliament'. [91] Longley's introduction is important, not only in his eloquent identification of the varied ecological, acoustic and political focuses of Jamie's poetry, but in the affinities he draws between their respective works. Noting their shared preoccupation with questions of provisionality, humility, and environmental transformation his attention to Jamie's use of sound is particularly important as she has herself noted the ethical importance of listening:

> When we were young, we were told that poetry is about voice, about finding a voice and speaking with this voice, but the older I get I think it's not about voice, it's about listening and the art of listening, listening with attention. I don't just mean with the ear; bringing the quality of attention to the world. [92]

Across *The Tree House*, Jamie repeatedly brings this 'quality of attention' to her poems, isolating specific moments and sounds that arise within the watershed of

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[89] Ibid, p.48.
[90] Michael Longley, 'Introduction to Kathleen Jamie', *Friendship of Poets Symposium*, Queen's University Belfast (November 2006) <https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/media/Media,60915,en.mp3> [accessed 13.02.2017].
[91] Ibid.
[92] Kathleen Jamie, 'In The Nature of Things', (para 43 of 69).

her home territory on the firth of Tay and other bioregions across the Scottish Isles.[93] Her focus on the aural dimensions of place draws out new narratives of relation that share with Longley a desire to reconcile the relationships between humans and nonhumans.

For many scholars *The Tree House* has been read as marking a central departure in Jamie's work, moving away from issues of national identity and the question of 'Scottishness' and instead concerning itself with the natural world. While *The Tree House* certainly marks a new phase in Jamie's oeuvre, this stark division between the national and natural dimensions of her work has produced a 'strangely depoliticised response to Jamie's work', where her engagement with the natural world is read as a conscious turn away from the question of nation.[94] Yet, as Louisa Gairn suggests, 'the divisions or meeting points between culture and nature pervade a great deal of Jamie's post-devolution writings'.[95] Indeed, her most recent collection *The Bonniest Companie* (2015), was born of a desire 'to write a poem a week, and follow the cycle of the year' in the run up to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum.[96] Across 47 poems Jamie deftly ties together political and ecological experiences of place, roving from visions of a rewilded Scotland happy with 'the lynx's return, the re-established wolf's' in 'Glacial', to bleaker images in the found poem 'Wings Over Scotland', (a title drawn from the pro-independence political website of the same name) in which she charts the 'Suspicious death' of buzzards, golden eagles, red kites and kestrels that have been shot or poisoned with 'No prosecution'.[97] In a recent article for the *LRB*, Jamie highlights how 'Scotland still has the most inequitable pattern of land ownership in Europe: [...] 432 people own half the private land in rural Scotland', these poems in particular address the ongoing ecological and political issues with landownership in Scotland, where the poem's counting of slaughtered birds on private estates draws attention to ongoing tensions between 'ownership and

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[93] The firth of Tay is also prominent in her earlier collections *The Queen of Sheba* (1994) in poems such as 'Bairns of Suzie: a hex', 'The Republic of Fife', 'Den of the Old Men', 'Sky Burial'; *Jizzen* (1999) 'Ultrasound', 'Tay Moses', and emerges in a series of 'Tay Sonnets' in *The Overhaul* (2012).

[94] David Wheatley, '"Proceeding Without a Map": Kathleen Jamie and the Lie of the Land', *Kathleen Jamie: Essays and Poems on her Work*, ed. by Rachel Falconer (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), pp.52-61, (p.56).

[95] Gairn, p.243.

[96] Kathleen Jamie, *The Bonniest Companie* (London: Picador, 2015), dustjacket.

[97] Ibid, p.4, p.55.

responsibility'.[98] The collection as a whole expresses similar concerns to her earlier collection *The Tree House* where questions of dwelling, relation and responsibility are paramount. Thus, while it is true that her more recent works 'have more to do with questions of natural history and human ecology than with territorial allegiance or national identity',[99] her continued negotiation of the politics of 'home' through intimate observations of specific regions remains vital to her poetic practice. Consequently, one cannot read *The Tree House* without attending to its political dimensions, as the collection often exhibits a sense of responsibility towards the land, seeking to 'address maters of pressing environmental concern through a politics derived from a local sense of place'.[100]

As Maria Johnston suggests, Jamie's title *The Tree House* is arguably an intertextual reference to Longley's poem 'Tree-house' taken from *Gorse Fires* (1991), the final line of which Jamie uses in her dedication in *Jizzen* (1999). The intertextual significance of this epigraph alerts us to the affiliations and differences between Longley's and Jamie's practice. Indeed, Jamie's titular poem 'The Tree House' echoes images and lines of Longley's earlier 'Tree-house', where lines such as 'our small-town Ithicas, our settlements| hitched tight beside the river',[101] resonates with Longley's depiction of the 'master-craftsman, Odysseus' who builds an 'ingenious bedroom' with the 'stone-work tightly set, the thatching waterproof'.[102] Likewise, Jamie's description of the poetic figure as an 'unseeable' 'bletted fruit| hung through tangled branches| just out of reach',[103] mirrors Longley's image of Odysseus 'tangled like a child in the imaginary branches| of the tree-house he had built, love poet, carpenter'.[104] Jamie's poem in particular presents the condition of entanglement as an essential component to dwelling, where the 'tangled branches' of the Tree House present 'a complicity' between human and nonhuman as 'beside me neither man| nor child, but a lichened branch' draws her into a 'close' embrace.[105] 'The Tree House' presents a central consideration of the ability of poetry to 'relate a "dwelling" in the natural world to

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[98] Kathleen Jamie, 'In Fife', *London Review of Books* [online], 37.8, (23 April 2015) <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n08/kathleen-jamie/in-fife> [accessed 20.08.2017].
[99] Gairn, p.244.
[100] Lynch, Glotfelty and Ambruster, p.2.
[101] Kathleen Jamie, *The Tree House* (London: Picador, 2004), p.42.
[102] Longley, *Collected*, p.177.
[103] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.41.
[104] Longley, *Collected*, p.177.
[105] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.41.

the "dwelling" possible in the structured rhythmic frameworks of poetry'.[106] While the growth of the 'lichened branch' effortlessly winds itself into the 'wooden chamber' of the Tree House, the human process of creation is less smooth, it is something 'knocked together| of planks and packing chests| a dwelling of sorts'.[107] While Longley's piece presents the poet as a master carpenter, seemingly able to dwell within the craft of poetry – for Jamie this condition is less assured. Her work is only ever able to produce a 'dwelling of sorts', her verse unable to 'coax this bird to my hand' and repeat a song that 'isn't mine to give'.[108]

Thus where Longley often relates the ability of poetry to 'sing about everything',[109] Jamie's works are more cautious of the means by which writing is ever able to capture a sense of place. This concern is one of the central issues of ecopoetics, grappling with the (im)possibility of reconciling the relationship between human and nonhuman realms through the medium of language (poetry). As the act of writing is an essentially human form, the notion that one might be able to re-engage with the natural world through writing becomes difficult. Arguably, while ecopoetry 'cannot avoid the human "I" at its centre [...] What it can do, however, is to strive to represent relationships with the environment, to be scrupulous in its observance of the condition of enmeshment in the world'.[110] Across *The Tree House*, Jamie is thus not only scrupulous in her attentions to the acoustic environment, but is equally meticulous in her attention to the limits of her poetic form.

Significantly, Jamie's sense of dwelling in *The Tree House* is informed by the verb 'tilt', defined as: 'to cause to fall to thrust, push, throw down or over; to overthrow, overturn, upset'.[111] Her poems, similar to Longley's sense of provisionality, present dwelling as an active process that is vulnerable to destabilisation. The collection's opening poem, 'The Wishing Tree', highlights the conditions of tilted dwelling. Opening with an ambiguous yet declarative

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[106] Peter Mackay, '"The Tilt from One Parish to Another": *The Tree House* and *Findings*', *Kathleen Jamie: Essays and Poems on her Work*, ed. by Rachel Falconer (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), pp.84-92, (p.87).

[107] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.43.

[108] Ibid, p.49.

[109] Longley, *A Hundred Doors*, p.61.

[110] David Borthwick, 'Introduction', *Entanglements: New Ecopoetry*, ed. by David Knowles and Sharon Blackie (Isle of Lewis: Two Ravens Press, 2012), pp.xv-xxiii, (p.xvii).

[111] 'Tilt, v.1', *OED* [online] <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202041?rskey=NIvlch&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 17.02.2017].

statement: 'I stand neither in the wilderness| nor fairyland',[112] Jamie alerts us to the liminal position of the poetic speaker who frequently inhabits spaces in-between. The refusal to occupy either of these idealised spaces of 'wilderness' or 'fairyland', marks Jamie's conscious departure from the Romantic depictions of Scottish landscapes that commonly invoke a sense of Celtic otherworldliness. Hinged 'in the fold| of a green hill', the poetic figure occupies a liminal position within the landscape, neither here nor there, but instead existing on the threshold of 'the tilt from one parish| into another'.[113] The 'tilt' Jamie describes, unsettles the otherwise seemingly stable conditions of dwelling by imparting into the poem conditions of transformation and change. Many of the poems in *The Tree House* subsequently do not produce a static or indeed harmonious form of dwelling, but rather self-consciously construct a tilted 'dwelling of sorts'.

For instance, 'The Bower', a space that refers to both a woodland dwelling and a form of anchor, explores porous notions of dwelling through a poetics of destabilisation. The poem in part can be seen as a response to Jonathan Bate's suggestion that ecopoetry 'is either (both?) a language (*logos*) that restores us to our home (*oikos*) or (and?) a melancholy recognizing that our only home (*oikos*) is language (*logos*)'.[114] 'The Bower' opens with a statement that recalls the opening declaration of 'The Wishing Tree':

> Neither born nor gifted
> crafted nor bequeathed
> this forest dwelling's little
> but a warp or tease[115]

By listing what the bower is not ('born', 'gifted', 'crafted' or 'bequeathed'), Jamie prompt us to consider what the bower *is* and describes it variously as: 'a warp or tease', 'nothing but an attitude of mind| mere breath rising in staves', an 'anchorage| or music box'.[116] In opposition to the material assuredness of 'The Tree House', here Jamie presents this 'forest dwelling' as an imaginative construction formed through the interwoven cadences of song and speech. For Peter Mackay, the poem is consequently understood as 'an evocation of dwelling

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[112] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.3.
[113] Ibid, p.3.
[114] Bate, italics in original, p.243.
[115] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.17.
[116] Ibid, p.17.

in language as much as in nature'.[117] Through a continual flow of 'interlinking yet loose-limbed' rhyme,[118] the poem expresses a 'need| to annunciate' the poetic condition and construction of dwelling.[119]

Revealing that this 'dwelling's| little but warp or tease| in the pliant light' Jamie once again provides us with an unbalancing tilt.[120] This 'plaint' quality of language and landscape combines throughout 'The Bower' through a continued interplay of musical and maritime terms. The oceanic language used throughout the poem ('anchorage', 'listing deep', 'waves') allows the text to engage the dynamics of arrival and departure. Consequently 'The Bower' relates a mode of dwelling that is not constant or static, but is actively enacted at multiple points of 'anchorage'. The open-ended final quatrain of the poem highlights this mobility:

> But when song, cast
> from such frail enclaves
> meets the forest's edge,
> it returns in waves[121]

The multiple 'waves' of return encourages us to think of poetry as a practice of exchange, where the vocal and aural engagement with the landscape incurs a relational musicality. The song cast from the enclaves of the bower is not limited to the confines of the loosely constructed space, but instead is able to resound outwards and interact with different acoustic assemblages and refrains. The active annunciation of the 'frail' poetic space prompts us to consider how through 'sound, through the various refrains we invent, repeat, and catch from nonhumans, we receive news of the [...] energies to which we humans are always in close, molecular proximity'.[122]

In 'Landfall' Jamie again plays with the notion of titled dwelling, where the term 'Landfall' refers both to the act of arrival at land after a sea voyage, but also to the destabilising conditions of landslide. Reflecting this dual signification, the

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[117] Mackay, p.87.
[118] Ibid, p.87.
[119] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.17.
[120] Ibid, p.17.
[121] Ibid, p.17.
[122] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.168.

single stanza poem undergoes a series of transformations as the speaker's attentiveness to the landscape shifts in the act of noticing:

> When we walk at the coast
> and notice, above the sea,
> a single ragged swallow
> veering towards the earth-
> and blossom-scented breeze,
> can we allow ourselves to fail[123]

The inclusion of the comma after 'notice' allows us to pause, ensuring that both reader and speaker remain attentive to the scene before them. Looking upward toward the 'ragged swallow' the poem is instilled with a sense of vertigo as the bird suddenly plummets towards the earth. This sudden 'veering' is akin to the opening 'tilt' of the collection – a destabilising action which unbalances the poet's position within the world. It is from this unbalanced positon that Jamie is able to adopt a new perspective that directly contests the supposed superiority of the human figure and their control of the world through language. The sudden alteration in perspective prompts the speaker to recognise, to notice, their own embeddedness within a changing world, thus prompting the question at the end of the piece: 'can we allow ourselves to fail'. The sudden veer of the swallow effectively destabilises the poets' orthographic control of language, as despite the intonation of the closing line, Jamie does not pose it as a question, but as a statement. For Lucy Collins, there is 'a strong link in Jamie's poetry between her passionate attachment to that natural world and her acknowledgement that poetry has a further role in exploring the most difficult transitions in human life'.[124] This question 'can we allow ourselves to fail', therefore not only refers to a sense of ecological failure in terms of the human's responsibility for environmental destruction – but the notion that poetry itself can fail in effectively producing a sense of landfall; of dwelling and attachment to place. Importantly, by ending the poem on an open-ended line, akin to 'The Bower', Jamie does not close down or answer this question, but instead allows it to resound outwards, encouraging us to question the concepts of failure, complicity and responsibility.

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[123] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.15.

[124] Lucy Collins, '"Toward a Brink": The Poetry of Kathleen Jamie and Environmental Crisis', *Crisis and Contemporary Poetry,* ed. by Anne Karhio, Seán Crosson, and Charles I. Armstrong (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), pp.150-166, (p.155).

Through her scrupulous acoustic attentions, Jamie's poems move beyond a distanced observation of the natural world and instead present the speaker as one component of a relational and resonant environment. Similar to Longley, many of her poems explore this sense of relation by attending to and noticing the specific species of birds and plants that populate the biotic community of the region. Many poems within the collection are named after the native creatures and plants that populate the archipelago: 'Frogs', 'Alder', 'The Swallow's Nest', 'Swallows', 'White-sided Dolphins', 'Basking Shark', 'Pipistrelles', 'Daises', 'Rhododendrons', 'Water Lilies', 'The Falcon'. This sense of proximity with the nonhuman world is a similar feature of Longley's works, as he himself acknowledges: 'the plants and the animals were what first involved me in Mayo'.[125] Importantly, both Longley's and Jamie's works highlight the difficulties and distances inherent in poetic attempts to gain proximity with the nonhuman. While Longley's works frequently explore a sense of provisional dwelling, Jamie's continued tilting towards the natural world instils a key dynamic of instability and flux in her poems dedicated to the flora and fauna of the bioregion. In 'Flight of Birds', Jamie overtly explores human responsibility for environmental decline through the observed suffering of an avian community. The opening stanza presents a scene of transformation and loss where:

> From our gardens the mavis is melted away,
> She is gravel: waders veer overhead
> Crying *whither? whither?* and the poor duck
> Flusters at the roadside with her clipped wings.[126]

The opening image of the 'melted' mavis – a regional term for the song thrush – is significant as here Jamie explores both local and global scales of environmental transformation. The local scale of 'our gardens' is transformed by the incursion of 'gravel' that dislodges the mavis from its habitat, while the use of the term 'melted' calls forth planetary scales of ecological crisis, invoking images of melting ice-caps, species extinction, and habitat loss. The repetition of '*whither? whither?*', accentuates this sense of displacement and habitat loss, while the image of the 'poor duck' with 'her clipped wings' reinforces the responsibility of the human figure in causing this disturbance. In the third stanza Jamie forcibly announces the role of the human in causing environmental destruction: 'There is

[125] Longley, *One Wide Expanse*, p.52.
[126] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.39.

no Paradise,| we've humiliated living creatures'.[127] The use of plural pronouns throughout the piece accentuates a sense of complicity, implying that it is not simply the lyrical speaker or local community, but rather the whole of humanity that is responsible for causing and perpetuating conditions of environmental crisis. The poem presents a possible solution for counteracting this sense of loss and decline: '- Suppose as a last ditch, we gathered| [...] and called| each bird by name' where the actions of naming and attending are the only way 'we yet prevail [...] to remain within our sentience in this| the only world?'[128] In naming the 'wren, water rail, tiny anointed goldcrest', [129] Jamie asserts the notion that 'loss can only be rectified by attentiveness, and further, by the power of language itself'.[130] In the closing stanza Jamie draws an affinity between poetry and bird song, questioning 'if *they* greet dawn| by singing of a better place, can we complain?'[131] The act of singing is presented as a communal activity, something that '*they*' and 'we' might be able to perform together within the shared space of this 'the only world'. [132] Throughout 'Flight of Birds', Jamie highlights the correlation between community and communication, and positions the work of poetry and song as a means of interweaving human and nonhuman worlds. Importantly, the repeated use of rhetorical questions within the piece recognises Jamie's own questioning of the feasibility of poetry to effectively craft this form of ecological communion. The final scene of the sonnet closes on this sense of uncertainty with the image of a 'yellow-tailed merlin' that 'tilts inside' a cave mouth. [133] The use of the term 'tilt' reflects the vulnerable and destabilised condition of the environment in the poem, but also prompts us to overturn our common anthropocentric modes of perception. It is only by tilting our perspective towards the shared vulnerabilities of the natural world that ecological relations may begin to 'prevail'.

While birds take a prominent position within Jamie's works, she is also drawn to the sudden movement of cetaceans and sea creatures. In 'White-sided Dolphins' the speaker mimicking the 'urgent cut and dive' of dolphins, attempts to gain a closer sense of proximity to the creatures by throwing themselves 'flat

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[127] Ibid, p.39.
[128] Ibid, p.39.
[129] Ibid, p.39.
[130] Collins, p.159.
[131] Jamie, *The Tree House*, italics in original, p.39.
[132] Ibid, p.39.
[133] Ibid, p.39.

on the fore-deck' where 'just for a short time| we travelled as one'.[134] The union of dolphin and human within the 'loose formation' of the poem, [135] allows Jamie to play with questions of perspective. While the human figures are said to have 'grabbed their cameras' at the sudden appearance of dorsal fins, it is dolphins who are shown to hold the power of the gaze as they 'careen and appraise us| with a speculative eye| till they'd seen enough'. [136] Satisfied with their assessment the dolphins 'true to their own| inner oceanic maps' are the ones to end the encounter, and veer 'off from us, north by northwest'. [137] The use of 'veered' here recalls the veering flight of the swallow in 'Landfall' and the 'veer' of the waders in 'The Flight of Birds'. Throughout the collection Jamie's repeated use of the terms 'veer' and 'tilt' acknowledges the active vibrancy of the biotic community, where the flight of birds or the sudden appearance of sea creatures disturbs any sense of human control or mastery over the environment. 'The Whale-watcher', opens on the edge of earth, occurring at the moment where 'at last| the road gives out –' into 'harsh grass, sea-maws, | lichen-crusted bedrock –'. [138] The solid dashes used in the opening quatrain mark the transition of the speaker from a purely anthropocentric domain into the nonhuman environment. Across the piece, Jamie forges linguistic connections between person and place, where the anthropocentric domain of the 'battered caravan' echoes the vulnerability of the whale's habitat beneath 'brittle waves'. [139] Much like 'Basking Shark' and 'White-sided Dolphins' the position of the speaker as 'watcher' soon shifts as the aural dimensions of the poem take precedence. We are told that the whale-watcher stares at the sea 'until my eyes evaporate'; the water becoming nothing but a bright 'glare' necessitating the adoption a different mode of poetic attention. [140] No longer reliant on visual connection the poem engages an ethics of listening, in which the open vowel sounds of 'breach, breathe and dive' effectively 'repair' the harsh consonance of the preceding unrhymed quatrains with their 'brittle' and 'battered' sounds.[141] The full rhyme of 'glare' and 'repair' closes the final quatrain

[134] Ibid, p.22.
[135] Ibid, p.22.
[136] Ibid, p.22.
[137] Ibid, p.22.
[138] Ibid, p.25.
[139] Ibid, p.25.
[140] Ibid, p.25.
[141] Ibid, p.25.

with a sense of restoration, in which the 'rent' ocean is stitched together by the movement of the whales, presenting a hopeful scene of environmental recovery.[142]

Importantly, Jamie's sense of the local is never static nor truly 'settled'. Her constant attunement to the active 'tilt' and 'fold' of the landscape ensures that her idea of place continually arises through scenes of transformation. In a similar vein to Longley, she embraces the entangled and relational conditions of the bioregion as a means of reaching beyond the restrictive rubric of essentialist and divisive nationalist identity politics, preferring a sense of interdependence and heterogeneity as opposed to the implicit homogeneity and insularity of nationalism. As Thomashow suggests,'[w]hen people search for their roots, they recognize the depth of their uprootedness. They discover that their affiliations are broad and vast, not necessarily linked to any specific place, but rather a constellation of places'.[143] We will see in Chapter 6 how far flung this 'constellation of places' is for Jamie, but for now her bioregional attentiveness 'speaks to the transient as well as the rooted'.[144]

For both Jamie and Longley, their interactions with the biotic community allow them to present an understanding of self and place that mirrors an understanding of the environment as a process rather than a constant or static singularity. Through patterns of contraction and expansion, their works present an understanding of self and place as 'an amalgamation of infinitely complex connections among variously scaled nested places'.[145] In his introduction to her reading at the 'Friendship of Poets' symposium, Longley notes how Jamie's poetry attends to questions of environmental community, ethical dwelling, and political identity, stating that her poems prompt us to 'share the globe with the plants and the other creatures'.[146] Through these descriptive borrowings, Longley exposes a direct affinity with Jamie's work, highlighting their apparent mutual, political, concern with a wider nonhuman, biotic environment. He notes that while the majority of her work is concerned with 'nature, and man-made damage to nature', she is also highly attentive to questions of 'identity and nationality':

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[142] Ibid, p.25.
[143] Thomashow, p.129.
[144] Ibid, p.124.
[145] Lynch, Glotfelty and Ambruster, p.9.
[146] Longley, 'Introduction to Kathleen Jamie'.

> Kathleen Jamie appraises her roots while keeping an eye on far horizons. While there is of course much that is quintessentially Scottish in her poetry, her generous transfiguring imagination takes in the world: Pakistan, Tibet, the Middle East, as well as beloved native landscapes such as Orkney and Tayside. These poems are fleet in their chronicling and abundant in circumstantial detail, but also interior, spiritually entangled.[147]

While Jamie's works do not present the same overt concern with Sectarian violence, her turn towards the biotic environment similarly provides her with a means of forming alternative models of identity that extend beyond politically determined boundaries.

As Timothy Baker suggests, Jamie's earlier collection *Jizzen* (1999), can 'be seen as a turning point between questions of national identity and a focus on a world that is more than human, and not restricted by traditional identity rubrics'.[148] Across *Jizzen* Jamie explores the relationship between individual and collective identities, suggesting that identity 'can only be established in the passing of one to the other, or one through the other'.[149] This sense of 'passing' recalls Paul Ricoeur's notion of selfhood, described as an 'intimate otherness in which "one passes into the other"'.[150] Arguably, Jamie's ability to 'appraise her roots while keeping an eye on far horizons' places us alongside the discourse of the rhizome, that 'ecological vision of Relation' which acknowledges the 'relational interdependence of all lands, of the whole Earth'.[151] We see this rhizomatic interdependence in the poem 'Rhododendrons', in which Jamie tracks the history of invasive non-native rhododendron species that have become 'commonplace, native| as language or living memory, | to our slightly acid soil'.[152] Tracing the 'terribly gentle work' of horticultural transplantation, the poem follows the movement of rhododendron bulbs from 'Yunnan or Himalayan' landscapes to their new habitats in 'Poolewe, or Arduine'.[153] The newly 'settled' flower is soon claimed 'as our own' and subsequently becomes naturalised into the 'bare glens' of the Scottish landscape.[154] The invasive species of rhododendron appears again in *The Tree House* where the appearance of the

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Baker, p.65.
[149] Ibid, p.69.
[150] Ibid, p.69.
[151] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. by J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p.67.
[152] Jamie, *Jizzen,* p.38.
[153] Ibid, p.37.
[154] Ibid, p.37.

flower's 'purple baubles' makes the speaker 'pause' in lieu of other native species within the scene such as 'sand martins| hunting insects in the updraught,| or the sudden scent of bogy myrtle'.[155] The flower prompts the poet to question 'What was it,| I'd have asked, to exist'.[156] Thus, while the linguistic exchanges of Jamie's work form a relational vision that highlights alterity over unity, this sense of extended identity, and associated questioning of the poet's position within the world, is often derived from poetic engagements with the biotic community.

We can sense this relationship between self and a larger biotic community across the majority of poems in *The Tree House* where Jamie's interactions with specific (though unnamed) places, are shown to provide access to wider scales of environmental thought. These scales are not only geographical in nature, but temporal. In 'Alder' the poet addresses environmental transformation through the image of an alder tree seen unfolding 'before the receding glaciers'.[157] Contrasted with the poet who has experienced 'rain showers' 'All week', the 'weary' tree has lived through an 'age of rain'.[158] The tree draws the human figure out of anthropocentric time scales ('the tenancy of our short lives') and prompts the poet to address the tree in askance: 'won't you teach me| a way to live| on this damp ambiguous earth?'.[159] We see Jamie ask a similar question in 'Puddle', where the continued growth of a puddle formed from 'A week's worth of rain', prompts her to question 'how should we live?'.[160] The series of rhetorical questions directed towards, and drawn from, the natural world alert us to the essential condition of entanglement that marks Jamie's interactions with the nonhuman. Her unanswered, and unanswerable, questions form a continuous dialogue between poet and place that also alerts us to the central issues inherent in ecopoetic practice; the ability to access the nonhuman world, to 'save the earth' through language.[161]

Through her tilted poetic attentions Jamie's works express a form of ecopoetics that moves beyond the anthropocentric pitfalls of Heideggerian modes of dwelling. As Kate Rigby has suggested, the problem with Heidegger arises in

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[155] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.33.
[156] Ibid, p.33.
[157] Ibid, p.7.
[158] Ibid, p.7.
[159] Ibid, p.9, p.7.
[160] Ibid, p.48.
[161] Bate, p.283.

the sustained 'arrogant assumption of human apartness' as delineated through 'the relationship between Being and language. For, in Heidegger's view, it is only within the *logos* of the word that the otherwise undisclosed being of things is revealed'.[162] Thus for Rigby, Heideggerian forms of ecopoetic thought effectively sustain anthropocentric hierarchies through the continued privileging of human's access to language. She suggests that rather than performing linguistic mastery over nature (in which humans derive a sense of dominance from the ability to name – speaking things into being), poets need to 'not so much to draw things into Being through their song, but rather to draw us forth into the polyphonic song of our nonhuman earth others'.[163] Across *The Tree House*, Jamie's constant attentions to the limits of human modes of representation aligns with this call for poets to 'draw us forth into the polyphonic song of our nonhuman earth others'. Her ethics of listening with 'the quality of attention' ensures that her poems, while necessarily framed around the lyrical human 'I', nevertheless engages with a multiplicity of voices, sounds and other resonances that proliferate across the bioregion.

Indeed, both Longley and Jamie seek to reconcile their respective estrangement from the nonhuman realm by adopting modes of acoustic attentiveness that attempt to reposition the centrality of the poetic figure. Throughout their works both poets turn to the sounds of place, and the sounds of language. Their poems are formed from the simultaneous actions of sounding and listening, and in so doing attempt to form new lines of communication between poet, poem, and place. Despite his attempts however, Longley's poems often retain the primacy of the human-centred position where the sound of the biotic environment, be it the rustle of leaves, the cry of a fox, or the song of a bird, often recalls a series of human-centred memories and emotional attachments to place. His overall sense of provisionality extends not merely from the transient environmental conditions of the Mayo landscape, but also reflects his own state as a visiting, provisional, subject within the landscape. For Donna Potts, this quality of Longley's work both 'registers an awareness of the nonhuman otherness of nature, as well as a realistic acceptance of the human position in the natural world'.[164] This 'realistic acceptance' of the poetic position, alerts us to a

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[162] Kate Rigby, 'World, Text: On the (Im)possibility of Ecopoiesis', *New Literary History,* 35.3 (2004), 427-442, (p.433).
[163] Ibid, p.434.
[164] Potts, p.77.

continued sense of distance and disruption within Longley's poems, where the human figure never truly experiences a sense of reconciliation. His works acknowledge the responsibility of the human subject as both the historian, and source, of 'an environment riddled by loss [...] pollution, erosion, extinction, global warming, overfishing, and farming'.[165] His poems trace the shared human and nonhuman experiences of violence where the loss of human life corresponds to the 'larger context of environmental loss'.[166] Consequently, his work expresses a form of fleeting and provisional entanglement with place, where the human figure is only ever able to interact with the nonhuman for brief moments that are subsequently memorialised in his verse.

While Longley's poems express a marked discomfort and difficulty in acknowledging the distances between the human and nonhuman, for Jamie, this distance is embraced as a central condition of the poetic subject. Rather than forcing a direct sense of reconciliation, many of her poems highlight the 'interstices',[167] or intervals, between the human and the nonhuman. Thus, while her tilted poetics prompt us to recognise the proximity of the human and nonhuman, her poems also acknowledge that this entanglement is only ever a 'loose form', that is not formed through moments of direct intersection and contact, but one formed through distance. As Collins notes, 'Jamie seldom locates the self definitively in her poems, preferring instead to explore the connections between being and dwelling more loosely'.[168] By retaining a sense of looseness and distance, Jamie's work attempts to limit the intrusive dimensions of the poetic subject. Her poetic forms consequently echo the interlinking shapes and arrangements of the nonhuman world, drawing variously from the 'pattern' of an 'outstretched| wing', the lichened branches of a tree that pulls 'close; a complicity', or the 'new form' of pipistrelles whose flight unfolds and coheres into new sudden shapes.[169] These loose forms are directly related to, and responsive to, the acoustic ecologies of the bioregion. Noticing the silence between bird calls, or the 'broken tune' of an alder tree's leaves, Jamie's works express the 'need| to annunciate' not only the harmonies, but also the discordant tones of the

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[165] Ibid, p.78.
[166] Ibid, p.91.
[167] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.30.
[168] Collins, p.156.
[169] Jamie, *The Tree House,* p.38, p.41, p.30.

environment.[170] In so doing, her poems acknowledge that the nonhuman realm is itself formed through conditions of not only harmony, but of discordance, distance and dissonance, acknowledging that the poet's position is not one of mastery but of constant navigation and negotiation

Through their multiform sonic interactions with the nonhuman realm, Longley and Jamie attempt to compose a territory through the symphonic interaction of human and nonhuman lives. By tracing the biologic entanglements of place through the migratory flight of birds, the rhizomatic spread of plants, or the seasonal movement of creatures, both poets present a form of poetry which recognises that the concepts of home and dwelling are not a singular nor static, but are formed through continuous resonances, interconnections and entanglements between the human and the nonhuman. Across their works, both Longley's and Jamie's poems emerge as 'capacious acoustic spaces [that] chime together far-flung people and places',[171] unveiling a sense of interdependence between political and environmental modes of reading place. Through their acoustic attentiveness both poets give rise to modes of poetic practice that are flexible, porous and inherently connective. By espousing an ethical practice of listening with a quality of attention, their works seek to advance alternative visions of place and political identity, recognising and responding to the inherent entanglement of human and nonhuman lives.

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[170] Ibid, p.7, p.17.
[171] Obert, p.130.

CHAPTER FOUR

'A catalogue of wrecks': John Burnside's and Derek Mahon's
Unhomely Lyrics

Writing in the introduction to *The Edge of the Sea* (1956), Rachel Carson
describes the shoreline as a space marked by biodiversity and change:

> Only the most hardy and adaptable can survive in a region so mutable,
> yet the area between the tide lines is crowded with plants and animals.
> In this difficult world of the shore, life displays its enormous toughness
> and vitality by occupying almost every conceivable niche. Visibly, it
> carpets the intertidal rocks; or half hidden, it descends into fissures
> and crevices, or hides under boulders, or lurks in the wet gloom of sea
> caves. [...] It exists minutely, as the film of bacteria that spreads over a
> rock surface or a wharf piling; as spheres of protozoa, small as
> pinpricks, sparkling at the surface of the sea [...] The shore is an
> ancient world, for as long as there has been an earth and sea there has
> been this place of the meeting of land and water. Yet it is a world that
> keeps alive the sense of continuing creation and of the relentless drive
> of life.[1]

For Carson, the constant flux of weather, tides, and time reveals the littoral zone
to be 'a strange and beautiful place', formed through conditions of 'unrest',
compromise, conflict, and change.[2] For many, the ocean subsequently emerges as
'an uncanny medium that distorts our terrestrial-bound understanding of figures,
time and space'.[3] We have seen in previous chapters how poets engage littoral
space as a means of addressing the alienating temporal scales of deep pasts and
deep futures, yet for Carson, the ocean is not alien at all, but is in fact the source
of our 'dim ancestral beginnings'.[4] As the introduction to this thesis suggests, the
recent rise of Oceanic Studies and the Blue Humanities, has prompted scholars to
consider 'maritime space as a multispecies and embodied place in which the
oceanic contours of the planet, including its submarine creatures, are no longer
outside of the history of the human'.[5] Across such work the ocean is not only
configured as central to human ontology, but is also a prime space through which

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[1] Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea* (Boston: A Mariner Book, 1998), p.1-2.
[2] Ibid, p.1.
[3] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene', *Comparative Literature,* 69.1
    (2017), 32-44, (p.39).
[4] Carson, p.xiii.
[5] DeLoughrey, p.42.

to consider notions of familiarity and strangeness, belonging and alienation. We both belong to the ocean, and are radically apart from it. Consequently, the ocean is no longer perceived as a blank empty space, but is viewed as a medium of cultural and environmental relation. Carson's work has proved influential for the poets Derek Mahon and John Burnside, whose poetry collections and essays frequently draw from Carson's environmental legacy. Across their collections, *The Asylum Dance* (Burnside 2000), *The Light Trap* (Burnside 2002), *The Good Neighbour* (Burnside 2005), *Harbour Lights* (Mahon 2005), and *Life on Earth* (Mahon 2008), the 'indefinable boundary' of the seashore emerges again and again, where the dynamism and (bio)diversity of the littoral zone with its 'primeval' ecosystem becomes a site of ecological and cultural relation that is both intimately familiar and infinitely strange.

As we have seen across the preceding chapters, the littoral zone often emerges within modern Irish and Scottish poetry as a space of transformation, allowing poets to conceive of more pluralistic and protean forms of cultural identity in line with the shifting contours of the coast. In the work of Burnside and Mahon, the littoral zone emerges as a site that not only invites new mutable readings of cultural identity, but further 'function[s] as an aesthetic configuration generating reflexion about being in and speaking about the world'.[6] This is not to suggest that their coastal vistas are purely emblematic, but that their respective fascination with beach spaces and seaside settings, 'challenge us to revise notions of entitlement and belonging, of beauty and enchantment' as their strangely unhomely beachscapes 'invite us to reconsider the relationship between questions of literary form and environmental conflict'.[7] In opposition to the preceding chapter, for both Mahon and Burnside, their lyrical encounters with the archipelagic environment are not marked by a sense of belonging to a wider biotic community, but are instead tempered by an overwhelming sense of otherness, strangeness, and difference. Unsettling notions of linear time and terrestrial place, looking to the ocean and its littoral zones necessitates that poets

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[6] Julika Griem, 'John Burnside's Seascapes', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp.87-107, (p.88).
[7] Ibid, p.88.

address feelings of 'radical displacement from places, figurative and otherwise, that we may call home'.[8]

Across their works, the littoral zone emerges as an 'unhomely' site of dwelling, prompting both Mahon and Burnside to contemplate alternative forms of belonging, community, and relation. The term 'unhomeliness' is often aligned with the work of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha who employs the term in his essay 'The World and the Home' to describe the experience of colonised peoples whose homes have been relocated, in both cultural and physical terms, to the extent that their identity has been deterritorialized – detached from any reference to, or grounding in, place.[9] Drawing from Freud's sense of the uncanny, Bhabha suggests that to be 'unhomed is not to be homeless', but is instead a state of 'strangeness' derived from the erasure of boundaries between the '[p]rivate and public, past and present, the psyche and the social'.[10] This blurring of boundaries gives rise to an unsettling feeling as the 'border between home and wold becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting'.[11] For Bhabha, this unsettled condition occurs when 'individuals or communities lose their traditional, stable, homogeneous identities and ways of life'.[12] Importantly, this sense of the 'unhomely' is not 'limited to the postcolonial experience, [but] it is especially characteristic of these communities, whether it results from colonization, decolonization, immigration of the persisting after effects of transportation'.[13] Characterised by a pervading sense of strangeness, in which the unhomely 'captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the word in an unhallowed place',[14] Bhabha's sense of the unhomely is both 'strange and secretly familiar'.[15]

This sense of intimate strangeness is one of the pervading characteristics of Timothy Morton's *The Ecological Thought* (2010) in which he urges us to

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[8] DeLoughrey, p.42.
[9] Homi Bhabha, 'The World and the Home', *Social Text*, 31.32, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues (1992), 141-153, (p.148).
[10] Ibid, p.148.
[11] Ibid, p.141.
[12] Celia Briton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), p.120.
[13] Ibid, p.120.
[14] Bhabha, p.141.
[15] Briton, p.122.

understand a sense of ecological interconnectedness by way of 'intimacy with the strange stranger'.[16] Morton's work arises from a critique of approaches to environmental thought that emphasise notions of embeddedness and embodiment, suggesting that the 'constant assertion that we're "embedded" in a lifeworld is, paradoxically, a symptom of drastic separation'.[17] Suggesting that 'The experience of the local is the profound experience of strangeness', Morton proposes that we would do better to think of ecological interconnection as radically displaced, recognising that the 'essence of the local isn't familiarity but the uncanny, the strangely familiarly and the familiarly strange'.[18] Invoking the 'radical intimacy' of the 'mesh' as a means of describing the entangled interconnectedness of all living and non-living things, Morton places equal weighting on both 'holes in a network and the threading between them',[19] meaning that the mesh is characterised both by moments of connection, while also containing space for otherness, difference, and strangeness. Importantly, the mesh further disrupts the boundaries often sustained within phenomenological thought – namely the idea that there is an 'external' environment or 'lifeworld', within which the human is 'embedded'. For the centreless mesh 'there is no definite "within" or "outside" of beings. Everything is adapted to everything else. This includes organs and the cells that constitute them'.[20] Just as Bhabha's notion of the 'unhomely' deconstructs the binary of world and home, public and private, so thinking with the mesh 'abolishes inside-outside distinctions'.[21] This chapter is concerned with the ways in which both Mahon and Burnside respectively engage coastal ecosystems in the exploration of an unhomely sense of place that is characterised by gaps, holes, absent presences, distance, displacement, 'the strange and secretly familiar'.

Looking to water necessitates an understanding of ecological interconnection that does not necessarily result in a harmonious sense of dwelling. In the recent work of ecological posthumanism, scholars have begun to advocate the need to explore a 'sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of

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[16] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), p.46.
[17] Ibid, p.8.
[18] Ibid, p.50.
[19] Ibid, p.28.
[20] Ibid, p.39.
[21] Ibid, p.39.

environments'.[22] For Astrida Neimanis, thinking with water requires us to acknowledge our own 'watery embodiment', where the human figure is viewed as one of many 'bodies of water' that 'leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation' and always in a process of transaction with a wider nonhuman realm.[23] Thinking with water effectively erodes concepts of 'discrete individualism' deriving from anthropocentric hierarchies, suggesting that:

> We are literally implicated in other animal, vegetable, and planetary bodies that materially course through us, replenish us, and draw upon our own bodies as their wells: human bodies ingest reservoir bodies, while reservoir bodies are slaked by rain bodies, rain bodies absorb ocean bodies, ocean bodies aspirate fish bodies, fish bodies are consumed by whale bodies.[24]

Thinking with water necessarily blurs the boundaries between binary concepts of internal and external, human and nonhuman. Emphasising the 'radical interiority of the sea to the human species',[25] the notion of watery embodiment further complicates Morton's notion of the mesh, as the turn towards fluids both human (blood, sweat, tears, milk) and nonhuman (toxins, pesticides, and oil) produces a 'disconcerting sense of being immersed within incalculable, interconnected material agencies that erode even our most sophisticated modes of understanding'.[26] Here embodiment is not conceived of as something inhibitive to ecological relation, but central to it. Yet this is not a form of embodiment that correlates with embeddedness, but is more akin to immersion. To embed is 'to fix firmly in a surrounding mass of solid material', where as to immerse is 'to enter; to involve, enclose, include; to merge, to sink'.[27] To immerse is to enter into a relational, interactive, embodied involvement with the nonhuman world. In opposition to the terrestrial and externalising dynamics of embedded relation, immersion involves a more dynamic process of interchange and interaction between and across different watery bodies. Yet to immerse is also to sink into 'a particular state of body or mind; to involve deeply, to steep, absorb, in some

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[22] Stacy Alaimo, 'States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea', *ISLE*, 19.3 (2012), 476-493, (p.476).
[23] Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.2.
[24] Ibid, pp.2-3.
[25] DeLoughrey, p.34.
[26] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.17.
[27] 'embed, v.', and 'immerse, v.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60835?redirectedFrom=embed#eid>, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91880?rskey=w0XU4I&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 09.03.2017].

action or activity'.[28] The experience of immersion thus incurs both relation and suspension, intimacy and distance, familiarity and strangeness, but also deep contemplation.

For both Mahon and Burnside, the coast and its surrounding waters become a key medium through which to contemplate unfamiliar, complex and difficult forms of dwelling that challenge notions of stability and singularity. Indeed, as Julika Griem has recently suggested, the 'vision of a sensuous bodily (re)connection between human beings and their natural environment is part of the attraction of many of Burnside's littoral spaces and maritime scenarios'.[29] This understanding of the seashore as a 'regenerative site of reimmersion and reconnection' is appealing for both Burnside and Mahon, yet their works frequently reveal the seashore to be as destructive as they are regenerative.[30] Rather than enabling a sustained sense of interconnection, Burnside's coastal vistas are often shaped by a sense of connection that is transient at best. His engagement with marine ecosystems often sparks a sense of belonging that is either past, or yet to come. Similarly, Derek Mahon's collections frequently turn to the beach as a means of exploring a sense of immersion within the fluctuating systems of the wider hydrosphere. Yet again however, immersion does not necessarily correspond with a comfortable sense of belonging, as many of Mahon's works are filled with a 'poignant atmosphere of certain loss' in which the poet's voice is 'uncertain of any adequate future to supersede the failures of the past'. [31] Across their respective coastal scenes both Mahon and Burnside explore entanglements between the poetic speaker and what Morton terms 'the strange stranger', a 'lifeform' that 'is itself yet uncannily not itself at the same time'.[32] Taking us on a journey across multiple scales of time and space, from the intimate yet secret folds of the local to the planetary and a sense of 'Global Weirding', these strange strangers arise in various forms from jellyfish, to Arctic charr, and the poetic self.[33] Where Morton's concept only refers to living beings, it

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[28] 'immerse, v.' *OED* [oline], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91880?rskey=yg2GAC&result=2#eid> [accessed 09.03.2017].
[29] Griem, p.90.
[30] Ibid, p.94.
[31] Terrence Brown, 'Mahon and Longley: Place and Placelessness', *Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Irish Poetry*, ed. by Matthew Campbell (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp.133–48, (p.137).
[32] Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, p.18.
[33] Ibid, p.5.

is in turning to water that both Mahon and Burnside explore a sense of strangeness and familiarity that arises not only from relationships with other sentient beings but with gasoline, cloud formations, and the abstract flows of capital. For both poets the relationship between bodies of water, watery bodies, and wider networks (cultural, ecological and economic), prompts serious consideration of responsibility, (inter)connection, and belonging.

i. Ecopoetry's Immersive Forms

In comparison to his early island forays, the recent work of Derek Mahon express an overt ecological sensibility through engagements with the sea. His collection *Harbour Lights* marks the beginning of what Hugh Haughton has termed a prevalent 'biological, marine vision' within Mahon's later works.[34] We have already seen how much of Mahon's early work is drawn to the coastal landscapes of the Irish West as a means of tracing contested identities and strained narratives of belonging that are dominated by a concern with conditions of exile, homelessness, and the (im)possibility of belonging. Across his collections, his poems are drawn to mutable sea and skyscapes in which the lyrical speaker is caught expressing 'love for a lover, for family members, affection for friends, across empty distances, as if oceanic and cosmic spaces highlight the difficulty of human communication and the fragility of such homes as we can construct'.[35] Consequently, many of Mahon's works express a paradoxical sense of belonging in not belonging. His poetic speaker is often located on the periphery, exploring from afar the notions of community, relation, and connection. Within his most recent collections, the sense of dissociation felt at the shoreline is paradoxically invoked through 'his growing receptiveness to, and progressive immersion into, the sensuous world around him'.[36]

While the coast has long attracted Mahon's exilic imaginary, a more sustained turn towards the ecological dimensions of water can be traced to his poem, 'A Swim in Co. Wicklow', first published in the *Collected Poems* (1999). Framed by an epigraph taken from the Italian poet Montale – 'The only reality is the perpetual flow of vital energy' – the poem concerns itself with the condition of

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[34] Hugh Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.331.
[35] Brown, p.138.
[36] Christelle Serée-Chaussinand, 'Derek Mahon's Literal Littorals', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles*, 25.2 (2012), 51-8, (p.55).

immersion.[37] From the opening stanza Mahon establishes an 'intimate' bodily interconnection between human and nonhuman where the poetic figure's re-entry into the 'warm uterine rinse' of the ocean, engenders a sense of ontological kinship with the ocean.[38] Critics interested in the relational qualities of water often cite the comparable saline content of the world's oceans and the salinity of human blood, tears and sweat, suggesting that the sea can be read as 'a powerful symbol of relatedness, [...] a substance securing human kinship with aqueous Earth'.[39] In 'A Swim in Co. Wicklow', the combined salinity of amniotic fluid and seawater reflects this sense of trans-corporeal relation, where the human figure's total immersion within the 'heart-racing heave and groan' of the 'uterine' sea marks a deep sense of ontological relation between humans and the ocean.[40] Merging with 'the sensual writhe and snore| of maidenhair and frond' the human figure is drawn into a primordial kinship with the ocean that attempts to emphasise the 'close tug of origin' felt at the edge of the sea.[41] Across the poem, the body of water and the human body blend and blur together, where the poetic figure's 'quick gasp' echoes 'the hissing wash' of waves, and the 'Soft–water-lip' of the shore meets the 'soft hand' of the swimming figure.[42] The fertile combination of saltwater, amniotic fluid, 'star cluster, dulse and kelp| algae, spittle, froth'[43] further recalls Alexander Oparin's theorisations of the 'primordial soup', from which the first pulse life is suggested to have originated.[44] Across the poem, the ocean is presented as a primeval origin, a place that the swimming figure is attempting to return to 'once more' after an unknown period of separation.[45] As the figure swirls and spins among the tendrils of seaweed, they transform 'as if' they too are 'creatures of salt and slime| and naked under the sun'.[46] The

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[37] Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Loughcrew: Gallery Press, 1999), p.280.

[38] Mahon, *Collected*, p.280.

[39] Stefan Helmreich, *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), p.10.

[40] Mahon, *Collected*, p.280.

[41] Ibid, p.280.

[42] Ibid, p.280.

[43] Ibid, p.280.

[44] Oparin's hypothesis of the 'primordial soup', refers to the theory that 'complex, high-molecular organic substances were being formed in any part of the primitive ocean and in every water reservoir, pool or drying-up basin [...] In this way the great variety of organic substances must have originated which are necessary for the building up of living cells. In other words, in these primitive waters materials were created out of which living organisms were to be built up subsequently'. Alexander Oparin, *The Origin of Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1938), p.127.

[45] Mahon, *Collected*, p.281.

[46] Ibid, p.281.

transformation of the swimming figure into a 'creature' reflects the ways in which looking to the ocean can encourage multispecies forms of belonging.

There is a temptation here to read the poem as one of rebirth, where the swimmer's entry into the transformative, uterine ocean effects a sense of regeneration. Arguably however, this is not a rebirth, but a regression. The swimmer's entry into the ocean appears to defy the teleological progression of evolutionary processes, whereby their immersion within the 'seething broth' of the ocean transforms them into 'a rogue gene'.[47] The gene is 'rogue' as the ensuing imagined alteration of the human figure into a primeval creature of 'salt and slime' does not move forward, but backwards in time; no longer following the 'perpetual flow of vital energy' but swimming against it.[48] In opposition to Haughton's suggestion that this poem is one of 'renovation by the sensuous equivalent of total immersion', there is an underlying sense of violence, threat, and discomfort in Mahon's swirling regressive ocean.[49] The poem's turbulent atmosphere formed from a lively mix of 'Spindrift, crustacean patience| and a gust of ozone' brings a sense of violence that prohibits a complete sense of rejuvenation.[50] A feeling of vulnerability consequently permeates the piece as despite the 'uterine' beginnings of the poem, the sea is not depicted as a welcoming mother, but an elemental force 'foaming at the mouth| to drown you in its depths'.[51] Importantly the sea is distinguished from other bodies of water such as the 'Spirits of lake, river| and woodland pond' or the 'quiet suburban pool' which are filled with 'water| never troubled by wind or tide'.[52] Rather than the welcoming calm of river, pool, and pond, the sea possesses 'the violence of the ages', the undulating tides and currents are imbued with elemental and destructive forces that 'suck and crunch' all that resides within its depths.[53] Despite the initial presentation of the ocean as an origin, the ultimately uninhabitable waters reflect a pervading sense of estrangement and disconnection that marks many of Mahon's poems regarding self and place. The ocean may in fact be an 'evolutionary and cultural origin', but it is not one that we

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[47] Ibid, p.281.
[48] Ibid, p.281.
[49] Haughton, p.330.
[50] Mahon, *Collected*, p.281.
[51] Ibid, p.281.
[52] Ibid, p.280.
[53] Ibid, p.281.

can easily return to.[54] The use of 'as if' in the closing stanza further prohibits a sense of rebirth, where the immersed figure's regression into a primordial state of being is revealed to be nothing more than 'a waking dream'.[55] For Sam Solnick, this hesitation reveals 'an undercurrent of anxiety within [Mahon's] water metaphors', and prompts us to consider more closely how his water poems revolve not only 'around a sense of, and an anxiety about, ecological and economic connectivity', but also exhibit an anxiety in relation to modes of poetic expression and reflection.[56]

The relationship between bodies of water and watery bodies arises repeatedly throughout *Harbour Lights,* through a series of poems that scrupulously examine the troubling confluence of global economic and ecological systems. Across this collection, the 'binding of the human subject within global hydrological cycles' displays how for Mahon, water is a useful 'vehicle for exploring interrelationships and the transport of materials across space and time'.[57] Across *Harbour Lights,* Mahon attempts to establish a primordial relationship between human bodies and global hydrological systems as a means of highlighting humanity's responsibility in the construction of devastating climate change. In 'Lapis Lazuli' (an intertextual reference to W.B. Yeats's poem of the same name), Mahon recalls the embryonic and primeval images of 'A Swim in Co. Wicklow' where the 'swirling sea' is again depicted as a primitive origin, a place where the 'meridional sun vibrates| on sandy shelves where life first crept ashore'.[58] Suggesting that we 'need the glitter of those secret depths' the shore is invoked as a site of cultural and ecological rejuvenation that is counterpoised against the 'money-shower' of the global capitalist system that has transformed the 'mysterious' oceanscape into a technoscape of 'vast tankers and patronizing warships'.[59] For Mahon while looking to the sea means we may encounter feelings of estrangement, alienation and disconnection, we cannot continue to perceive ourselves as something disconnected or separate from the natural world.

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[54] DeLoughrey, p.36.
[55] Mahon, *Collected*, p.281.
[56] Sam Solnick, *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, Biology and Technology in Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (London: Routledge 2017), p.117.
[57] Ibid, p.117.
[58] Derek Mahon, *Harbour Lights* (Loughcrew: The Gallery Press, 2005), p.24.
[59] Ibid, pp.24-5.

A sense of kinship with the ocean is again invoked in the titular poem of the collection, whose epigraph is taken from Rachel Carson's *The Edge of the Sea*: 'And I...a mere newcomer whose ancestors had inhabited the earth so briefly that my presence was almost anachronistic'.[60] The poem traces a day in the poet's life in Kinsale as it is shaped by wider cultural, ecological, and political forces. Interestingly, 'Harbour Lights' is not only drawn to the circulation of bodily fluids (amniotic fluid, spit, froth, semen) within the global hydrosphere, but is drawn to another complex fluid that crosses the boundaries between nature and culture: oil. The opening lines of the poem position us directly within the politics of global petroculture: 'It's one more sedative evening in Co. Cork.| The house is quiet and the world is dark| while the Bush gang are doing it to Iraq'.[61] Across the poem Mahon explores a range of concerns with regards to oil, not only in relation to questions of foreign policy in the wake of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but the ecological impacts of global petroculture. The line: 'dark oil-drums and fish boxes on the quay,| winches and ropes, intestines of the sea| alive with the stench of pre-historic water' draws out troubling narratives of consumption and extraction that currently shape our relationship with the world's oceans as a resource space of food and energy.[62] The proximity of oil drums to fish boxes and 'intestines' connects the flow of food and energy systems, subtly drawing attention to otherwise invisible or offshore narratives of trans-corporeal relation. The condition of immersion thus not only corresponds with the development of a new oceanic ontology of the human subject, but significantly places that subject within global systems of waste production, pollution, and consumption.

This concern with toxic trans-corporeal connections and capitalist flows continues throughout 'Harbour Lights'. Noting the slow 'drip of diesel oil' that slowly inches towards the sea, Mahon describes contemporary society as a 'crude culture dazed with money'.[63] Towards the end of the sequence, the initial vitality of the ocean gives way to 'the old life-force' that 'rides Daz and Exxon to the blinding surface'.[64] The description of the 'old life-force' recalls Carson's description of ocean currents as a 'stream of life, carrying always the eggs and

[60] Ibid, p.61.
[61] Ibid, p.61.
[62] Ibid, p.65.
[63] Ibid, p.65, p.63.
[64] Ibid, p.67.

young of countless sea creatures',[65] while also acknowledging the deep past of oil as a substance derived from large quantities of dead biotic matter being subjected to intense heat and pressure over the course of centuries. For Mahon, in modern culture 'the pressure of the life force – the intense, blind, unconscious will to survive, to push on, to expand' has become detached from the vital function of ecosystems, and become aligned with the consumptive forces of global capital.[66] The closing stanza employs the language of extraction where the 'wriggle' and 'seething chaos' of the shore is 'drained' and 'exposed' to 'discharging gases'.[67] Mahon's concern with the toxic flow of oil is expanded through an 'inventory| of vapour trails and nuclear submarines', 'the cash dynamic and the natural gas', and an overall concern with 'unsustainable levels of aviation' that currently proliferate across the globe.[68] Instead of blood and saltwater, oil becomes the vital life-force of the poem and draws new perilous and pollutive connections between the human and nonhuman.

As the poem continues, the site-specific opening in Kinsale broadens outwards to include wider global scales of environmental decline as the poet self-consciously toys 'with cloud thoughts as an alternative| to the global shit-storm that we know and love' and warns us of potential forthcoming 'danger; for quite soon,| perhaps, we dump our rubbish on the moon'.[69] Indeed, when one considers the amount of orbital debris and satellites currently circulating the earth, this fear is not without merit. In highlighting the troubling relationships between global economic and ecological systems the poem becomes both a warning and a lament for the current state of the world to which we have grown accustomed. Mahon's characteristic concern with waste is expanded here to include both planetary and extra-terrestrial scales of pollution. While the site-specific impacts of waste and dereliction are engaged in earlier poems such as 'The Apotheosis of Tins', 'The Hudson Letter' and 'A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford', in 'Harbour Lights' the scales invoked by engagements with the world's ocean necessitate us to consider environmental consequences on a grander scale. In reaching beyond the local, Mahon's discussion of intergalactic waste in 'Harbour Lights' implicates the singular poetic subject within wider networks of

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[65] Carson, p.189.
[66] Ibid, p.189.
[67] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, p.67.
[68] Ibid, p.65.
[69] Ibid, p.64-5.

responsibility. As Stacy Alaimo suggests the trans-corporeal flow of toxins across the globe:

> render[s] it nearly impossible for humans to imagine that their own health and welfare is disconnected from that of the rest of the planet or to imagine that it is possible to protect "nature" by merely creating separate, distinct areas in which "it" is "preserved"'.[70]

Across 'Harbour Lights', Mahon is increasingly sceptical of poetry's ability to protect or save 'nature'. His opening resolution to 'study weather, clouds and their formation' becomes 'complicated' by the immersion of the human within the consumptive flows of the capitalist system in which 'even clouds are gobbled up by the sun,| not even the ethereal clouds are immune:| these too will be marketed if it can be done'.[71] The confluence of economic and ecological systems prompts Mahon to question the very purpose of poetry:

> What have I achieved? Oh, little enough, God knows:
> some dubious verse and some ephemeral prose
> as for the re-enchantment of the sky,
> that option was never going to fly [72]

In opposition to the forms of Heideggerian ecopoetics we have encountered previously, here Mahon reveals a deeply held scepticism of the ability of poetry to re-enchant or save the earth. Despite this scepticism, he concedes: 'Does it matter now? Oh yes, it still matters;| strange currents circulate in these calm waters | though we don't mention them'.[73] The contemplation of poetic value corresponds with a deeper sense of immersion, in which the poet is not only conscious of their entanglement within wider ecological and economic systems, but also recognises their position within a deeply contemplative practice that is wary of its ability to stimulate ethical change. This discomfort with the effectiveness of poetry alerts us to other anxieties within Mahon's practice. Within 'Harbour Lights' the frequent experience of bewilderment and estrangement felt upon 'these baffling shores' prompts the poetic figure to be alert to the more problematic dimensions of entanglement.[74] In recognising this, his immersive lyrics attempt to acknowledge his own dual position as both observer and participant within global

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[70] Alaimo, p.260.
[71] Ibid, p.64-5.
[72] Ibid, p.65.
[73] Ibid, p.65.
[74] Ibid, p.63.

systems that have the potential to form both harmonious, and harmful, instances of ecological relation.

The work of the prolific Scottish poet, John Burnside, similarly explores entanglement as immersion. Across his writings, Burnside often returns to the landscape of a 'small fishing town on the east coast of Scotland' which he associates with early morning walks with his son who:

> [l]ikes to see the crabs, to exchange a few words with the 'crab-men' and loiter for a while for the five-fathom scent of the creels and the massed colours of the catch, the black and orange bodies packed into old boxes dripping with hairweed and a greeny deepwater-light. This is what we know of life: sea birds, caught fish, the odd twenty-foot wave flaring against a wall, the dark scent of unknown waters.[75]

This particular coastal scene arises repeatedly across his collections *The Asylum Dance*, *The Light Trap* and *The Good Neighbour* in various iterations that allow him to contemplate conditions of connection and interchange between the human and the nonhuman. His works are filled with momentary transformations and transitions, in which the poetic figure becomes 'something' not quite known, 'a blur at the edge of the print, | that might be human'.[76] The prevalence of 'somethings' across Burnside's works reflects the uncanny, unknowable, dimensions of Morton's 'strange stranger', where the littoral zone often conjoins with acute feelings of 'separateness and difference'.[77] While Burnside cannot be defined a 'sea poet' to the same extent as Mahon, it is notable that a significant portion of his work turns to seascapes and coastlines. In the collections under consideration here, poems situated on or near the sea occur twenty times, either through references to beaches across the Fife Coast and the Norwegian archipelago, or more oblique references to piers, ferries, harbours, and unnamed strands. Across these collections, 'strange things come| to those who live| by water'; the seashore emerging as a site through which to contemplate a form of dwelling that is shaped by the unsettling 'fact of endurance|decay| and the fact| of weathering'.[78]

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[75] John Burnside, 'A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology', *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science*, ed. by Robert Crawford (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp.91-107, (p.91).
[76] John Burnside, *The Light Trap* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002) p.76.
[77] Morton, p.47.
[78] John Burnside, *The Asylum Dance* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000) p.69, p.67.

Written in the aftermath of September 11th 2001, the poem 'History', turns to the flux of the shoreline to emphasise a sense of unease and 'muffled dread| of what may come'.[79] Akin to Mahon's continued references to the war 'planes that consume deserts of gasoline' in *Harbour Lights*,[80] Burnside's attention to the 'war planes' that 'cambered and turned| in the morning light'[81] above West Sands beach in St. Andrews, draws the immediacy of the lyrical moment into relation with wider world events. In an interview with Attila Dósa in the week following the attack on the World Trade Centres, Burnside notes the interplay between local and global resonances of violence within his work:

> I have been working on a poem about [...] the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September, and about the situation as it stands now. [...] So the poem that I have just mentioned started to come together when, on a Sunday morning, I was flying my kite with my son on the West Sands in St Andrews. As we were playing on the sand, the air show at the RAF base in Leuchars was on, and I could smell the gasoline drifting in the air. My son and I were standing there on this beautiful, wide and empty beach, flying kites, and there was this smell of gasoline, insidiously touching us and coming through our lives. For me, that was the beginning of an individual experience. Again, if you want to speak about environmental damage, you have to find a ground for the experience.[82]

Across his works, Burnside's 'ground for the experience' of 'environmental damage' occurs in relation to the positioning of his physical body within the landscape. While for many this lyrical position usually implies and facilitates a sense of intimate withdrawal or 'retreat into "pure" self-containment', for Burnside the individual experience of the body in the landscape almost always involves a sense of opening and exposure that precludes any sense of purity or containment.[83] For Scott Brewster, 'History' reveals the lyric moment to mark both a sense of retreat and 'a countervailing exposure to distress and contamination; in its encounter with the other, the poem opens itself up to danger, but also to the possibility of the unprecedented'.[84] The description of 'gasoline drifting in the air' draws the poetic figure out of the immediacy of the

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[79] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.40.
[80] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, p.25.
[81] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.40.
[82] John Burnside, interviewed by Attilla Dosa, 'John Burnside: Poets and Other Animals', *Beyond Identity* ed. by Attila Dósa (New York: Rodopi, 2009), p.117.
[83] Scott Brewster, '*Hern:* The Catastrophe of the Lyric in John Burnside'*, Crisis in Contemporary Poetry*, ed. by Anne Karhio, Sean Crossan and Charles I. Amstrong (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp.50-58, (p.51).
[84] Ibid, p.51.

personal and draws them into relation with the wider environment, where the 'gasoline smell from Leuchars' drifting across the sands, actively 'links' the individual to a maelstrom of invisible toxic flows and wider geopolitics of war and terrorism.[85] Across 'History', the sheer prevalence of pollution begins to filter into the nonhuman realm through descriptions:

> of silt and tides
> the rose or petrol blue
> of jellyfish and sea anemone
> combining with a child's
> first nakedness.[86]

Here it is as if the gasoline fumes floating above have penetrated the depths of the ocean below, flowing into the bodies of 'petrol blue' sea creatures that combine and corrupt the otherwise pure image of a 'child's| first nakedness'. The polluted, stranded jellyfish becomes one of several tethering points within the coastal environment that acts as a material counterweight to the underlying sense of fear and helplessness that 'History' reckons with. In contrast to the insidious flow of toxins that seep into the air, the act of kite flying is presented as an innocent and joyous practice which allows for more ethical relations to develop between the human and the nonhuman realm. '[P]lugged into the sky| all nerve and line',[87] the act of kite flying alerts both father and son to the array of creatures and materials that occupy the space of the beach. The image of father and son flying kites, 'gathering shells| and pebbles | finding evidence of life in all this| driftwork', instils a sense of hopefulness into the piece that counteracts the underlying fear 'of losing everything – the sea, the sky,| all living creatures, forests estuaries'.[88] The poem's slow accumulation of material objects, is placed in opposition to the disassociating dimension of 'the virtual' that has clouded the speaker's attention to 'the drift and tug| of other bodies'.[89]

In a later poem entitled 'Pentecost' from *The Good Neighbour* this accumulation of objects at the shoreline occurs again, as the poet recalls another coastal walk with his son:

> We are here so you can name

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[85] Burnside, *The Light Trap,* p.40.
[86] Ibid, p.41.
[87] Ibid, pp.41-2.
[88] Ibid, p.41.
[89] Ibid, p.41.

> the world you know
>   one object at a time:
> fishing boat, lighthouse, herring gull, open sky,
> those shoals of fish that skirt the harbour walls [90]

Across his works, Burnside is drawn to the ways in which physical engagement with the material phenomena of the natural world can offer access to a wider sense of environmental interconnection. Connected yet distant, in 'History', the kite floating above the earth with its 'lines raised in the wind', fastened by 'bodies fixed and anchored to the shore', reflects the mystified position of the poetic speaker who though tethered to the coast remains 'dizzy' and 'puzzled' in the face of global crisis.[91] Across the poem the poetic figure is suspended between different states of being, grounded yet weightless, 'patient; afraid; but still, through everything| attentive to the irredeemable'.[92] Paused, patient, and afraid, for Burnside every encounter with the nonhuman realm not only entails the possibility for reconnection, but also harbours a sense of risk, prompting the closing rhetorical question of the poem: 'how to be alive| in this gazed-upon and cherished world| and do no harm'.[93]

Burnside notes how this sense of crisis with regard to the corruption and pollution of the nonhuman realm features prominently within a specially commissioned poem entitled 'Caller Water': '"caller" meaning pure or clean in Scots. Today, finding clean water for most parts of the world is a serious business [...] I was reading about the pollution which had been happening in Romania: there had been a serious spill of heavy metals in the River Tisza'.[94] Written in response to Robert Fergusson's poem of the same name, Burnside's sequence traces the transformation of once 'Siller and clean' water to a substance corrupted by manufactured 'poisons;| Tinctures of lead; strains of dioxin;| Cankerous smeek; toxic emmisions'.[95] In a stronger vein than 'History', the poem is attentive to the trans-corporeal flows of toxins and pollutants that seep into the rivers, waterways, and oceans of the globe, before filtering into the bodies of both human and nonhuman beings. In 'Caller Water', Burnside positions water as a

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[90] John Burnside, *The Good Neighbour* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), p.25.
[91] Burnside, *The Light Trap,* p.42.
[92] Ibid, p.42.
[93] Ibid, p.42.
[94] Burnside, 'Poets and Other Animals', p.116.
[95] John Burnside, 'Four Variants of "Caller Water"', *Heaven-Taught Fergusson: Robert Burns's Favourite Scottish Poet: Poems and Essays*, ed. by Robert Crawford (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2003), pp.113-116, (p.114).

connective medium, linking the human body to the wider 'frame' of global capitalist systems that have 'Lapper'd' (congealed) the world's rivers, 'scart' (scarred) the land and 'scad' (scalded) the oceans.[96] Across the poem blood, water, and spinal fluid mingle with the harmful substances of poisons, heavy metals, and 'Cankerous' toxins.[97]

In a similar mode to the primeval shores of Mahon's 'Harbour Lights', in 'Caller Water', Burnside attempts to reassert a sense of primordial kinship with the nonhuman. Through a shared experience of exposure and contamination, Burnside fosters a bodily affinity between the human and the nonhuman, noting how 'a thread of fluid in the spine | answers to fish and frog, answers to rain,' so that the human and nonhuman 'becomes implicit in a ceaseless play | of echoes'.[98] Looking back to a time in pre-history when 'we first walked the banks o' Eden', the poem suggests that buried 'Deep in the bloodstream, far in the brain' the human still possesses a 'froglike saul'.[99] In suggesting that both human and animal life derive from the same 'origin and swelling | Reed-bed and strand', the poem's later painful recognition that 'the frogs are gone, | the fish and birds, the purse of spawn | beneath each lily-pad, all dead' prompts us to recognise that the loss of the environment threatens our own ability to survive.[100] The threat of extinction unites both human and nonhuman and seeks to 'remind ourselves that as human beings we are part of nature, and that we cannot survive in any meaningful sense, unless we respect animal life'.[101] The poem laments how the 'sea-eagle; osprey; sturgeon; deer' can now only exist as 'a fairy tale in someone's head', leaving the surrounding environment 'dumb and still | and nothing left to save, or kill'.[102] The paratactic positioning of 'save, or kill' recognises the responsibility of the human figure in both causing and curing the devastation of the nonhuman realm. The poem's resonant assertion that 'we are animate' attempts to rekindle a lost sense of kinship between the human and nonhuman that can problematically only ever be enacted within the space of the poem. As the final stanzas indicate these bodily affinities are not felt but imagined, 'drawn from the realm of in-between', from 'ancient tales' and a 'ceaseless play of

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[96] Ibid, p.114.
[97] Ibid, p.114.
[98] Ibid, p.114.
[99] Ibid, p.114.
[100] Ibid, pp.114-5.
[101] Ibid, p.118.
[102] Ibid, p.114.

echoes'. [103] Despite the poem's emphasis on corporeal connections, ecological reconnection is only enacted through imagined states, leaving the poet to question how to 'live beneath the sky| with all that lives, and how the soul extends | through every life that water makes or mends'.[104]

Burnside's focus on toxic transference is likely informed by Rachel Carson, whose works Burnside has described as influential for his own understanding of ecological relation: 'To belong, as Rachel Carson knew, is to belong to everything, to be part of an uninterrupted whole. To belong, to make ourselves at home in this world, is the most intelligent thing we can do; it is also the most difficult.'[105] The difficulty of ecological belonging is perhaps one of the most distinguishing features of Burnside's poetic craft. Filled with unnerving glimpses of 'something' and the eerie sensations of 'somewhere', his poems grapple with a sense of belonging that is provisional, fragile, and unsettling. This is perhaps due to the fact that for Burnside, the act of 'belonging' is not simply derived through connection or encounter (though this is key) but relates to the ethical notions of membership, responsibility and acceptance. To belong is to be welcomed, to be accepted, and to accept that connection comes with responsibility and risk. For Burnside, this risk is in part attached to the dynamics of self-annihilation that often marks his lyric poems. As Scott Brewster has suggested, many of Burnside's poetic works are concerned with the 'ethics of withdrawal, and how this might be reconciled with responsibilities to family, to human and non-human others, and to the environment'.[106] To enact ethical relation with the nonhuman, the poetic figure often risks 'self-obliteration', erasing any trace of the self in order to not intrude upon, betray or contaminate the other.[107] While the ethical impulse behind this withdrawal is born from a desire to not objectify or harm the other, Burnside's retreat into the lyric moment can at times emerge as a refusal to engage with the wider realities of extraction, consumption, and exploitation that are currently reshaping the global biosphere, as the intimate scales of his poetic

[103] Ibid, pp.115-6.
[104] Ibid, p.116.
[105] John Burnside and Maurice Riordan, 'Introduction', *Wild Reckoning,* ed. by John Burnside and Maurice Riordan (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2004), pp.13-22, (p.15).
[106] Scott Brewster, 'John Burnside: Poetry as the Space of Withdrawal', *Poetry & Geography: Space & Place in Post-war Poetry,* ed. by Neal Alexander and David Cooper (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), pp.178-190, (p.178).
[107] Ibid, p.180.

encounters problematically position the poetic figure outside of such networks of consumption.

Through his lyrics of 'self-forgetting', it is not only the 'slow flood of alien others' that emerge as unnerving presences within his poems, but the poetic figure itself that becomes one of many strange strangers 'resident aliens, foreigners, fair-weather friends'.[108] Playing with the 'twisted, looping form' of ecological relation, many of his poems present moments of ecological interconnection through the seemingly inverse experience of distance and otherness.[109] Burnside's contribution to *Wild Reckoning* presents one such instance of this strange looping, in a poem that recalls an 'eerie encounter in a Tromsø fish market'.[110] Entitled 'Salvelinus alpinus', the poem later included in *The Good Neighbour*, begins with a distinct sense of uncertainty: 'They've troubled me for days, these Arctic charr,| their childish faces cradled in a bowl | of salt and ice, their bodies hatched with night'.[111] The troublingly human faces of the child-like fish 'cradled' in a bowl awaiting consumption, places us within the realm of the uncanny. The fish are said to possess 'human faces, human eyes', which stare unblinkingly back at the poet, as their 'gaze' 'shifts from face to face, then disappears'.[112] The image of the shoal of fish aligns with notions of ecological interconnectedness:

> muscles of current laid out on a slab,
> steel-blue as cold as stone and none of them
> singular, none of them real outside the shoal
>
> that maps the tides and wanders with the light
> as one long soul: a unity of eyes
> and movement, centred everywhere at once
> and nowhere, as the centre of the world
> is here, and now, in every blade of grass
> or poppy head that shivers in the wind,
> though when we stop to look, nothing is there,
> perfect and cold and snow-blue as this gaze
> that shifts from face to face, then disappears.[113]

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[108] Burnside, *The Good Neighbour*, p.83, p.76.
[109] Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p.81, p.6.
[110] Burnside, *Wild Reckoning*, p.244.
[111] Ibid, p.210.
[112] Ibid, p.244.
[113] Ibid, p.210.

Depicted as a 'sprawling network of interconnection without center or edge' that melts 'the difference between *over here* and *over there*', the shoal becomes emblematic of ecological relation.[114] The amorphous body of the shoal is both 'everywhere' and 'nowhere', 'here and now', 'centered' and yet without a definable core. Yet again, despite the attention to the corporeal dimensions of this interconnection ('muscles', 'eyes', 'shivers') the poem's closing lines – 'this life beyond the life I have imagined, | livid and slow and dreaming in the tide| with shoals of others, till its time arrives' – highlight the inability of the poet to physically access this sense of interconnection, only experiencing it through dream, imagination, and the written word.[115]

Across *The Good Neighbour* (notably the collection is arranged in two sections 'Here' and 'There') Burnside's poems are alert to the ways in which the seemingly ordinary, quotidian aspects of life, are in fact extraordinary and startlingly strange. Poised between here and there, the known and unknown, absences and presence, the collection grapples with a mode of relation that is 'half-flesh | half-dream'.[116] Crafting a sense of intimacy that does not outweigh remoteness, Burnside's work alerts us to the inability of the poet to ever fully 'know' the place they are in. While blood, flesh and bone rise to the surface of Burnside's immersed verses, his poetic encounters with the nonhuman realm often give way to the intangible, impalpable and immaterial. As with Mahon, these constructed forms of relation are frequently found to be lacking. Throughout his work, Burnside is acutely aware of the 'limits of speech' and the ability of poetry to effectively express 'the intimate surprise | of other bodies'.[117] Filled with things that are 'not quite fact, | but not quite false', 'not quite there, yet not quite | missing', 'not quite true, and yet more trusted than the authorised account', his poems are attentive to the ways in which language and sensation are limited in their ability to evoke the real.[118] His repeated fascination with 'twins, liminal spaces, strange encounters with wild animals, points at which the environment, and the self fade in or out, and intermingle' gestures towards a

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[114] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, p.158.
[115] Burnside, *Wild Reckoning*, p.210.
[116] Burnside, *The Good Neighbour*, p.17.
[117] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, pp.7-8.
[118] Burnside, *The Good Neighbour*, p.32, p.67, p.78.

complex and continually unfolding relationship between self and other, human and nonhuman, that is definitively strange and looping.[119]

<p style="text-align:center">ii.   Lyrics of Suspension</p>

Across the works of Mahon and Burnside, this sense of immersion that is inversely felt as distance, arises in conjunction with their use of the lyric form, whereby their respective encounters with the shore often casts them into a state of contemplation that verges on crisis. A form that necessitates both immediacy and deference, relation and distance, intimacy and withdrawal, the lyric is a strange space that prompts both poets to reflect on the ability of poetry to re-enchant and re-connect. While both poets exhibit a proclivity for solitude and estrangement in the production of their lyrics, their respective attitudes towards the sense of loss that marks 'man's uneasy place in the world', are markedly different.[120] For Burnside the potential of loss is a core component of his immersive poetics, where the authenticity of place is only felt through extreme conditions of solitude, withdrawal, and self-obliteration. For Mahon however, loss, solitude, and withdrawal do not hold the potential for re-enchantment and re-connection, but are instead symptomatic of man's fundamental 'estrangement from the natural order [and] of ontological exile'.[121] As Eoin Flannery suggests, while Mahon's works engage the 'sense of the unknown, even the unknowable, in nature [...] as a means of ecological re-enchantment', his repeated fascination the 'washed-up remnants' of ecological relation in the form of whale carcasses, plastics, and tins, are employed 'to engender awe and humility in humanity, so that a more conscientious attitude to nonhuman ecology might be fostered'.[122] For Mahon, loss does not mark a possible space of future relation, but our actual present of ecological disconnection and environmental destruction.

In 'Resistance Days', Mahon orientates his ethical and poetic concerns around the resolve to embrace 'creative anarchy', 'not the faux anarchy of media culture' but 'the real chaos of indifferent nature'.[123] Across the collection, Mahon draws from the Epicurean thought of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (*DRN*),

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[119] Louisa Gairn, *Ecology in Modern Scottish Literature,* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2008) p.175.
[120] Haughton, p.31.
[121] Ibid, p.31.
[122] Flannery, p.44.
[123] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, p.18.

offering a 'materialist vision' of the world that displaces 'the divine' with 'biological process'.[124] For Monte Johnson and Catherine Wilson:

> the central aim of the *DRN* was to demolish religious belief and banish superstitious fear [...] By way of accomplishing its aim, the poem addressed a range of scientific subjects: nutrition, perception and mental illness; cosmology, the seasons and eclipses; thunder, clouds, and the magnet; the emergence and evolution of animal and vegetable life; contagion, poisoning and plague.[125]

Through its exploration of scientific materialism, the *DRN* has proved to hold a 'powerful influence on modern science' as the poem's attention to 'the discreteness of matter, the plurality of worlds, and the spontaneous adaptation of living things – are [arguably] continuous with our own ideas about atomism, multiple universes and evolution'.[126] For Mahon, the didacticism and scientific focus of the *DRN* proves informative for the development of his own ecological thought and poetic practice which frequently displays a fascination with the material essence of things. In 'Resistance Days', the turn towards the material is highlighted as a form of resistance 'to co-optation, | the "global" project of world domination' in which the natural world of corporeal phenomena has become transformed by 'the murderous tedium | of business culture' that has laid 'claim to the real'.[127] The poem presents a damning assessment of modern culture that has transformed the earth into 'a ganglion of wires and flex, crap advertising and commercial sex'.[128] Drawing distinctions between the vacuous forms of 'media culture', and the 'live seizures in the flux, fortuitous archetypes' of photography 'an art as fugitive as the life it snaps', the poem is dedicated to the Irish photographer John Minihan.[129] The poem shares Minihan's desire to trace the 'incursions of industry, comparative wealth and modernity' as they change and penetrate the Irish landscape and wider world.[130] The flux and movement of this 'fugitive' life alerts us to Mahon's contemplation of poetic art and its ability to counteract and 'resist commodity, the *ersatz*, the cold, the *schrecklichkeit* of the

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[124] Haughton, p.343.
[125] Monte Johnson and Catherine Wilson, 'Lucretius and the History of Science', *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius,* ed. by Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), pp.131-148, (p.131).
[126] Ibid, p.132.
[127] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, pp.16-7.
[128] Ibid, p.15-6.
[129] Ibid, p.17.
[130] John Minihan, *Shadows from the Pale – Portrait of an Irish Town* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996), dustjacket.

post-modern world' through the accurate documentation of the material world [131] For Mahon poetry, and particularly lyric poetry, like photography is able to capture and access a specific moment in time, laying 'claim to the real | as product, no, but as its own ideal'.[132] Writing in the foreword to Minihan's *An Unweaving of Rainbows: Images of Irish Writers* (1998) Mahon quotes Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977), suggesting that a photograph is not only 'an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask'.[133] For Mahon lyric poetry can similarly be understood as 'evidence not only of what's there but what an individual sees, not just a record but an evaluation of the world'.[134] Depicted as a form of 'sun-writing' that seeks to capture 'photogenic details' and 'immortal souls' through a series of 'close ups', Mahon establishes poetry as a medium that is able to both document and evaluate change.[135]

Yet it is difficult to say how successful Mahon's 'resistance' and reclamation of the 'real' in opposition to 'digital movies and unnatural nosh' truly is.[136] Both poem and photograph exist in a strangely suspended state that effectively arrests both the linear progression of time and the 'flux' of indifferent nature. Ultimately, the 'real' can only be perceived and recreated in a place of 'conceptual silence, the best place to live'.[137] As world of the 'corporate whole' has either destroyed or commoditised such places, the suspended space of the poem holds the poet in a moment of deep contemplation that allows them momentary access to a sense of the real that problematically exists outside of time and chronology. While the poem implores us to 'stick with real tomatoes, real *brioche*' and to 'study weather, clouds and their formation', this sense of the real is belied by the realisation that this study too will go 'straight to video with each new release'.[138] Similarly in 'Shorelines', a sequence 'based on a series of photographs by the Cork artist Vivienne Roche', Mahon records the flux and vibrancy of the littoral zone through a series of 'sand studies' that 'expose each bare feature' of the landscape.[139] The sequence employs a range of active verbs and onomatopoeic terms in an attempt

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[131] Mahon, *Harbour Lights,* p.16.
[132] Ibid, p.17.
[133] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2005), p.120.
[134] Ibid, p.68.
[135] Ibid, p.17.
[136] Ibid, p.17.
[137] Ibid, p.17.
[138] Ibid, pp.16-7.
[139] Ibid, p.48.

to recreate the elemental conditions of the shoreline with its 'expiring lines of froth,| absorbing sand where every| worm hole is a discovery', the 'Breakwater, an ebbing tide,| the frantic shingle-dash| and vigilant gull-glide'.[140] The poem attempts to document and evaluate the 'never ceasing friction' of 'the raw reality,| always that harsh index' of the natural world, and yet does so through ekphrasis.[141] The poem consequently exhibits a sense of anxiety, with the line: 'Resistant, a losing struggle', recalling the difficulty of expression encountered in 'Resistance Days'.[142] The 'near-silence' of the shoreline recalls the 'conceptual silence' of the earlier poem, acknowledging that silence and perfection can only ever truly exist in conceptual forms as 'The long contingent action| of salt on the first rocks' gives no sense of 'respite and no pity' to the poetic subject.[143] Through their suspension of time and place, each of these poems expresses a concern with modes of recording the 'real', revealing a governing crisis of expression that prompts the poet to give 'up even on the death of language'.[144]

In 'Lucretius on Clouds', Mahon attempts to overcome this crisis of expression by turning to the elemental chaos of weather systems. Reworking a short sequence from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura,* the poem explores epicurean modes of thought which emphasise the role of sensation and materialism in perceiving the 'real':

> Clouds take shape in the blue sky and gather
> where flying bodies get tangled up together
> tiny clouds are borne along by breezes
> till the moment when a stronger current rises.[145]

Akin to 'A Swim in Co. Wicklow', in 'Lucretius on Clouds', Mahon immerses the human figure within a soupy mixture of primordial fluids: 'a multitude of life-germs, water semen, floats | with cloud stuff and secretions of all sorts'.[146] The poem draws connections between the absorptive cloud systems above and the human body below, where the pouring rain echoes the permeability of our own 'windpipes, our glands and pores', and the gentle swelling of the clouds mirrors the engorgement of 'our own bodies' that 'grow with the serum, gism,| sweat,

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[140] Ibid, p.48.
[141] Ibid, p.50.
[142] Ibid, p.49.
[143] Ibid, p.50.
[144] Ibid, p.50.
[145] Ibid, p.21.
[146] Ibid, p.21.

whatever fluid is in the organism'. [147] The human figure is absorbed into the flows of the global hydrosphere, their bodily fluids becoming one of many 'particles' that 'rise from rivers and wet slopes'. [148] The poetic focus on functions of biological and meteorological processes remains empirical while still espousing a 'a sort of secular numen',[149] in which descriptions of 'evanescent strips' of cloud 'trailing from snowy summits into the ether| the empyrean spaces torn by wind and weather' reveal the seemingly ordinary to be transcendent.[150] Mahon's invocation of Lucretius explains not only his thematic turn towards biological and materialist conditions, but also the collection's overall fascination 'with clouds upon clouds, tempests upon tempests'.[151] Lucretius' work on clouds describes them both as 'atomic bodies of rougher texture [that] come together and are able to remain in conjunction despite the very slight connection that binds them', and as 'harbingers of peril'.[152] Mahon is thus not only attentive to the atomic scales of weather systems in which 'particles rise from rivers and wet slopes | while the sky, weighing them, packs them tight| and weaves them closely like a linen sheet', but is also conscious of broader conditions of extreme weather in which all 'melts and runs'.[153] The poem's description of 'violent pushing', 'sizzling rains' and 'smoky air' moves beyond the sublime images and pathetic fallacy of Romantic cloud poems, pointing more earnestly towards issues of environmental crisis.[154] Consequently, Mahon's use of the lyric not only reveals a deeply-felt crisis of expression – regarding the ability of language to effectively evoke the 'real' – but also recognises the hazardous consequences of immersion through instances of contamination and destruction.

In *Life on Earth* Mahon again deals with scales of ecological encounter that extend from the 'micro-climate' of the individual subject, to the wider 'atmosphere' of the global biosphere.[155] In this collection, Mahon continues to develop his ecological ethics, first set forth in *Harbour Lights*, through a central

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[147] Ibid, p.21.
[148] Ibid, p.21.
[149] Derek Mahon, 'An Interview with Derek Mahon', *Poetry Ireland Review* (Autumn 1985), 11-19, (p.18).
[150] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, p.21.
[151] Ibid, p.22.
[152] Lee Fratantuono, *A Reading of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), p.427.
[153] Mahon, *Harbour Lights*, p.21.
[154] For a discussion of clouds in the Romantic lyric poem see: Mary Jacobus, 'Chapter 1, Cloud Studies: The Visible Invisible', *Romantic Things: A Tree, a Rock, a Cloud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp.10-36.
[155] Derek Mahon, *Life on Earth* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2008).

lyrical sequence entitled 'Homage to Gaia'. As critics have noted, the title of the collection likely takes its name from James Lovelock's 'Gaia hypothesis' outlined in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979). Lovelock summarises the concept thus:

> Briefly, it states that organisms and their material environment evolve as a single coupled system, from which emerges the sustained self-regulation of climate change and chemistry at a habitat state for whatever is the current biota [...] Perhaps its greatest value lies in its metaphor of a living Earth, which reminds us that we are part of it and that human rights are constrained by the needs of our planetary partners.[156]

Lovelock's metaphor of a 'living Earth' formed through a series of interdependent 'organisms [that] change their material environment as well as adapt to it' proves a useful mode of thought for Mahon's developing ecological position.[157] As Flannery suggests, Lovelock's theory 'couples interdependence with responsibility', acknowledging the force of 'human history within the more protracted continuum of geological, evolutionary and astrological histories'.[158] The Gaia hypothesis enables Mahon to address the scale and impact of human participation within the global biosphere; one that has been relatively brief but extraordinarily exploitative.

Across 'Homage to Gaia', Mahon addresses these pressing questions of scale and power, as well as acknowledging his own complex position within global systems of exploitation and responsibility. While the familiar tropes of waste and dereliction appear across the sequence, they do so with a renewed ecological vigour and sense of responsibility. In '4. Sand and Stars', we see Mahon acknowledge the familiar directions of his work, as he notes 'here I am, listening| again to a cold strand| the vast sky glistening| like blown dust or sand'.[159] The descriptions of the cold strand with its 'Ancient shingle races,| clicking and sparkling, down| to wild watery chaos', recall moments from *Harbour Lights* and 'A Swim in Co. Wicklow'.[160] In 'Homage to Gaia', the shore once again becomes a site of transformation, but on a planetary scale. The scene unfolds under an

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[156] James Lovelock, 'Gaia: The Living Earth', *Nature: International Weekly of Science*, 426, December 18th (2003), 769-770, (pp.769-770).
[157] Ibid, p.770.
[158] Flannery, p.32.
[159] Mahon, *Life on Earth*, p.49.
[160] Ibid, p.49.

'enormous sky', dwarfs the figure on the strand as they measure the 'tiny houses' and 'sunken bungalows' of flooded communities.[161] This altered scale of encounter occurs throughout the 'Homage to Gaia' sequence, with the titular poem invoking deranging planetary scales of ecological encounter. The two opening quatrains of the poem establish a sense of communal complicity and individual responsibility for global environmental decline:

> Since we destroyed the woods
> with crazy chainsaws, oiled
> the sea, burned up the clouds,
> upset the natural world
> to grow fat, if I may
> I want to apologize
> for our mistakes and pay
> homage to seas and skies[162]

Acknowledging both individual and collective culpability, the poem stands as an alternative gift to the 'Suspension bridges' and 'columns of black smoke' that humanity has thus far deigned to 'give back' to Gaia.[163] The transition from 'we' to 'I' reflects Mahon's own complicity in these destructive practices, prompting him to take ownership of humanity's exploitative history in the hopes of establishing a new mode of ecological interaction that includes a sense of humility and responsibility.[164]

Mahon's anxiety of expression emerges again across the sequence, declaring at one point 'we babble about the world| while you sustain the earth'.[165] As a whole, the sequence plays with the initially individual and personal scales of the lyric form to convey a sense of finitude and vulnerability that affects the wider 'planetary totality of which humans are a constituent part – but they are not necessary to the continual operations of life on Earth'.[166] The grand scales of time and space induced by 'the confused stink| of global warming' ultimately casts the individual human subject, formed from 'spit and snot', as both a perpetrator of the 'weird weather' that now plagues the globe, and its victim.[167] At this scale, the human race is positioned as one of many species that will become 'extinct' as the

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[161] Ibid, p.49.
[162] Ibid, p.46.
[163] Ibid, p.46.
[164] Flannery, p.37.
[165] Mahon, *Life on Earth*, p.46.
[166] Solnick, p.130.
[167] Mahon, *Life on Earth,* p.54, p.52.

great adaptive system of the global biosphere with its 'Sea levels rising annually,| glaciers sliding fast' recalibrates itself in line with new parameters that don't necessarily include the human race.[168] In comparison with the primordial poetics of *Harbour Lights* in which the hydrosphere is imbued with life-giving potential, across *Life on Earth*, Mahon's concern with rising sea levels, destructive flooding, and glacial melt, imbues water and 'weird weather' with an ironically unnatural destructive capacity.

In comparison to Burnside's sustained personal excursions through specific terrains, Mahon's planetary scales reveal how in 'the Anthropocene all human and non-human life is caught up in political questions', subsequently rendering the scale of the local as insufficient for addressing ecological change.[169] Where for Burnside, the biotic limits of the bioregion become a means through which to cultivate a new sense of belonging, for Mahon we must not only derive a sense of belonging from our bioregional community, but the wider global biosphere:

> We belong to this –
> not as discrete observing presences but as born
> participants in the action, sharing of course
> 'the seminal substance of the universe'
> with hedgerow, flower and thorn
> rook, rabbit and rat.[170]

In 'Country Road', he expands the initial aperture of vision and encounter provided by the pastoral form, as the opening scales of 'a tinkling ditch and a long field| where tractors growled' slowly enlarge to include less obvious signs of life: 'skittish bacteria, fungi, viruses, gastropods| squirming in earth and dirt'.[171] Suggesting that both the 'lone bittern and the red grouse' and planetary 'Dark energies' formed from 'red-shifting gas' have 'got the measure of it', Mahon plays with the varying scales of encounter that looking to the biosphere inspires.[172] In so doing the immediate bioregion of 'Cloyne' with its 'Abandoned trailers sunk in leaves and turf' is subjected to wider planetary changes of 'slow erosion, waves on the boil'.[173] The poem's rejection of 'observing presences' in favour of 'participants in the action' overcomes the sense of withdrawal and detachment often invoked

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[168] Ibid, p.55.
[169] Solnick, p.131.
[170] Mahon, *Life on Earth*, p.42.
[171] Ibid, p.42.
[172] Ibid, p.43.
[173] Ibid, p.42.

by lyrical and pastoral forms, and instead proffers a sense of relationality and connection through the closing line's assertion that 'we belong here too'.[174]

Working at the 'borderline between "self" and "other"', the transient temporalities and liminal qualities of Burnside's lyrics similarly seek to undermine 'feelings of separateness that make us capable of damaging the world in which we live, the meta-habitat we must share with all other things'.[175] His subsequent turn towards 'the beauty of the real, as opposed to the virtual' marks the central concern of his lyrical practice which attempts to relate how:

> any human being standing in the open, exposed, aware, at risk, untrammelled – is able to attune him or herself to the rhythm of the earth, the feel of a place, the presence of other animals, the elements, sidereal time, the divine. To be exposed in such a manner is, of course, dangerous, [...] but it is also essential to being human'.[176]

For Burnside, in order to reconnect with our condition as 'human animals' we must first embrace a mode of being that is not 'cut off from the scent and sound and feel' of the nonhuman world, but actively attends to 'the starlit darkness of the actual night, the salt and physicality and achieved grace of real bodies, the pleasure of walking as opposed to driving'.[177] It is only through (re)establishing a sense of kinship with the nonhuman realm, by establishing the body as material fact, that we may begin to contest 'the degradation of our shared environment, the obscene power of the corporations, the cheapening of our shared experience'.[178] This wariness of modern capitalism is not unlike that expressed by Mahon in *Harbour Lights,* with Burnside similarly embracing the lyric as 'a technique for reclaiming the authentic, a method for reinstating the real, a politics of the actual'.[179] Yet, Burnside's desire to develop this sense of authentic, actual, connection between the human and nonhuman is similarly underlined by an anxiety of expression; of the ability of poetry to ever reach the 'real'.

The long poem 'Ports', taken from *The Asylum Dance*, displays Burnside's desire to enter into a 'politics of the actual' through poetry.[180] The poem displays

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[174] Ibid, p.43.
[175] John Burnside, 'John Burnside', *Conversations with Scottish Poets*, ed. by Marco Fazzini (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 2015), pp.111-123, (p.122).
[176] Burnside, 'A Science of Belonging', p.101.
[177] Ibid, p.93, p.97.
[178] Ibid, p.97.
[179] Ibid, p.95.
[180] Ibid, p.95.

this conscious turn towards the 'real' in opposition to the virtual through the figure of a photographer who is unable to photograph the carcass of 'feral|cattle' 'a long-forgotten| ghost of husbandry' found at the shore.[181] As in 'Resistance Days', the act of photography in 'Ports' is not aligned with the 'faux anarchy of media culture' but is instead presented as a medium capable of producing authentic connection through attentive observation.[182] As Louisa Gairn suggests, a significant portion of Burnside's work is 'haunted by the tension between perception and revelation', with the art of photography often emerging as mode that is able to accurately and sensitively record the phenomenon of encounter.[183] Indeed, the art of photography arises at several points across Burnsides' oeuvre, perhaps most potently in his novel *The Locust Room* (2002). At one point in the novel Burnside describes the ways in which objects viewed through the camera lens are seen to possess a:

> quality of estrangement that seemed to allow the things to move away from the viewer's gaze, to set each thing, each pebble and plank and scab of weed, in its own inviolable space, not as a mere object, but as something respected, something loved and so left to be itself, beyond possession, beyond comprehension.[184]

Here Burnside attempts to establish a key ecological difference between observation and objectification, where both poetry and photography are hailed for their ability to respect the innate value of seemingly mundane materials. For Burnside, the art of photography cultivates a sense of relation through a necessary 'estrangement', where connection is engendered through the recognition that the object is always 'beyond possession, beyond comprehension'. Importantly, this sense of estrangement is not the same as disconnection or separation, but is instead the recognition of difference that allows Burnside to draw on the mystery of the commonplace.

In 'Ports', this sense of estrangement derives from scenes of decay; the 'smashed keel' of boats 'half restored', the 'beauty of wreckage | of things submerged' the 'dark webs of crabmeat', the 'wet diaphragms of stranded jellyfish' the hunched carcass of 'feral cattle', or 'the shallow wrecks | of coalships' that populate the shore.[185] Within the space of the poem these decaying materials

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[181] Burnside, *The Asylum Dance*, p.4.
[182] Mahon, *Harbour Lights,* p.17.
[183] Gairn, p.159.
[184] John Burnside, *The Locust Room* (London: Vintage, 2002), p.28.
[185] Burnside, *The Asylum Dance*, pp.1-4.

possess an unnerving haunted vitality, their afterlives 'suspended in the constancy' of the lyric moment.[186] Acknowledging that our ability to dwell is not only defined through 'the handful of birds and plants we know by name', but also through that which we can never truly know, the poem defines 'our| dwelling place:| a catalogue of wrecks', presenting a sense of place that is haunted by loss and incomprehensibility.[187] In 'Ports' we see this moment at the point at which a photographer is 'unable' to take a photograph of a particular scene:

> He had his camera
>   but couldn't take
> the picture he wanted
>   the one he thinks of now
> as perfect
>   — he couldn't betray
> that animal silence
>   the threadwork of grass through the hide
> the dwelling place
>   inherent in the spine
>
> that
>
> kinship of flesh with flesh.[188]

The topographical construction of the poem attempts to visually trace the estrangement of the human figure from the natural world, where the constant use of caesura symbolically emulates the distance felt between the human and the nonhuman. Despite the poem's impulse to catalogue, document, and define, the central scene of the photographer who is unable to take the photo 'he wanted| the one he thinks of now | as perfect' alerts us to a tension in Burnside's work between empirical recording and artistic distortion.[189] The poem relates the imagined perfection of an image that is never taken. Thus, while Burnside has suggested that 'poetry itself can be seen as a means — a discipline, a spiritual path, a political-ecological commitment — to wholeness and reconnection with the earth itself', many of his poems express the (im)possibility of such (re)connection.[190]

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[186] Ibid, p.7.
[187] Ibid, p.2.
[188] Ibid, p.5.
[189] Ibid, p.5.
[190] Burnside, 'A Science of Belonging', p.99.

In a similar mode to Mahon, Burnside's insistence upon a return 'the real', sees him turn to the scientific materialism of the *DRN* in the four-part sequence 'After Lucretius'. The poem's epigraph: '*nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, | Continuou hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante'*, translated as: 'for change in anything from out its bounds| Means instant death of that which was before', governs the Burnside's overall concern with questions of transformation and destruction; the modes through which 'each thing dies| into its own becoming| the shed skin falling away'.[191] As with Mahon, Burnside is drawn to Lucretius' insistence upon:

> a phenomenal world of largely fleeting appearances and transitory entities, behind which there existed only tiny particles, deprived of all characteristics and powers except shape, size and movement, in constantly changing configurations and combinations.[192]

Through a series of lyrics that attempt to document the 'gaps between' the poet and the world, in 'After Lucretius' Burnside seeks to understand and account for 'the nature of things' through a materialist account of the untraceable 'and perishable shadows of a soul| that shifts and slides| beneath this everyday'.[193] Filled with 'vanishings', 'disappearances' and gradual erasures, the poem not only employs an encyclopaedic cataloguing of observable materials (bone, skin, and flesh), but also attempts to register and record the 'almost-heard, in the almost known'.[194] In so doing, the poem attempts to capture the strange familiarity of the local, understood as that which 'never fully | hoves into view:| a blur at the edge of the print, | that might be human', but 'could just as easily| be something else'.[195] By drawing attention to the absences and gaps that form between the 'intimate surprise of other bodies', Burnside's lyrics alert us to the condition of suspension, in which the poetic figure is perpetually on the cusp of contact, caught in the 'chasm between | one presence and the next'.[196] As in 'History', in 'After Lucretius' Burnside's use of the lyric form suspends the poetic figure between estrangement and encounter, where they are able to feel 'salt-dreams| printed in the flesh, | the echo of other bodies', but ultimately experience 'this ebb and flow: | new animals' as 'a sudden mystery'.[197] Replete with '[u]nsaid and

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[191] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.71.
[192] Johnson and Wilson, p.131.
[193] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.70-3.
[194] Ibid, p.72.
[195] Ibid, p.75-6.
[196] Ibid, p.8, p.11.
[197] Ibid, p.75, p.73.

unsayable presences', his poems are conscious of 'the ways in which language is fundamentally limited in evoking the "real"' forming a poetic practice that is 'always provisional or compromised'.[198] Rather than resolutely overcoming the 'gaps between' the human or nonhuman, material or immaterial, flesh or dream, Burnside's use of the lyric form casts the poetic figure into a state of suspension in which they identify with 'the absence that forms| between two lives'.[199] The human and nonhuman are subsequently drawn into a dialectical relationship – each one lacking the other, experiencing the other as a felt absence.

The constant interplay of withdrawal and encounter within Burnside's lyrics is 'shadowed by a sense of threat and vulnerability' that draws an affinity between the human and nonhuman.[200] Through a shared sense of vulnerability and exposure in which 'we are bound | by greenness and decay to see ourselves | each in the other',[201] Burnside's lyrics establish a sense of kinship with the nonhuman realm that attempts to formulate a new politics of representation that is 'expansively communal: to locate ourselves where we do not own the earth but are subjects on it'.[202] For Burnside, the lyric is the most apt form through which to subvert a sense of ownership and control as 'the purpose of the lyric is to stop time, by somehow conveying the timelessness of the chosen place' in which the lyric's ability to focus 'very specifically on the moment' breaks the flow of liner time, giving way to transience.[203] In so doing the lyric exists both in and outside of time in a suspended state that 'is essentially empty, a region of potential in which anything can happen'.[204] It is a borderline space that arises 'between the individual and the world'.[205]

As a point of negotiation and transaction between the self and 'other human beings, or with a living and changing environment', the lyric is a transformative 'gap', a 'magical space' in which 'several versions of a place, or a person, can exist simultaneously'.[206] It is a space that is poised between 'self-containment, and a

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[198] Gairn, p.161.
[199] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.70-1.
[200] Bristow, p.52.
[201] Burnside, *The Light Trap*, p.73.
[202] Tom Bristow, 'Environment, History, Literature: Materialism as Cultural Ecology in John Burnside's "Four Quartets"', *Scottish Literary Review,* 3.2 (2011), 149-170, (p.168).
[203] John Burnside, 'Poetry and a Sense of Place', *Nordlit,* 1 (Spring 1997), 200-220, (p.201).
[204] Ibid, p.201.
[205] Ibid, p.203.
[206] Ibid, p.203.

countervailing exposure to distress and contamination'.[207] Burnside's sense of the 'here and now' is thus almost always shot through by the 'there and then', meaning that both the poem and the poet 'cannot insulate itself from contact with the other, cannot ignore its overtures and threats'.[208] Ultimately for Burnside, the local is proximate, intimate and quotidian, but it is also distant, strange, and numinous. Akin to Mahon's numinous materialism, Burnside's works explore the mystery of the everyday, and expose the unhomely dimensions of dwelling. His predilection for seascapes can in part be read as symptomatic of his desire to trace our immersion within 'a world we do not know | and name the things | one object at a time: | fishing boat, lighthouse, herring gull, clear blue sky'.[209] As a transient and transformative space, the littoral zones that emerge across his oeuvre are presented as both a 'regenerative site of immersion and reconnection' and as a site of degeneration, estrangement, and disconnection.[210] The shore is formed through the intangible:

> [...] pull of borderlines
> slow
> tide shifts in the angle of a wall
> the slip of water
> underneath a quay [211]

For Burnside, our sense of place and dwelling derive, not from the notion of constancy or absolute states of being, but from a disconcerting and unhomely sense of being neither here nor there, 'not lost or found | but somewhere in between'.[212]

For both Mahon and Burnside, the turn towards the littoral zone marks a preoccupation with liminality within their works. Where for Mahon the shoreline shapes a poetic oeuvre that is dominated by an overall sense of 'loss and estrangement and more generally the ambivalent affiliation between his self and place',[213] for Burnside the of the edge of the sea with its constantly shifting boundaries and stranded creatures marks a relationship to place that is one of constant negotiation and strangeness. Where previous poetic turns towards the

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[207] Brewster, 'Hern', p.51.
[208] Brewster, 'Poetry as the Space of Withdrawal', p.181.
[209] Burnside, *The Good Neighbour*, p.27.
[210] Greim, p.94.
[211] Burnside, *The Asylum Dance*, p.65.
[212] Ibid, p.84.
[213] Serée-Chaussinand, p.51.

edge of the sea open us to notions of cultural plurality and mobility, for Burnside and Mahon the shore becomes a space through which to consider the 'incoherence, the estrangement, in modern culture and identity, the gaps opened up by the stranger, the tectonic shifts that displace established meanings and force us to confront the stranger in ourselves'.[214] It is not just that the shore or ocean possesses a dynamic and estranging quality, but that looking to the sea reveals how all forms of dwelling must necessarily respond to and acknowledge the inherent strangeness of place and self. One way in which the edge of the sea helps us to contend with the inherent strangeness of place is through the contemplation of scale. As Rachel Carson suggests:

> When we go down to the low-tide line, we enter a world that is as old as the earth itself – the primeval place of the elements of earth and water, a place of compromise and conflict and eternal change [...] To understand the shore, it is not enough to catalogue its life. Understanding comes only when, standing on a beach, we can sense the long rhythms of earth and sea that sculpted its land forms and produced the rock and sand of which it is composed.[215]

The edge of the sea is a place where both time and space become strange. Both an 'ancient world' and a space of 'continuing creation' the edge of the sea prompts us to consider forms of time and space that extend beyond the parameters of the human subject. This ability to think in scales that exist beyond the temporal limits of the human subject is key to current ecocritical thinking. As we have seen across the preceding chapters, the edge of the sea is for many poets and environmental theorists a key space through which to comprehend not only a deeply individual sense of place, but a 'new sense of planetary scale and interconnectedness' as symbolised through rising sea levels, trans-corporeal relation, watery bodies, and weird weather.[216] As Morton suggests, the ecological thought asks us to think simultaneously across different and seemingly contradictory scales of time and space, and 'demands that we encounter the strange stranger on many levels and on may scales from the bacteria in our gut to birds slick with oil to displaced victims of a hurricane'.[217] For both Mahon and Burnside, encounters with the 'strange stranger' importantly 'confound our

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[214] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.264.
[215] Carson, p.xiv.
[216] DeLoughrey, p.224.
[217] Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, pp.49-50.

limited, fixated, self-orientated frameworks',[218] and urge us to conceive of a sense of place through more open, plural and multi-species modalities.

[218] Ibid, p.19.

'Waves succumbed to | and survived': Sea Change in the Poetry of
Moya Cannon and Mary O'Malley

In her introduction to *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland* (2014), Pilar
Villar-Argáiz notes the significant economic, political and cultural changes that
have led to depictions of modern Ireland 'as the most globalised country in the
world'.[1] Referencing Ireland's entry into the European Union in 1973, the 'rise
and success of the women's movements', the coinage of the 'Celtic Tiger' period
by economist Kevin Gardiner in 1994, and the later 1998 Good Friday Agreement,
Villar-Argáiz traces 'Ireland's gradual transformation from a predominantly
agricultural economy to a hi-tech multinational one' and in doing so notes the
increased levels of inward migration to Ireland that 'profoundly altered the ethnic
landscape of Irish society'.[2] Yet it was not only the ethnic landscape of Ireland
that greatly transformed during this period. As Eoin Flannery suggests, any 'Irish
ecocritical intervention must engage with the country's Celtic Tiger period and
focus on the idea of values and valuation'.[3] Placing emphasis on the value of
capital over the value of community, for many, the intense commodification of
land during the Tiger period effectively detached 'people from their fellow
humanity and the proximate domains of non-human ecology'.[4] For Flannery, the
Tiger period consequently marks an epoch that in contrast to 'a productive ethics
of ecological dwelling' was sustained by 'speculation and consumption, as land
and property assumed totemic proportions'.[5] As Marie Mianowski notes,
contemporary Post-Celtic Tiger literature is sensitive to the physical and cultural
landscapes of Ireland that have since become populated by 'roads, hotels, and
housing developments [...] and ghost estates' that eerily recall 'the absentee
inhabitants of our times and the absentee landlords of previous centuries'.[6] The
landless inheritance of Post-Celtic Tiger landscapes has consequently brought

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[1] Pilar Villar-Argáiz, 'Introduction: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature', *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature* ed. by Pilar Villar-Argáiz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp.1-37, (p.1).
[2] Ibid, p.1.
[3] Eóin Flannery, *Ireland and Ecocriticism: Literature, History and Environmental Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.16.
[4] Ibid, p.16.
[5] Ibid, p.16.
[6] Marie Mianowski, *Post Celtic Tiger Landscapes in Irish Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2017), p.1.

forth a new wave of writing 'since 2008, [that] has attempted to represent and re-negotiate identities and heritages in a multicultural and transnational context'.[7] The decades of writing with which this chapter is concerned (1990-2012), marks a specific phase within Irish literature that is conscious of the ways in which 'Ireland suddenly opened out to the global world of market economy, and out of the logic of containment', where the initial unfurling and eventual collapse of the Tiger economy brought with it the need to form new concepts of place, space, and belonging.[8] In this chapter, the work of poets Mary O'Malley and Moya Cannon is examined in relation to this shifting perception of landscape, tracing their engagement with conditions of loss and estrangement that have shaped 'a contemporary sense of place characterized not by pause and enclosure but by movements of expansion and openness'.[9]

The binding of Irish land and seascapes to the global capitalist system marks a central concern for both O'Malley and Cannon whose works trace shifting relationships with land and sea from the boom of Tiger period through to the bust of Post-Tiger imaginings. As Justin Carville notes 'the unifying spatial logic of global capitalism' that came to the fore in the Tiger years divested the Irish landscape of a sense of 'tradition, heritage and community', where 'the tumultuous impact of the collapse of global capitalism on the Irish landscape' resulted in 'a new wave of geographic and cultural dislocation'.[10] This sense of cultural disconnection correlates with the commoditisation and destruction of the environment that Tiger economies perpetuate and sustain. Tiger economies are often governed under 'a "developmental" state model and inspired by export-orientated industrialization' whose 'unprecedented rates of economic growth' are coupled with 'unprecedented transformations of nature, transformations that have been coloured by the tendency of [Tiger economies] to house a disproportionate number of global investments in the "dirty industries"'.[11] As Sharae Deckard has recently argued, the Celtic Tiger's 'opening of new commodity frontiers (such as fracking, water, agrobiotechnology, and

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[7] Ibid, p.5.

[8] Ibid, p.6.

[9] Ibid, p.134.

[10] Justin Carville, 'Topographies of Terror: Photography and the post-Celtic Tiger Landscape', *From Prosperity to Austerity: A Socio-Cultural Critique of the Celtic Tiger and its Aftermath,* ed. by Eamon Maher and Eugene O'Brien (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp.103-119, (pp.103-107).

[11] Mark Boyle, 'Cleaning up after the Celtic Tiger: Scalar "Fixes" in the Political Ecology of Tiger Economies', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 27.2 (2002), 172-194, (p.17).

biopharma)' is symptomatic of 'the neoliberal drive [of Tiger economies] to appropriate and financialize nature'.[12] While Deckard highlights the 'grazier export economy' of Ireland's '"green" rural countryside' during the peak Tiger period, the subsequent collapse of the Tiger state after the financial crash of 2008 means that the post-Tiger economy has sought new 'ecological frontiers' that look to both the blue and the green:

> water via the privatization of domestic water provision; oil via the sale of offshore petroleum exploration licenses to transnational oil companies; natural gas through onshore hydraulic fracturing; fish through the development of mass aquaculture and intensification of salmon-farming.[13]

Deckard notes how the turn to these water-derived commodities means that 'hitherto uncommoditized aspects of the hydro-social cycle are being incorporated into networks of finance'.[14] As Deckard highlights, within hydro-social models water is imbued with a political, material, and cultural significance.

We see this engagement with the impact of water commodification in O'Malley's most recent collection *Playing the Octopus* (2016). In 'Scarce', water is at the centre of questions regarding globalisation and environmental sustainability:

> The future is water – plastic
> Famine drums, a dented kettle,
> A brushed-steel tap
> Set in tombstone marble
> In a slim kitchen.
> Water, cleaned, dirty, chlorinated,
> A dry river. Heat waves at the Arctic.
> Cut off means war.
> It is oil, it is diamonds.
> The poem and the soil demand it.[15]

Prioritising the flow of capital over the flow of water, the poem positions the 'demand' and exchange of water as the conduit to a future of uneven development and environmental decline. The ominous 'tombstone marble' of the sink disturbs the seeming security of the domestic space, and gestures towards the fatal consequences of water shortage and climate change. The corruption of the

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[12] Sharae Deckard, 'World-Ecology and Ireland: The Neoliberal Ecological Regime', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22.1 (2016), 145-176, (p.149).
[13] Ibid, p.164.
[14] Ibid, p.164.
[15] Mary O'Malley, *Playing the Octopus* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2016), p.22.

homely space correlates to the penetration of the local by the global, where the wider issues of famine, war, and climate change, forcibly open the limits of the 'slim kitchen' to global crises. Aligned with the exchange of oil and diamonds, water is repositioned as a valuable and violently contested commodity that is also tied to climate change: 'A dry river. Heat waves at the Arctic'. The use of caesura in line seven mimics the sudden drought of water which once abundant is now 'cleaned, dirty, chlorinated' and 'dry.' The closing line: 'The poem and the soil demand it', emphasises the importance of water in relation to both culture and capital. While 'Scarce' looks to the formulation of new hydrological commodity frontiers in Ireland,[16] O'Malley's work as a whole is more often concerned with saltwater spaces, where her engagement with the seas and oceans of the archipelago are paramount in exploring new migrant identities that have arisen in the wake of economic and environmental collapse.

Addressing questions of quality, inequality, control, access, sanitation and organisation, hydro-social scholarship often focuses on the socio-cultural and ecological consequences of the commodification of fresh water ecologies, only briefly mentioning the larger saltwater bodies of the seas and oceans in relation to desalination processes. Yet the ocean is also a distinctly social, material, and political watery space and remains central to the continued circulation of 'Earth's commerce [as] Ninety percent of the world's goods (most of what we eat or type on or wear) still travels in container ships' that float across the world's oceans, following and aiding the flow of capital.[17] Within the modern capitalist system, the world's oceans 'are becoming more techno than ocean', where the prevalence of militarised waters, industrialised fishing fleets and plastic gyres has transformed once biodiverse waters into a 'humanized technoscape that places new demands on our eating and disposal habits and also on our relation to literature'.[18] Thus, while the sea has traditionally functioned 'in literature and culture as a trope instead of a biotic world or swarm of agencies', the current ecological condition of the world's oceans necessitates the production of a new form of writing that 'put[s] the ocean's agitation and historicity back onto our

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[16] Deckard notes that until recently 'Ireland remained the only EU member state not to charge for domestic water and wastewater services, which were paid instead through general taxation'. However in 2013 the 'Water Services Bill established Irish Water as a new state water utility responsible for operation, maintenance and upgrade of water services infrastructure, customer billing and charging' (p.166).

[17] Patricia Yaeger, 'Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 523-545, (p.523).

[18] Ibid, p.530.

mental maps and into the study of literature'.[19] This chapter suggests that within contemporary Irish literature, poetic seascapes take on new cultural and political dimensions that are increasingly sensitive to changes in both world economy and world ecology.

Across the work of O'Malley and Cannon, the continued cultural evacuation of the land and seascapes of the Irish West is not only understood as an ecological crisis, but is attached to a deeper crisis of identity and sense of a threatened national culture. This sense of being cast adrift, of being separated from both the human and biotic community often characterises contemporary discussions regarding the force of globalisation that for many has:

> swept like a flood tide through the world's diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, 'branded' homogenization of cultural experience, [and] thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities.[20]

Viewed as a 'seamless extension [...] of western cultural imperialism', for many scholars the force of globalisation 'destroys localities' and further threatens 'that particular subset of cultural identity that we call "national identity"'.[21] This sense of deterritorialisation, in which any 'identity attached to a specific place imagined [as] a territory or nation' is stripped away, prompts the 'phenomenon of displacement' that much contemporary Irish poetry attempts to navigate.[22] This experience of displacement is often mediated through complex engagements with Irish land and seascapes, where encounters with the local community and nonhuman environment invoke intense feelings of both estrangement and connection. This chapter is concerned with the ways in which both Cannon and O'Malley chart the 'old legacies of colonialism and new economic prosperity' that have 'stripped' the Irish landscape 'of meaning, affecting not only environmental biodiversity, but also the stratified layers of history and memory of an old Ireland into a new Ireland'.[23]

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[19] Ibid, p.538.
[20] John Tomlinson, 'Globalization and Cultural Identity', *The Global Transformations Reader,* ed. by David Held (London: Wiley, 2003), pp.269-277, (p.273).
[21] Ibid, p.270.
[22] Derek Gladwin, 'Ecocritical and Geocritical Conjunctions in North Atlantic Environmental Multimedia and Place-Based Poetry', *Ecocriticism and Geocriticism: Overlapping Territories in Environmental and Literary Space*, ed. by Robert Tally and Christine M. Battista (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), pp.37-55, (p.45).
[23] Ibid, p.46.

Through their attentiveness to the oceans and seas that surround and connect the archipelago, Cannon and O'Malley exhibit an express concern with the modes through which the histories of linguistic colonisation, and the control of contemporary economic systems, are increasingly divesting Irish seascapes of cultural and ecological value. The first half of this chapter addresses the ways in which both poets look to the seas and coasts as a means of engaging experiences of dislocation and detachment invoked by colonial legacies and patriarchal order. For O'Malley and Cannon, the experience of deterritorialisation in their early works emerges as a threat to forms of territorial identity based upon intimate linguistic relations with the western landscape; however in their more recent collections the experience of deterritorialisation enables, and indeed necessitates, new conditions of cross-cultural connection and migrant identities. Thus, while the place of woman within the national body is of central concern to their early collections, the second half of this chapter suggests that their more recent works have 'moved on from what Susan Cahill [has] described as the enfolding of landscape with the construction of the "national body", to the present search for a new Irish identity in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger era [to new] unfolding landscapes on the other side of the Atlantic'.[24] Charting 'Ireland's ill-fated economic buoyancy'[25] through sustained lyrical engagements with both local seascapes and transnational currents, their later works explore conditions of dislocation, hypocrisy, cultural inauthenticity, nostalgia, and ecological ruination that have come to the fore in recent Irish Literature.

i.   'Our language was tidal': Women, Language, Landscape

In her introduction to the Carcanet anthology *Three Irish Poets,* Eavan Boland notes how between '1900 and 1950 Irish poetry was tempered by far-reaching change [yet] with few exceptions, women were not part of this. [...] The apparent end of colony in Ireland left women with new laws, new strictures – and the unspoken assumptions which go with those – and new silences'.[26] In Insisting upon a poetics that is tuned to absence, silence, and disjunction, the legacy of Boland's work has helped to shape the form of contemporary Irish poetry, ensuring that the role of the poet is not merely to provide a 'voice [to] history, but

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[24] Mianowski, p.6.
[25] Flannery, p.36.
[26] Eavan Boland, 'Introduction', *Three Irish Poets: An Anthology* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003), pp.ix-xiii, (p.x, p.xiv).

[bear] witness to a silence'.[27] As Donna Potts notes, Boland's work importantly 'conceives of Irish national identity as "having an origin like water"'; within her poems water often 'represents the fluidity of identity, both to challenge static definitions of nationhood and to reassert the role of women, traditionally regarded as outside the process of national definition'.[28] While scholars have yet to fully explore the ecological dimensions of Boland's works, her poems have influenced a generation of poets that have been recently noted for their ecological engagements. In particular, the work of Paula Meehan, Moya Cannon and Mary O'Malley has been highlighted in recent collections of Irish ecocritical scholarship due to their respective consideration of the relationships between colonial histories, gender, language, and the Irish landscape.[29]

We have already encountered various iterations of the condition of displacement within modern Irish poetry across the course of this thesis, where the poetry of Louis MacNeice, Michael Longley and Derek Mahon all variously draw on a sense of place that is shaped by the experience of exile, violence, decay, and erosion. As previously noted, the space of the Irish West often conjures narratives of stability and continuity and is frequently depicted as a space that resides outside of time and history as a 'primitive Eden largely unaffected culturally and linguistically by colonialism.'[30] While the respective works of MacNeice, Mahon and Longley have worked to contest this apolitical vision of the West, the work of Cannon and O'Malley further highlights the complex 'interface between language and land' within contemporary Irish poetry, drawing attention to both the 'historical contexts of imperial conquest and abandonment' and the cultural silencing of the female voice that have shaped their respective relationships with place.[31]

Across their early collections, Cannon and O'Malley display an overt fascination with the submerged cadences of Irish language and culture through intimate engagements with the oceanic landscapes of the West. Regarding the inspiration of her poetic practice, O'Malley has remarked that her work is often

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[27] Ibid, p.xvii.
[28] Donna Potts, *Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Pastoral Tradition* (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2011), p.102.
[29] Eamonn Wall, 'From Macchu Picchu to Inis Mor: The Poetry of Mary O'Malley', *The South Carolina Review*, 38.1 (2005), 118-127, (p.122).
[30] Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2008), p.44.
[31] Christine Cusick, '"Our Language Was Tidal": Moya Cannon's Poetics of Place', *New Hibernia Review,* 9.1 (2005), 59-76, (p.72).

shaped by her childhood landscapes of the Galway coast and a constant tuning to history and the sea:

> Since history and story were very close relations for me, I take that to include personal history. Since I grew up with a very real and local mythos that arose out of the ritual activities of the place I lived in, myth was the more powerful and less subjective of the two. I am a fisherman's daughter and a blacksmith's niece and was surrounded by strong shapes and deep rhythms from the time I could talk.[32]

These strong shapes and deep rhythms are often located within seascapes that are defined by the local mythos and language of the Galway coast. Filled with selkies and sirens but also thrumming with lobster-creels and trawlers, O'Malley's seas mediate the ways in which maritime ecology and economy impact cultural identity. We will see how these economic dimensions allow O'Malley to engage with questions of migrancy and ecological decline in the latter half of this chapter, for now O'Malley's seascapes of the Western coast are included as a means of accessing questions of gender, language and the relationship between 'territorial rights and national identity'.[33]

Describing her 1993 collection *Where the Rocks Float* as 'a book about linguistic colonisation', O'Malley has noted the importance of Irish language and culture in her work, particularly with regards to how certain forms of language allow or prohibit access to the nonhuman realm.[34] Remarking that she 'was raised between languages', O'Malley notes how her childhood home in Connemara was 'a place suited to [Irish] language and the sensibilities of its people. We spoke English, but almost the entire specialized vocabulary of the sea, the names of fish, rocks, birds and plants was in in Irish'.[35] As Seán Lysaght suggests, the ability to access nature is in part aided by the ability to name where the 'act of naming, whether in a peasant vernacular or in modern scientific nomenclature, is a vital record of our relationship with nature'.[36] He continues to note that in 'Ireland,

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[32] Mary O'Malley, 'Between the Snow and the Huge Roses', *My Self, My Muse: Irish Women Poets Reflect on Life and Art*, ed. by Patricia Boyle Haberstroh (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp.33-47, (p.34).

[33] Irene Gilsenan Nordin, 'Elegy and Celebration: Landscape, Place and Dwelling in the Poetry of Moya Cannon', *Redefinitions of Irish Identity: A Postnationalist Approach*, ed. by Irene Gilsenan Nordin and Carmen Zamorano Llena (London: Peter Lang, 2010), pp.243-267, (p.244).

[34] Mary O'Malley, 'Interview with Mary O'Malley', *The Poetry Ireland Review*, 108 (December 2012a), 37-44, (p.39).

[35] O'Malley, 'Between the Snow', p.37.

[36] Seán Lysaght 'Contrasting Natures: The Issue of Names', *Nature in Ireland: A Scientific and Cultural History*, ed. by John Wilson Foster (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), pp.440-461, (p.440).

however, there is a particular obstacle to our relationship with nature which has to do with the fact that the old Gaelic vernacular has been lost to most of the country – and with it a range of names for plants and animals, the key to the old Gaelic community's relationship with the natural world'.[37] Across *Where the Rocks Float*, this fear of linguistic and environmental loss emerges repeatedly. For example, in 'The Shape of Saying' O'Malley explores her bilingual position through the competing forces of 'Received English | as if it was a gift you got | by dint of primogeniture' and the native 'Old gold words | toned like concert violins | tuned to talk to God'.[38] Noting a literary and linguistic inheritance passed down from 'Donne' and 'Coleridge', the poem highlights O'Malley's troubled relationship with the English language perceived as a hard masculine force 'only meant for men', a language as 'slippery as pebbles, | full of cornered consonants | and pinched vowels' that stands in opposition to her own sense of voice carved through 'softness', 'sorrow' and 'sweet lullabies'.[39] While the poem seems to relate a sense of defeat in the face of a language she 'cannot speak', the closing stanza ends on a sense of transformation and hope, where the invasive 'cornered' and 'pinched' language is eventually 'sheared' 'carded' 'fleeced' and woven 'into something of our own'.[40] The coupling of pastoral terms of sheep shearing with the linguistic politics of the text further highlights the relationship between land and language, in which linguistic control correlates with control of the land.

Across *Where the Rock Floats* O'Malley alerts us to the ambiguity and ambivalence of language, her linguistic exploration of place coupled by a sense of insecurity that derives from the shape and sounds of an increasingly threatened and controlled landscape. Thus, despite Eamon Wall's assertion that across O'Malley's oeuvre 'the Irish word takes precedence over the English',[41] in this collection Irish words and phrases are in fact, few and far between. Rather than presenting Irish as a solid and stable force, the collection reflects a sense of slow transformation and decline in which the Irish language and its associated landscape is increasingly threatened by linguistic colonisation. In 'The Foreigner' English language is tied to 'the voice of governors, | the voice of arrogance, | the

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[37] Lysaght, p.440.
[38] Mary O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float*, (Dublin: Salmon Publishing, 1993), p.12.
[39] Ibid, p.12.
[40] Ibid, p.13.
[41] Eamonn Wall, *Writing the Irish West: Ecologies and Traditions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), p.123.

seductive cadence of power'.[42] Described as a voice as 'lethal as opium', the English language is depicted as a 'dangerous thing' imbued with a seductive patriarchal force that is able to 'intimidate the sea itself'.[43] Here the colonial undertones of the Englishman with a voice of 'opium' highlights connections between the female body and the Irish landscape, in which the political governance of the landscape corresponds to the control of female sexuality. This combination of sexual and linguistic control arises at multiple points across the collection, reflecting the ways in which women have been 'twice colonised […] Irish women suffered the double burden of being twice refuted, twice silenced. In this sense women *were* nature in their signification of exclusion and the margins of culture'.[44] O'Malley herself has noted how in the wake of 'a world where women held only a subverted authority [she] felt the need to stake [her] claim in the world, as befits a woman who has no land'.[45] The collection importantly 'portrays this breaking away from the solid ground and forms of the tradition as a desirable flux' often attached to oceanic, in opposition to terrestrial, environments.[46] Her works evade the normal restrictions and prohibitions associated with the female position as governed by the masculine politics of colonisation, turning instead to the more mercurial and transformative element of the sea. Through the implementation of a series of mythical female figures shaped by water her poems project an immersive and 'inclusive identity with the sea'[47] that stands in opposition to the sense of dislocation produced through terrestrial engagements with place.

O'Malley's works are not only influenced by the writing of Eavan Boland whose attention to the legacy of silence, and the drive 'to recover the voices of lost women', is a key shaping force, but are also highly indebted to the work of the Galway poet Richard Murphy.[48] Eamonn Wall notes how Murphy's poetic fascination with the history of the Galway coast in poems such as 'The Cleggan Disaster' and 'The Last Galway Hooker' have given rise to a shared fascination with fishing communities, history, and a pervading sense of loss within

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[42] O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float,* p.5.
[43] Ibid, p.5.
[44] Oona Frawley, *Irish Pastoral: Nostalgia and Twentieth Century Irish Literature* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), italics in original, p.149.
[45] O'Malley, 'Between the Snow', p.37.
[46] Eibhlín Evans, 'Moving into the Space Cleared by our Mothers', *Critical Survey*, 8.2 (1996), pp.198-209, (p.205).
[47] Ibid, p.205.
[48] Wall, p.123.

O'Malley's work. O'Malley has often acknowledged the influence of Murphy's work in relation to her fascination with the sea and has described *Where the Rocks Float* as a 'book of my ancestors. A tribute. And a tribute to Richard Murphy, who had written about the Connemara I knew in English, without being patronising'.[49] Modelled on the practice of boat building her poetry is crafted in line with a belief that:

> what's badly made won't float. That's really the first question in the end about a poem: will it float? After that, the business of trimming and streamlining comes in. You're dealing with something that has to carry people and a fire in its belly, and survive some serious weather.[50]

Across the collection O'Malley engages the recurrent trope of boats and myth-women whose histories are shaped by the local myths and ritual activities of the Galway Coast. Her speakers emerge in the form of sirens, mermaids, swans, selkies and otter women who are all imbued with the 'power to transform'; their shape-shifting abilities allowing them to transcend restrictive gender roles.[51]

The opening of the boat poems sequence is prefaced by a line from Murphy's 'The Last Galway Hooker': 'So I chose to renew her, to rebuild, to prolong| For a while the spliced yards of yesterday'.[52] Yet, where in 'Murphy's boat poems, one hears the voice of the sea captain [...] in O'Malley's work what one hears is the often ironic voice of the feminized boat, or the voice of the wife or daughter left on the quay side'.[53] For example, the feminised personification of the boat in 'Jealousy' is a clear borrowing from Murphy, whose poem 'The Last Galway Hooker' frequently compares the body of the boat to the bodies of women:

> The sea, good to gamblers, let him indulge
> His fear when she rose winding her green shawl
> And his pride when she lay calm under his pillage:
>
> And he never married, was this hooker's lover,
> Always ill-at-ease in houses or on hills,
> Waiting for weather, or mending broken trawls:[54]

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[49] O'Malley, 'Interview', p.39.
[50] Ibid, p.41.
[51] Mary O'Malley, *Three Irish Poets: An Anthology* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2003), 34-72, (p.49).
[52] O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float*, p.55.
[53] Wall, p.122.
[54] Richard Murphy, *Collected Poems 1952-2000* (North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 2001), p.19.

In O'Malley's piece she similarly plays with the marital dynamics of fishermen and boats, speaking from the perspective of a scorned wife left on land, while her husband embarks upon an adulterous affair with his vessel:

> Look at her, the black bitch.
> I see nothing beautiful.
> He spends his day with her,
> his nights thinking about her.
> I only have peace in October
> when he becomes dutiful,
> a full-time husband for a stretch [55]

The reorientated focus of O'Malley's poems which actively attend to the wives and children left ashore by the men who head out to sea and often 'bleed to death | in this world of fast cars and trawlers', inverts the patriarchal order of Murphy's pieces.[56] Where Murphy is concerned with the voice of lost men and boys drowned at sea, O'Malley highlights the historical silencing of those women and girls who were forced to stay ashore, 'landlocked' and waiting for their return. In the final poem of the boat sequence, 'Out of History', recalling Eavan Boland's similarly titled poem 'Outside History', O'Malley bitterly observes 'the enigma of marked time' through the figure of a sixteenth century woman who with 'one unexecuted stroke' is written 'out of history'.[57] Remarking that it takes 'three hundred years| of unrelenting song to write her in' O'Malley imbues her poetry with the function of retrieval and restoration, where through the act of writing the once silenced history of women now 'swells| across a chorus of generations'.[58] Moving from the figure of a sixteenth century woman, to the figure of a 'daughter| sitting on a rock| with the sea pounding' the poem slips across the centuries, carrying a multitude of 'excluded' women in its wake.[59] In homage to her ancestors and place O'Malley's verses become vessels which transport the voices of lost women and the histories of un-sung places across the archipelago. Occupying the threshold between elements O'Malley's boats and myth women are imbued with the power to move between terrestrial and oceanic realms, tied to neither land or sea her works slip 'Between them| I chart my own course and keep afloat'.[60]

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[55] O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float*, p.57.
[56] Ibid, p.61.
[57] Ibid, p.60.
[58] Ibid, p.64.
[59] Ibid, p.64.
[60] Ibid, p.53.

In a similar vein to O'Malley's early work, Moya Cannon's collections *Oar* (1990) and *The Parchment Boat* (1997), (recently gathered in her 2007 volume *Carrying the Songs*) address the submergence of history and language through the movement of tidal waters. While for O'Malley, the seas of the archipelago are depicted as reservoirs of rich history and culture, in Cannon's work the ocean is presented as the source of colonial forces that have the ability to destroy and disrupt connections with the landscape. For example, in 'Our Words', Cannon explores histories of linguistic and ecological erosion through 'forms and sounds that precede the language, forms, and sounds that are perhaps most clearly heard in the landscape's tides and cries'.[61] The opening lines of 'Our Words', engages the material environment of the western coast as a source of linguistic identity:

> Our words are cart-ruts
> back into our guttural histories;
> they are rabbit tracks, printed
> into the morning snow on a headland;
> they are otter runs,
> urgent between fresh and salt water;
> they are dunlin tracks at the tide's edge.
> They will be erased by the next wave
> but, in the meantime, they assure us
> that we are not alone
> and that we are heirs to all the treasure
> which words have ever netted.[62]

The alignment of language and natural landscape arises at various points across *Carrying the Songs*, where poems such as 'First Poetry' describes the movement of 'swallows, terns, or grey-lag geese' as 'the original poetry', or in 'Script' where the slow movement of a seal pup on a beach is described as a 'recorded breast-stroke, | a perfect, cursive script'.[63] While this is not dissimilar to the connections forged between language and landscape in the works of O'Malley, in Cannon's pieces the 'elemental function of sound' drawn from a myriad of human and nonhuman beings affirm 'human sound as part and particle of the natural world'.[64] Indeed Cannon herself has noted that her largest poetic inspirations derive from 'the textures and weathers of [persons whose] lives [are] inseparable from the textures of their lands, the unarticulated tragedies of their lives

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[61] Cusick, p.64.
[62] Moya Cannon, *Carrying the Songs* (Carcanet: Manchester, 2007), p.16.
[63] Ibid, p.17, p.40.
[64] Cusick, p.64.

imploding into the culture into which I had been born'.[65] Conscious of 'both the power and inadequacy of language as a means of access to the layers of the material and natural world',[66] in comparison with O'Malley's earlier works, Cannon's poems express a more overt attempt to forge an ecological connection between human and nonhuman figures through language; often comparing the sound of words to animals or comparing the writing process to features within the landscape.

In 'Scríob', referring to the name of a townland in Connemara, Cannon 'both glosses and mines its multivalent title [Scríob], Irish-Gaelic for "scrape", "scratch", "notch", "furrow"'.[67] The poem, first published in *The Parchment Boat* reflects an early poetic engagement with the relationship between landscape and language. Across 'Scríob', the act of cutting, scraping and scratching is attached both to pastoral scenes of a 'sheep's track, the plough's track', and the scrape of a pen cutting 'a path on the hill'.[68] Drawing a deep connection between agricultural and artistic cultivation, the act of writing is presented as a doubly coded process that enables both inscription and scarring. For Alice Entwistle the poem's attention to lines and paths 'seems to concede the politically loaded fact that spaces usually depend upon their existence upon borders and boundaries'.[69] Yet arguably this interpretation attends to only half of the poem's content. While the act of writing is certainly tied to the construction of borders, Cannon is alert to the limitations of the written form, noting that ultimately 'Tracks run to an end', and that there will always be 'things which can neither be written, nor spoken, nor read'.[70] Recognising these linguistic limitations, Cannon turns away from the violent inscriptions of the cutting pen towards the blank 'bleached bones' of seabirds. Unlike the clear-cut paths of the sheep and plough, these bones 'have nothing to tell'.[71] Their lack of inscription makes them difficult to identify, with Cannon unable to discern whether they are that of a fulmar or gannet. The bones

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[65] Moya Cannon, 'The Poetry of What Happens', *My Self, My Muse: Irish Women Poets Reflect on Life and Art*, ed. by Patricia Boyle Haberstroh (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp.123-135, (p.128).

[66] Cusick, p.63.

[67] Alice Entwistle, 'Post-pastoral Perspectives on Landscape and Culture', *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women's Poetry,* ed. by Jane Dowson (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)*,* pp.136-153, (p.139).

[68] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.101.

[69] Entwistle, p.140.

[70] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.101.

[71] Ibid, p.101.

consequently become 'an edge| where the pen runs dumb'.[72] The delicate, blank, and hollow bones of the seabird disrupts the controlling action of both language and landscape, where 'Too fragile for scraping, | the bones hold in their emptiness| the genesis of the first blown note'.[73] Unable to withstand the cutting action of the written form, the bones prompt Cannon to turn to the oral dimensions of blown notes and bird song. The bones of sea-birds are transformed into a flute upon which new, as-yet uninscribed, histories may be played, resounding outward beyond the boundaries of text and territory.

The underlying sense of violence that emerges in 'Scríob' also occurs in 'Our Words', where the pastoral images of the opening stanza soon give way to more violent images of invasion. As the poem advances, the local iterations of language transform from the comforting sounds of local fauna, into the invasive 'arrogant, hobnailed scrape' of a foreign tongue:

> Abetted by trade winds, they cross channels, oceans.
> seeds in the mud of a soldier's boot, they come ashore,
> part, at first, of an arrogant, hobnailed scrape,
> language of the rough-tongued *geurrier.*[74]

As the poem closes, Cannon continues to employ the imagery of erosion and scraping, where the constant 'waves' of colonial invasion, ensure that the local 'Hard slangs of the market-place| are ground down to pillow-talk'.[75] Similar to O'Malley's 'The Foreigner', in 'Our Words' the sexualised language of the invader's 'pillow-talk' and 'language of conquest', threatens the 'guttural histories' of the native, natural, language that are eventually 'subsumed| into the grammar of the conquered'.[76] 'Our Words' is one of many poems in the collection that explores the ways in which '[n]atural history is tied to colonial history; shores are formed and changed by the same erosive influences that silence and erase a language from a colony'.[77] Across Cannon's poetry the 'erosion of a nation resembles a shoreline: slowly consequential, complexly tidal' where her

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[72] Ibid, p.101.
[73] Ibid, p.101.
[74] Ibid, italics in original, p.16.
[75] Ibid, p.16.
[76] Ibid, p.16.
[77] Cusick, p.71.

continued invocation of tides and waves blurs 'distinctions between language and land, and hence between natural and political change'.[78]

We see this combination of political and environmental change in the poem 'Taom', referring to an instance of 'overflowing, usually in the context of a great wave of emotion'.[79] 'Taom' is taken from Cannon's earlier collection *Oar* published in 1990, and in a similar form to 'Our Words' where 'so many| will be wiped out by the next wave', the ocean and western coastline are configured as a battleground between competing 'territories of the voice'.[80] Within 'Taom' Cannon's employment of Irish language marks how these words have either become 'lost or forever altered when the English language displaced the Irish'.[81] This central question of displacement lends itself to the physical character of the oceanic environment, where lost and submerged materials constantly surface in the wake of tidal 'surges and ebbs'.[82] Importantly, for Cannon displacement is not the same as destruction. Both 'Our Words' and 'Taom' end on a sense of hope, where despite the continued assault of invasive forces, Cannon asserts 'we will never run short' of language 'because a mill on the ocean floor, grinds them out | keeping the tongue salt'.[83] Both 'Taom' and 'Our Words' are marked by a sense of linguistic recovery, survival, and futurity, in which the deep, though strained, relationship between language and landscape is invoked as 'a testimony | to waves succumbed to | and survived'.[84]

This question of survival and recovery arises most forcibly in 'Murdering the Language'. The poem navigates the 'unruly wash of Victorian pedantry, | Cromwellian English, Scots,' that seek to govern and control relationships with the land.[85] Once again the colonial dimensions of both seas and language are evident, where the cartographic control of the sea which is 'parsed' as 'small and rectangular' reflects the constriction Irish language and dialect which are 'fastened in grammar | and in grammar's dream of order'.[86] Within the poem, the seas and sentences conflate in order to display how the containment of 'language

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[78] Cusick, pp.71-2.
[79] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.60.
[80] Ibid, p.60.
[81] Potts, p.143.
[82] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.60.
[83] Ibid, p.16.
[84] Ibid, p.60.
[85] Ibid, p.88.
[86] Ibid, p.88.

within the boundaries of grammar is as absurd as the containment of the sea within the symmetries of a rectangle'.[87] In comparison to 'Our Words' and 'Taom', within 'Murdering the Language', saltwater becomes an overwhelming force that disrupts the control of strictly governed 'correct language spoken only in the capital'.[88] The overflowing motion of the sea is contrasted with the rigid constraints of a 'sentence lifted out of talk,| canal water halted in a lock'.[89] The controlled static canal water is counterpoised against the later lines which declare:

> Our language was tidal;
> it lipped the shale cliffs,
> a long and tedious campaign,
> and ran up the beaches, over sand, seaweed, stones.[90]

Concerned with how language is controlled when 'lifted out of talk' the poem is attentive to the use of punctuation throughout, and plays with the acoustics of end stopped lines which attempt to echo the 'tholing [...] rush and tug of many tides' through the use of commas, dashes, and semicolons.[91] The abundant use of punctuation reflects Cannon's conscious engagement with the regulatory patterns and colonial dimensions of grammar. Her mastery of the grammatical and cultural 'Laws' of '*Mood, tense, gender*' allow her to question the structure and formation of such rules: '*What performs the action, what suffers the action? | What governs what? | What qualifies, modifies?*'[92] Again the poem ends with a sense of resistance and recovery where the 'jetsam and beached bones of Irish - | a grammarian's nightmare' provide the basis for 'a new, less brutal grammar'.[93]

Through their engagement with language and landscape O'Malley and Cannon draw analogies between cultural preservation and environmental protection, whereby the health of Gaelic language indirectly maps onto the health of the local ecosystem. Unlike the work of MacDiarmid, MacNeice, Longley and Mahon, both O'Malley and Cannon were born and raised in the West of Ireland; Gaelic is thus not encountered as a foreign tongue, but is a language that is intimately bound to childhood memories and notions of community. Through their respective depictions of the Western landscape as a feminised space that is

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[87] Cusick, p.70.
[88] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.88.
[89] Ibid, p.88.
[90] Ibid, p.88.
[91] Ibid, p.88.
[92] Ibid, italics in original, p.88.
[93] Ibid, p.88.

vulnerable to the penetrative invasions of the mae colonial figure, both Cannon and O'Malley's works problematically overlap 'with concerns of cultural purity and preservation, centred on the image of the West of Ireland as an Irish cultural region, whose physical landscape provide[s] the greatest contrast to the landscape of Englishness'.[94] Consequently large portions of their works invoke discourses of nativism and nostalgia, where in 'the face of a changing or threatened social structure, place and nature can be conceived of as a steady and unaltered realm beyond the reaches of the fluctuating culture.'[95] Such formulations can, ironically, be seen to align with the tropes of revivalist writing in which the 'Irish West [is viewed] as a source of cohesion, simplicity, instinctiveness and an organic relationship between lifestyle and environment'.[96] Through their continued use of pastoral imagery such as sheep shearing, weaving, singing, and fishing, their works unwittingly contribute to the very discourses they oppose, whereby their attempt to preserve local practices, languages, and places reinforces a vision of the West as a 'pure' space that exists outside of time and history.

In 'Hills', first published in 1990, Cannon plays with romantic constructions of the Irish West which overtly objectify the landscape through a distanced gaze: 'Have I stooped so low as to lyricise about heather, | adjusting my love| to fit elegantly| within the terms of disinterested discourse?'[97] While the poem actively attempts to resist the disengaged position of the romantic lyrical perspective, asserting 'Who do I think I'm fooling?| I know these hills better than that', Cannon fails to move away from such romantic images, describing the hills 'like delicate shoulders' and the 'passionate brightness and darkness | of high bog lakes'.[98] Similarly, in O'Malley's 'The Countrywoman Remembers' the poem opens with a similar employment of revivalist tropes declaring 'The West is hard | with a treacherous yielding'.[99] In a similar mode to Cannon, O'Malley aligns the landscape of bogs and mountains with the body of the female subject, depicting

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[94] Catherine Nash, 'Remapping and Renaming: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender and Landscape in Ireland', *Feminist Review: Nationalisms and National Identities*, 44 (Summer 1993), 39-57, (p.44).

[95] Oona Frawley, 'Nature and Nostalgia in Irish Literature', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 18.19 (1998/1999), 268-277, (p.270).

[96] Nash, p.45.

[97] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.66.

[98] Ibid, p.66.

[99] O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float*, p.33.

the West as a space of 'soft temptations' that 'reflects the breast| of an unsuspecting hill'.[100] While there is a certain ecofeminist undertone to these poems (where the alignment of body and landscape draws attention to the dual domination of nature and woman by patriarchal society) when viewing such pieces in conjunction with their linguistic concerns, the feminine subjects are effectively relegated to reservoirs of cultural purity and preservation that ultimately sustain the romantic idealisation of the West.

However, for Eoin Flannery, one can read Cannon's 'lyricisation of indigenous Irish orality and rural Irish geographies' against a form of 'historical progress and authenticity' that is 'implicated in varieties of globalised patriarchal domination [and further] buttressed by neoliberal capitalism'.[101] Cannon's subsequent insistence on the intimate relationship between the female body and the natural landscape, coupled with the frequent use of Gaelic language and Irish placenames, can perhaps be read as an attempt to overcome the patriarchal ordering of both territory and history through the reterritorialisation of the silenced female subject into the Western landscape. By imbuing both woman and land with a voice, both Cannon and O'Malley seek to offer 'a new narrative of place and perception' that is conscious of the aesthetic traditions that have historically shaped 'Ireland into a pastoral entity – a place sanitised of its defeats, silences and shames'.[102] In so doing their works attempt, to varying degrees of success, to expose the limits of both pastoral and patriarchal traditions, where the 'wild hills' of the West are revealed to be both beautiful and threatening: 'in the murk of winter,| these wet hills will come howling through my blood| like wolves'.[103]

ii.   'The shore marks the start of possibility': Commodification, Migration, Globalisation

While Cannon's and O'Malley's early works explore a sense of displacement as derived from 'the older legacies of colonization' and patriarchal control, in their more recent collections, conditions of exile, dislocation, and migration arise in relation 'to contemporary forms of neo-colonialism in the new Ireland by way of

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[100] Ibid, p.30.
[101] Flannery, p.74.
[102] Boland, p.xiv.
[103] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.66.

globalization and uneven geographical and economic development'.[104] As Jody Allen Randolph suggests, in 'an older Ireland, emigrants [and natives] were dispossessed of their country by poverty, a legacy of colony; in the New Ireland villages [and persons] are displaced not by colony but by advancing global capitalism'.[105] Where their earlier collections explore a sense of deterritorialisation in the wake of patriarchal and colonial silencing, their most recent collections respond to 'a reassessment of nationality in the face of the speedy socio-economic changes of Ireland at the end of the twentieth century'.[106] While problematic elements of nostalgia and nativism are still evident within their recent works, one can trace a new transnational dimension in their recent collections through a series of poems that are expressly concerned with conditions of plurality, hybridity and mobility that have arisen in the wake of economic change. Attending to mobile figures who have been set adrift in the wake of economic decline, Cannon and O'Malley turn to coasts, beaches, and the open ocean as a means of navigating new forms of cultural and ecological relation that have emerged in response to 'concerns of dislocation, exile, and deterritorialization [that have stripped] away any identity attached to a specific place imagined in a territory or a nation'.[107]

Across *Carrying the Songs*, Cannon examines how relationships with place and language necessarily change through the experience of (forced) migration. For example, in 'Winter Birds', she explores the migratory histories and ecologies of the West through the metaphorical relation of words and birds. The poem traces the arrival of Barnacle geese that fly in from 'the cliffs of Northern Greenland', 'to graze on the wind-bitten sedges of Inis Cé' between October and April each year.[108] Also known as the Inishkea islands, (or Inis Gé translated as 'Goose Islands') the now uninhabited islands lie off of the Mullet Peninsula in Co. Mayo, and are one of the key wintering sites for the Greenland Barnacle goose

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[104] Gladwin, p.43.

[105] Jody Allen Randolph, 'The Ecocritical Turn in Contemporary Irish Women's Poetry', *Nordic Irish Studies*, 8 (2009) 57-70, (p.60).

[106] Pilar Villar-Argáiz, 'Dark Twins and Black Cormorants: Migrant Others in Contemporary Irish Poetry', *Words of Crisis, Crisis of Words: Ireland and he Representation of Critical Times,* ed. by Maria Losada-Friend, Auxiliadora Pérez-Vides and Pilar Ron-Vaz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016) pp.221-241, (p.227).

[107] Gladwin, p.45.

[108] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.13.

population.[109] Framed by a quote from the *Topograhia Hibernia* (an account of the peoples and landscapes of Ireland written by Gerald of Wales in 1188) the poem relates how, unable to locate their nests, people believed that the Barnacle goose was born of driftwood and 'so in early times it was concluded| that they had hatched from the pupa-shaped goose barnacle –| as fish they were eaten on Fridays'.[110] With no visible ties to the landscape, the folktale of the Barnacle goose supplants the role of land in forming a sense of origin. For Cannon, it is not land, but language and story that enables us to form connections with place. The local mythology of the Barnacle goose offsets the migratory action of the poem, where the later descriptions of the geese in April 'restless, broody,| fatted on the scant grasses of a continent's margin,| ready to leave for breeding grounds in Greenland's tundra' are coupled with descriptions of young men and women in 'South Donegal' similarly poised for departure.[111] Across the piece, the sound and movements of the geese correspond to the aural resonances of childhood where the goose colony becomes 'a tuning orchestra raucous before the signal' recalling memories of 'my father's talk of "winter-birds in his class'.[112] The geese's mobile 'strut and clamour' is further juxtaposed with the bodies of 'big boys and girls| […] bound soon for Scotland'.[113] Their 'migratory patterns set' the poem closes on the cusp of departure, where the opening landfall of the geese 'in October, exhausted' transitions into the departure of young men and women, bound for new shores.[114]

As Lucy Collins suggests, 'by likening poems to migrating birds, Cannon contemplates the dichotomy of belonging and estrangement, of being both of the community and "other" to it'.[115] The relationship between language, place and migration is further explored in the titular poem of the collection whose epigraph reads: 'Those in power write history, those who suffer write the songs'.[116] Tuned to the songs and stories produced by those suffering the histories of colonisation,

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[109] D. Cabot, 'Population Dynamics of Barnacle Geese, Branta leucopsis, in Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy Section B: Biological, Geological, and Chemical Science,* 73 (1973), pp.415-443.

[110] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.13.

[111] Ibid, p.13.

[112] Ibid, p.13.

[113] Ibid, p.13.

[114] Ibid, p.13.

[115] Lucy Collins, 'Clearing the Air: Irish Women Poets and Environmental Change'*, Ireland: Revolution and Evolution,* ed. by John R. Strachan and Alison O'Malley-Younger (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp.195-211, (p.206).

[116] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.14.

'Carrying the Songs' focuses on those subjects 'with little else to carry' those persons who:

> [...] last possessed less than nothing
> did not own their own bodies
> yet, three centuries later,
> deep rhythms from Africa,
> stowed in their hearts, their bones,
> carry the world's songs.[117]

Dispossessed of body and land, language and song supplants the landless origins of Cannon's poetic subjects. Within 'Carrying the Songs', the seascapes of the archipelago become a site of exchange where the songs of migrants are transformed into currency: 'the pure metal of their hearts, | to be exchanged for other gold| other songs which rang out true and bright'.[118] Spanning the length of the Atlantic, 'Carrying the Songs' turns from the colonial histories of the transatlantic slave trade, to follow the more local voyages of:

> [...] those who left my county,
> girls from Downings and the Rosses
> who followed herring boats north to Shetland
> gutting the sea's silver as they went
> or boys from Ranafast who took the Derry boat [119]

With its attention to the submerged voices of the middle passage, 'Carrying the Songs' counterpoises the violent histories of the transatlantic slave trade with the migratory history of Ireland. While the economic migrancy of Irish communities who leave the west in search of richer fishing grounds cannot compare to the violent histories of the transatlantic slave trade, Cannon's comparison highlights a sense of displacement felt by the history of migration that has long shaped the culture of the West. Across these poems, the lasting currency of language, as depicted through story, song and poem, works to overcome the sense of loss that otherwise pervades the migrant experience. Across the collection, Cannon's continued intertwining of language and landscape, be it in the 'first poetry' of migratory birds, the 'tenses and declensions' of tulip bulbs, the sawing of timber that releases 'the song of the place', or planting of lemons that invoke 'the tang of a placename', ensures that these mobile subjects 'having navigated northern

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[117] Ibid, p.14.
[118] Ibid, p.14.
[119] Ibid, p.14.

coasts, centuries,| having tested the grain of languages, dialects', retain a sense of place attachment in the wake of physical displacement.[120]

Where Irene Gilsenan Nordin has read Cannon's works as exhibiting a Heideggerian ecopoetic sense 'of rootedness, or dwelling, in the natural world', through her continued attention to the migratory histories and mobile ecologies of the archipelago, elements of Cannon's work appear to resist concepts of rooted dwelling.[121] In 'Demolition', the speaker's encounter with a dilapidated house filled with highlights the loss of the ability to dwell within the Tiger landscape. Within the poem the underlying Tiger logic of 'speculation and consumption',[122] is highlighted through ironic images of 'self-raising flour| with the top folded down' and tins of 'Royal Baking Powder| and a glass salt cellar' that contrast with the poem's title.[123] The baking ingredients are attached to memories of a more prosperous time where the house once filled with 'people running to work', now lies abandoned 'exposed, vanished'.[124] The demolished house with its 'sliced off kitchen' resonates with the 'ghost estate' and 'empty landscapes' of post-Celtic Tiger topographies, 'that instead of being filled with the aesthetics of loss and longing, are a terrifying spectre of the collapse of the property bubble'.[125] Indeed, the poem expresses no desire for return or repossession of the house. Countering the logic of global capitalism in which 'empty space [is] a site of future development', the speaker's declaration that 'I had no shelter| or hope of shelter', prohibits the forms of speculative thinking that would view the demolished house as a site of future expansion.[126] In 'Demolition' there is no sense of futurity or progression, only abandonment, exposure and decline.

This concern with fragmentation and destruction as a preclusion to modes of dwelling and connection arises at numerous points within the collection. Noting how she views 'beach-combing as [an] apprenticeship to poetry', [127] many of Cannon's poems attempt 'to recreate some kind of order by assembling random bits and pieces' that emerge in the wake of economic and ecological

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[120] Ibid, pp.13-19.
[121] Nordin, p.248.
[122] Flannery, p.16.
[123] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.20.
[124] Ibid, p.20.
[125] Carville, p.111.
[126] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.20.
[127] Moya Cannon, 'An Interview with Moya Cannon', *California Poetics* [online], <http://www.californiapoetics.org/interviews/3818/an-interview-with-moya-cannon/>, [accessed, 10.10.2016].

change, resulting in a '*poiesis* [that] figures as a mimesis of broken parts, fragments which have been washed ashore'.[128] Attempting to incorporate 'all that floods and tides push in its way', Cannon's poetic accumulation of the various 'kernels of sound',[129] bones, shells, feathers and words that float across from the various coastlines of the archipelago works to 'protect these remaining fragments of Irish culture from further appropriation and globalization'.[130] Her engagement with the migrant histories and cultures of the archipelago are attached to a discourse of survival, in which the deterritorialising actions of modern globalisation are seen to threaten both ecological and cultural relationships with place. Examining the loss of 'species, culture and language in Ireland [her poetry] subtly gestures toward both the fragility of cultural and spiritual identities and the fragility of the natural world with which these identities are interwoven'.[131] Ruminating on the origins of various found materials that are described as 'rare', 'frail', and 'light', Cannon involves the flotsam with a sense of cultural and ecological fragility, exposing 'the powerful interrelatedness of the natural landscape and the fractured, fracturing, cultural history it inscribes'.[132]

In 'Survivors', the speaker of the poem marvels at how the robust shells of 'sea-potatoes' can withstand the 'North Atlantic gale| which churned the sea-bed, dug them up' only to arrive at the shore and 'fall apart' in the hands of a beachcomber:

> I lift one and admire its pinpoint symmetries
> and it falls apart –
> I rinse another in the tide
> and it falls apart –[133]

The repeated lines 'and it falls apart –', recalls Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming':

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

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[128] Tobias Döring, 'Caribbean Beachcombers', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp.107-121, (p.116).

[129] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.60, p.92.

[130] Jeanne Armstrong, 'Otherworld Landscapes: An Appreciation of Moya Cannon's Poetry', *Working Papers in Irish Studies*, *Irish Studies Committee, Northeastern University,* 4.4 (January 2006), 3-29, (p.4).

[131] Ibid, p.4.

[132] Entwistle, p.139.

[133] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.42.

> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;[134]

In 'Survivors' Cannon re-tunes the 'blood-dimmed tide' of Yeats's text to a non-anthropocentric but similarly apocalyptic vision. While Yeats's poem attends to the loss of human life in the context of World War I, Cannon reorientates the critical axis to address contemporary conditions of exile, loss and displacement that emerge in the wake of global capitalism. In 'Survivors', the 'stranded souls' of 'pieces of sea-porcelain' 'are strewn along the tideline', in a haphazard depiction of environmental disarray.[135] Arriving at the beach with 'an impossibly safe landing', these environmental fragments, 'some smaller than a fingernail, | others big as a baby's fist', 'endure the strong currents and 'roots of waves', only to crumble at the touch of a human hand.[136] Similarly, in 'Breastbone' Cannon's lyrical rumination on a 'loop of collar-bone', 'intact, | anchored still with sinew| to a perfect wind-keel', incurs a sense of ecological humility, in which despite the seeming vulnerability of the birds' ribs described as 'hollow straws', the figure acknowledges that 'Nothing we make is as strong| or as light| as this'.[137] Through her beachcomb poems, Cannon's works attempt 'to preserve some shards of the culture, language and spirituality that [have] miraculously survived the violence of colonization only to now be endangered by the deluge of globalization'.[138] Her oceans are filled with materials, both linguistic and physical, that hold the potential for creation and connection. Through the fragmented and migratory aesthetics of her poems, Cannon's works present an actively routed, as opposed to statically rooted, relational connection between nature and culture that responds to contemporary conditions of economic and ecological change.

In a similar mode, O'Malley uses 'personal experiences of global mobility to achieve a better understanding of a modern Irish multicultural society' through 'shared transcultural experiences of exile, homelessness, and homesickness' that have emerged in the wake of increased globalisation and economic instability.[139] In a poem that draws its title from the opening sentence of the Easter Proclamation of 1916, 'In the Name of God and of the Dead Generations', Mary

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[134] W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats,* ed. Cedric Watts (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), p.280.
[135] Cannon, *Carrying the Songs*, p.42.
[136] Ibid, p.42.
[137] Ibid, p.43.
[138] Armstrong, p.5.
[139] Villar-Argáiz, 'Introduction'*,* pp.20-1.

O'Malley plays with the migrant histories of old and new Ireland. Migrant figures from the past and present filter throughout the piece, where images of Irish emigrants travelling to America in 'the darkened hold of coffin ships' is compared with present images of migrants attempting to illegally enter Ireland 'sealed in the olds of containers| wounded, sometimes dead, between the jigs and the reels, | and the Céad Mile Faílte'.[140] Glossed as 'an expression of welcome' the closing use of Irish 'Céad Mile Faílte' alongside the 'sounds the wounded make' draws attention to the numerous wounded, 'slashed', 'strangled' and 'inelegant' voices that populate the island, recalling the 'experiences of dispossession and displacement that leaving one's land entails'.[141] The poem continues this juxtaposition through images of dispossessed political refugees from Kosovo, with 'hard' Dubliners, and 'uneducated' 'people with gypsy blood and skin| darker again than that| of certain fishermen along the coast'.[142] While O'Malley draws affinities between these dispossessed groups, she is careful not to assert a sense of uniformity to the migrant experience, noting at one point 'I was born outside the pale| and am outside it still. I do not fit in'.[143] The poem is careful to retain a sense of alterity, acknowledging that a sense of community formed through the shared experience of displacement is a hollow construct. O'Malley, in opposition to Cannon, expresses a marked scepticism with the poetic construction of place and identity, noting at one point 'so much for place. Yes| it has mattered, yes we replace| rock with the shimmering space| an idea of rock where the rock has been'.[144] Where for Cannon the 'shimmering space' of the poem allows for meaningful reconnection to lands lost and left behind, for O'Malley this space is nothing more than an 'abstraction' that fosters an idealised and false 'welcoming place| into which strangers may come', but are ultimately wounded by their arrival.[145]

In comparison to Cannon, O'Malley's work presents more sustained engagements with the seas and oceans of the archipelago, viewing them as sites of historical value and cross-cultural connection that are increasingly threatened by economic territorialisation. In a recent interview O'Malley acknowledges that her poetic turn towards the sea often corresponds to a tradition of exiled writers

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[140] O'Malley, *Three Irish Poets*, p.60.
[141] Villar-Argáiz, 'Dark Twins', p.226 .
[142] O'Malley, *Three Irish Poets*, p.60.
[143] Ibid, p.60.
[144] Ibid, p.60.
[145] Ibid, p.60.

(such as Beckett and Joyce) and to the notion that 'if the ground shifts from under you, you better find other Co-ordinates'.[146] Resolutely locating such coordinates within the sea, O'Malley shifts her poetic focus away from the bloodied soil of the Irish West, scarred by its 'planted' and colonial history, to the 'real country, my real country, […] offshore. Offshore and underwater. Thousands of square miles of it, full of wonder. A great place to write'.[147] Nowhere is this offshore recalibration of coordinates more evident than in her 2012 collection, *Valparaiso*.[148] Across *Valparaiso*, the ocean becomes 'a global contemporary, cosmopolitan space […] run through by Irish mythological heritage'.[149] The result of a 2007 voyage on the Irish marine research ship 'Celtic Explorer', *Valparaiso* is an itinerant transatlantic collection that roves from the Galway coast to the Chilean port of Valparaiso. Mediating scientific, economic, and poetic engagements with the sea, the collection exhibits an extension of O'Malley's earlier mythical seascapes into marine settings shaped by the 'hangover from the Celtic Tiger period [that left] many Irish citizens scrambling for a new set of codes by which to live their lives and with which to engage with the altered landscapes of the country'.[150]

This anxiety with the commodified ocean emerges repeatedly in O'Malley's work, where instances of economic territorialisation are linked to narratives of cultural decline. For Philip Steinberg, the 'terretorialization of ocean-space responds to a pressing imperative of postmodern capitalism – the need to commodify, invest in, and "develop" elements of nature and space that previously had existed outside political-economic competition and modernization'.[151] Regarding the economic territorialisation of the World Ocean, Elizabeth DeLoughrey notes that in:

> 1982 the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea catalyzed the most radical remapping of the globe in modern history, expanding all coastal nations through an Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ] of two hundred nautical miles. Roughly thirty-eight million square nautical miles of the global sea were enclosed by the state, a privatization of thirty-five percent of the world's ocean.[152]

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[146] O'Malley, 'Interview', p.43.
[147] Ibid, p.44.
[148] Mary O'Malley, *Valparaiso* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2012b).
[149] Mianowski, p.9.
[150] Flannery, p.3.
[151] Philp Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: CUP 2001), p.176.
[152] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity', *PMLA,* 125.3 (May, 2010) 703-712, (p.705).

The EEZ prescribes and controls state access rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources (mostly in relation to offshore fishing and energy extraction) and subsequently transforms oceanic space from a site of cultural interpenetration, into a resource-space of 'finite economical assets'.[153]

The commodification of oceanic territory is particularly problematic for O'Malley, as her works frequently establish the sea as a source of cultural and historical identity. Her work actively attends to those voices, places and practices that she perceives to have been 'legislated out' and displaced by the forces of modern globalisation and neocolonial capital.[154] In poems such as 'Crew' we see how the crew of the scientific vessel are 'Driven to this work because of quotas| that stop them using their own boats'.[155] Forced out of traditional fishing practices, the local crewmen are compelled to find new work aboard the scientific vessel. Through her politically incensed fishing poems, O'Malley seeks to mediate the contemporary situation in which '[o]ur fishing fleets have all but disappeared, legislated out of existence, along with a way of life that formed an essential part of the poetry and legends of the sea where wonder flourished'.[156] In the closing line of 'Crew', she asserts the role of the poet as that of preserving the cultural bycatch of fishing communities (myth, folklore, songs etc) stating 'Science will publish | but the poet put them higher, young, wild | as the fine cliff flowers, the sea-promised'.[157]

O'Malley has spoken at length about how the market forces that govern the quotas and legislation of the EEZ have come to negatively impact local practices and cultural attachments to marine environments:

> The sea just is, was and always will be. It is a vast and shining world, a dangerous solid place [...] Official Ireland turned her back on it with the Common Market - this created a great tear, one for which we are paying dear. The world I grew up in is gone, it has been legislated out. Official Policy. I believe that is a serious thing. It is a wound that fuels certain lines, and poems. What's a farmed salmon? A fisherman is told to put out a cigarette on his own trawler [...] by a man from some department, a latter day bailiff, and some such types are apt to let

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[153] Steinberg, p.178.
[154] O'Malley, 'Interview', p.41.
[155] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.72.
[156] Mary O'Malley, 'Think Piece by Poet Mary O'Malley', *Estudios Irlandeses,* 11 (2016), 234-235, (p.235).
[157] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.41.

power go to their heads. This matters. No-one shouted stop, or no-one in power cared to hear.[158]

While 'Crew' focuses on the economic territorialisation of ocean space and its impact on human subjects, in the poem 'Caged', O'Malley turns to consider the ecological impact of a legislated ocean. Formed through triplet verses and an alternating half-rhyme scheme (unsure|water, webbed|force-fed) that work to echo a sense of being 'Caged' the poem considers the processes of mass capitalist production that have resulted in the creation of 'Liverish, stressed, drugged out, unsure' farmed fish.[159] Fit only for a 'feast' for sea lice, the farmed salmon is so unrecognisable that 'Without| the pink dye they are given we would gag|at the sight of their flesh on the plate'.[160] The poem reflects Ireland's turn towards new ecological commodity frontiers that arose in the wake of economic decline in 2008, including 'fish through the development of mass aquaculture and intensification of salmon-farming'.[161] Noting that 'the real thing' 'tasted like knowledge' the poem conveys an intellectual and cultural 'hunger' for seemingly authentic traditional practices that have disappeared in the wake of economic change.[162]

Across her work the seas and oceans of the Atlantic archipelago are caught between 'different modes of temporal experience associated with the realm of commodity exchange on the one hand, and the material memory of water on the other'.[163] Responding to the commodification of oceanic space, O'Malley instils her seascapes and oceans with a range of Celtic myths and local legends in an act of reterritorialisation, attempting to realign culture with place. By 'emphasising the fragility of local tales that are in danger of disappearing or being forgotten', O'Malley explores 'the perils that a globalised world may have upon cultural identities'.[164] Again, there is an underlying sense of nostalgia within these short pieces where the traditional fishing practices of the West are placed in 'higher' regard than contemporary scientific and economic encounters with the ocean.

[158] O'Malley, 'Interview', pp.41-2.

[159] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.76.

[160] Ibid, p.76.

[161] Deckard, p.164.

[162] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.76.

[163] Janine MacLeod, 'Water and the Material Imagination: Reading the Sea of Memory against the Flows of Capital', *Thinking With Water*, ed. by Cecelia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press 2013), pp.40-60, (p. 41).

[164] Pilar Villar-Argáiz, '"A Global Regionalist": Paula Meehan's Transnational Poetics of Globalisation', *Glocal Ireland: Current Perspectives on Literature and the Visual Arts,* ed. by Marisol Morales Ladrón and Juan F. Elices Agudo (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp.100-118, (p.101).

For O'Malley, the 'good lads' of the research ship *Celtic Explorer*, are emblematic of an unprecedented sea change within wider Irish culture; no longer able to pursue what she views as 'traditional' modes of living they must adapt to a new reality that is governed by market forces originating from elsewhere.

Her works espouse a growing EU scepticism in which her earlier discomfort towards 'forms of European colonialism' is transposed onto 'EU forms of neocolonialism, where policies are constructed to enhance global capital for other EU countries rather than for Ireland'.[165] For O'Malley, the EU represents a different version of the same colonial dynamics of earlier British colonial rule with a new colonial centre located in Brussels as opposed to London. This euro-sceptic position indicates a tension in O'Malley's works where her increased sensitivity towards migrant figures seems at odds with her overt rejection of EU systems. As Villar-Argáiz suggests, one of the immediate consequences of Ireland's new found economic success during the Tiger years 'was the reversal of emigration from outward to inward migration. For the first time in history, Ireland became a destination not only for tourists and students, but for EU nationals, asylum-seekers, political refugees, and the so-called economic migrants'.[166] We have seen in, 'In the Name of God and of the Dead Generations', how O'Malley is generally welcoming of such migrant figures, viewing their arrival in relation to Ireland's own history of 'language loss, enforced outward migration, and dispossession'.[167] Her rejection of the EU is thus not a rejection of notions of plurality, mobility and hybridity that critics such as Richard Kearney have associated with the EU's cultural project of integration,[168] but is rather directed towards the institutional and economic frameworks that effectively re-peripheralised Ireland after the collapse of the Tiger economy. As Maurice Coakley notes, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Ireland went from being 'one of Europe's great success stories' to being 're-classified in the financial media as a peripheral state'.[169] The post-Celtic Tiger years were subsequently marked by the imposition of a new austerity regime that attempted to deal with soaring

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[165] Gladwin, p.45.

[166] Villar-Argáiz, 'Introduction', p.1.

[167] Michaela Schrage-Früh, '"Like a foreigner/ in my native land": Transculturaity and Otherness in Twenty-first Century Irish Poetry', *Literary Visions of Multicultural Ireland: The Immigrant in Contemporary Irish Literature,* ed. by Pilar Villar-Argáiz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) pp.163-176, (p.163).

[168] Richard Kearney, *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays 1976-2006* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2006)

[169] Maurice Coakley, 'Ireland, Europe and the Global Crisis', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22.1 (2014), 177-201, (p.180).

numbers of unemployment and outward emigration, while still having to respond to macro-economic 'policy [as] determined by an autonomous European Central Bank' that has for Coakley, effectively accentuated the 'core-periphery divide within Europe, and a reinforcement of the hierarchy of nation-states'.[170]

In *Valparaiso*'s central five-part sequence, 'Resident at Sea', O'Malley presents a series of voyaging poems which chart 'Ireland's ill-fated economic buoyancy', and the subsequent psychological condition of being 'at sea' in the wake of loss and change.[171] In the opening poem, 'Sea Road, No Map', the sequence begins with a sense of disorientation and desperation where an unknown speaker begins questions: 'What world would have me? A ship'.[172] Setting sail from the shores of an 'Impossible Ireland' the poem enacts a conscious breaking of roots, where the 'the wrack of ties I have knotted| too tightly' no longer connotes a sense of stability but rather relates to 'things I do not understand'.[173] As the ship slips away from the docks, the figure actively critiques the capitalist cityscape they leave behind where 'the merchant class handing one another rosettes' are contrasted with 'the drug dealers, the scrap merchants' and the 'Buckfast kids under the bridge'.[174] As the ship slides out 'past Salthill| leaving Galway rampant' the speaker notices how 'three musketeers raise their cans to another new hotel' and questions scathingly '– how many new hotels can the homeless need?'[175] The bitter tone of the rhetorical question challenges the elation of the toasting merchant class by revealing the dire consequences of unchecked economic expansion that has done nothing but ensure the continued progression of social inequality and poverty.

Poised between rootedness and displacement, O'Malley's migrant figures look to the ocean as a means of sourcing new connections and anchorages to place and identity. These figures bring with them a history of the places they have left behind and, like Cannon's migratory poems, infuse O'Malley's work with a dialogical sense of 'cultural and linguistic rootedness [that] has its twin in the sense of loss and displacement'.[176] Across *Valparaiso,* the fluidity of the sea is

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[170] Ibid, p.196.
[171] Flannery, p.36.
[172] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.37.
[173] Ibid, p.37.
[174] Ibid, p.37.
[175] Ibid, p.37.
[176] Kinga Olszewska, 'The Limits of Post-Nationalism: The Works of John Banville and Mary O'Malley', *Nordic Irish Studies*, 7 (2008), 135-146, (p.142).

inversely positioned as a site of cultural connection that is more stable than the land her poetic subjects leave behind. Through her attention to the uncharted abyssal zones, and the churning activity of the seas and oceans, O'Malley's seascapes resist the discourses of ownership and control that have resulted in the formation of mass ghost estates, 'the rubble, the rows of tinpot houses, | the new ghettos, from the bottom of endless potholes'.[177] Deciding that 'the earth is not reliable', her figures take to the sea in the pursuit of new uncharted futures that, instead of maps, look to 'the studded way of paintings| signposted in shells, the hope of travellers' courtesy | and all our road unravelling before us'.[178] It is important to note however, within her collections, the ocean does not simply become a diluting and destructive force, washing away all trace of national distinctiveness or cultural identity. Across *Valparaiso* saltwater is positioned as both the conduit to deterretorialisation through a focus on voyaging and (enforced) transnational migrations, and as a reterretorialising element through the transportation of songs, myth and stories that are anchored to the cultural histories of the Irish Coast.

Across the 'Resident at Sea' sequence it is not only the human figures and histories which are shown to be suffering from the economic fall-out of the Post-Tiger years. As the poem slowly gains distance from its original shores O'Malley's voyage shifts the 'destination to Nymph's Bank', a sand bank situated off the coast of Southern Ireland located 'nearly midway between the English and Irish coasts' that in the early 1800s was reputed to be abound with 'cod, hake, and ling, [and was] much frequented [by] Irish fisherman'. [179] In 'Sea Road, No Map' the once rich sand bank is now home to the toxic marine plankton species of 'Dinophysis' described as: 'the scientists' prey| red, handsome, bad'.[180] Observing how the plankton 'lures the scientists| now inland, now offshore, | now, unexpectedly, to the sea-floor', O'Malley alerts us to the pervasiveness 'the toxic red tide' that pervades all layers of oceanic zones.[181] The 'red tide' is a common name for the harmful algal blooms (HABs) that can result in 'the accumulation of

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[177] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.24.
[178] Ibid, p.12.
[179] Martin White, *Sailing Directions for The English Channel: Including a General Description of the South Coasts of England and Ireland and a Detailed Account of The Channel Islands* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1835), p.9.
[180] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.39.
[181] Ibid, p.39.

DSP [Diarrheic Shellfish Poisons] toxins in filter feeding shellfish'. [182] The consumption of tainted shellfish or prolonged exposure to HABs can cause various gastrointestinal issues in sea mammals, birds, fish and human populations. The emergence of such blooms often coincides with harvesting bans that affect the aquaculture of coastal regions, thus not only impacting the health of local ecosystems but the health of coastal economy. Across 'Resident at Sea', economy and ecology are intertwined through the trans-corporeal connections of toxic blooms and housing booms, where the unsustainable expansion of hotels, houses, and markets is echoed by the encroaching 'thin horizontal column' of the red tide. [183] The second poem of the sequence, 'Oceano Nox', similarly presents an intimate interrelationship between sea, memory, and capital. Suggesting that 'what's drowned in the sea is buried in the cortex', [184] O'Malley vividly imbues the ocean with a mnemonic capacity. However, in the fourth stanza this cultural reservoir is threatened by acts of commercial fishing where 'Ghost nets waltz along the bottom| fishing. They catch shark, whales. | They snatch music from the dead'. [185] The poem positions songs and sharks as an unfortunate bycatch of commercial practices; effectively linking ecosystem decline to cultural deterioration where the commoditisation of ocean space is viewed as a threat not only to marine ecosystems, but to cultural heritage and possible futures.

As the sequence draws to a close the sense of security felt at sea where 'everything makes sense', is belied by wider references to global climate change. Aboard the ship, the poet watches 'the progress of the deluge in England. | A young spaniel is swimming through the streets', where the 'endless rain' and extreme weather scatters houses 'like paper cups'. [186] In the penultimate poem of the sequence, 'Shore', the dimensions of a flooded England and 'drowned Ireland' give way to wider scales of global climate change where the speaker obliquely notes 'The poles are melting'. [187] O'Malley's poetic figures become environmental migrants, forced to leave their home land due to changing socio-economic and environmental climates. In 'Shore' O'Malley looks to the most at-risk members of

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[182] *The Occurrence of Marine Biotoxins and Risk of Exposure to Seafood Consumers in Ireland, Report of the Scientific Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland* (Dublin: Food Safety Authority of Ireland, 2016), <https://www.fsai.ie/publications_marine_biotoxins/> [accessed 18.04.2017].
[183] O'Malley, *Valparaiso,* p.40.
[184] Ibid, p.40.
[185] Ibid, p.40.
[186] Ibid, p.39, p.42.
[187] Ibid, p.44.

society, those most likely to be displaced in the wake of significant environmental and economic change concluding that 'for the refugee and the poor| the shore marks the start of possibility'.[188] Marking both the point of arrival and departure, beginning and ending, the shore becomes a liminal site of possibility and transformation, and in so doing, challenges 'restrictive understandings of [...] belonging and citizenship' that attach themselves to ideas of landed stability.[189] In a world threatened by encroaching sea levels where 'maps are redrawn so long | after countries disappear', O'Malley displays how concepts of landed identity are increasingly insufficient for the modern condition.[190] Tracking both ecological and economic flows O'Malley's work opens up questions regarding a burgeoning sense of planetary consciousness, whereby localities are drawn into discourse with the global coordinates of environmental crisis.

Poised between embeddedness and mobility, O'Malley's and Cannon's lyrical works attempt to navigate the changing relationships with place that arise in the wake of economic recession and global climate change. Concerned with the mobility of language, the migration of bodies (both human and nonhuman) and the transmission of stories that extend outwards from Irish shores to form new transnational and global connections overseas, their works have been read by some critics as advancing a postnational aesthetic. Through their various encounters and engagements with dynamics of migration both Cannon and O'Malley question how poetry may be able to 'preserve local identities while at the same time fostering a genuine openness to Otherness and alterity'.[191] As Villar-Argáiz notes, this attempt to maintain the interconnections 'between local traditions and external influences are usually articulated by means of the concept of "post-nationalism"', most often advanced by the Irish critic Richard Kearney.[192] Kearney's work stresses the need to consider 'more inclusive and pluralist forms' of belonging that recognise how Irish identity 'is no longer coterminous with the geographical outlines of an island', but must include 'an international group of expatriates and a subnational network of regional communities'.[193] Yet in dismissing the geographical dimensions of the archipelago, Kearney's

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[188] Ibid, p.44.
[189] Villar-Argáiz, 'Dark Twins', p.222.
[190] O'Malley, *Valparaiso*, p.45.
[191] Villar-Argáiz, 'Introduction', p.18.
[192] Ibid, p.18.
[193] Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge 1997), p.99.

postnationalist model effectively ignores the lived realities of place which, as we have seen in the work of Cannon and O'Malley, are vital in crafting narratives of belonging and community. Kearney's postnationalist archipelago consequently arises as an idealised utopian space in which the scale framing of a 'trilateral allegiance to the concentric circles of Ireland-Britain-Europe', supposedly allows British and Irish subjects to 'put their sovereignty quarrel behind them and work for the common good of their region under a broad European roof'.[194] Yet as we have seen for O'Malley, this European roof is not as accommodating of regional communities as Kearney would have us believe, especially when that European roof is not shaped by cultural values, but economic ones. Indeed, for O'Malley, the legislation set forth by Kearney's proposed 'European federation of regions' does not address the 'sense of local powerlessness' felt as a result of the 'centralizing tendencies of both British imperialism and Irish nationalism',[195] but further enacts a sense of powerlessness through the establishment of a new centralising body in Brussels.

Across her works O'Malley tests the limits of postnationalist ideologies, often finding them lacking as her mediation of local and global encounters with place work to polemicise 'the established norms of national, cultural and gender identification, insisting upon the multi-layered nature of any form of subjectivity'.[196] Rather than espousing a postnational ideology, her works align more fully with a transnational sensibility whereby 'the flexibility with which her speakers move in the contemporary world', ensures that though her 'speakers are anchored in their cultural identities' these anchorages notably take root within vastly different waters from the Western coast of Galway, to Lisbon, New Zealand, Guam and Valparaiso.[197] As O'Malley writes in 'Shore', it is not the dock or specific coast that shapes her sense of identity but 'The ship, monastic in its matins and vespers| anchors me'.[198] Importantly for O'Malley the European and Global scales of encounter that arise within her work, do not serve to shore up a sense of identity that is secured in the act of 'coming home'.[199] Rather, her transcultural encounters serve to acknowledge that 'home' cannot ever be a static construct, but is something 'Open-ended. Home, the point of departure and

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[194] Ibid, p.17.
[195] Ibid, p.104.
[196] Olszewska, p.141.
[197] Ibid, p.141.
[198] Ibid, p.141.
[199] Ibid, p.101.

return'.[200] Thus while the 'question of Irish identity is of utmost importance' in her poetry 'it does not occlude a more comprehensive vision of the world' that arises from personal and historical experiences of marginalisation and displacement.[201] Through a poetic practice shaped by migrancy and voyaging, O'Malley engages the ocean as a site of living histories, positioning the seas of the archipelago as a watery matrix of multiple anchorages and transnational home-landings.

Across their works, both O'Malley and Cannon contribute to a growing field of Irish writing that is attentive to the ways in which 'dwelling/unhoming, rootedness/alienation, habit/disorientation are each two sides of the same cultural coin'.[202] Through their respective fascination with transatlantic seascapes, linguistic histories, and migrant communities, their work expresses a mode of writing that actively turns away from the flow of capital toward the circulation and flow of history, story, and poetry. The carrier of both voyaging vessels and submerged histories, their oceans and poems become reservoirs of cultural heritage that connect migrant subjects to a multitude of anchorages across the archipelago. Oceanic space is engaged as an essential element for the advancement of new forms of hybridity, mobility and plurality that emerge in the wake of economic and ecological change. For both Cannon and O'Malley, the ocean and seas of the archipelago emerge not only as powerful metaphorical tools, nor merely as sites of transnational crossings and connection, but are encountered as material sites that increasingly bear the traces of environmental decline. Presenting saltwater space as an intricate network of relations that flow beyond national boundaries, without entirely dissolving the concept of the national, their works engage wider scales of planetary ecological threat, ultimately recognising oceanic space as a site of ecological, historical and cultural significance.

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[200] O'Malley, *Three Irish Poets*, p.66.
[201] Olszewska, pp.140-3.
[202] Flannery, p.73.

CHAPTER SIX
'The sea returns whatever you give it': Kathleen Jamie, Jen Hadfield and the Poetry of the Global Ocean

As we have seen across the course of the preceding chapters, modern poetry within the archipelago is increasingly concerned with the ways in which the ideology of postmodern capitalism and the politics of globalisation have come to adversely affect cultural and ecological relationships with oceanic space. For scholars of Human Geography, the modern framings of the industrial capitalist system have resulted in oceans and seas being 'dismissed as spatial fillers to be traversed for the capital gain of those on land […] or conquered for means of long distance control'.[1] For Philip Steinberg the marine spatial order constructed by the modern capitalist system results in a dialectical conception of the ocean as '*res nullius*, [a] space that is so devoid of any social content that it is available for appropriation and development, even though the appropriation of the sea necessarily conflicts with the "great void" idealization that makes this appropriation possible'.[2] As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the recent emergence of the Blue Humanities has sought to respond to the cultural and material evacuation of the ocean, insisting that we view the ocean 'not as a material or metaphorical void, but alive with embodied human experiences, more-than-human agencies' and an abundance of vibrant matter that carries with it global narratives of environmental and cultural change.[3] As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the contemporary poetry of Mary O'Malley and Moya Cannon is marked by an increased sensitivity towards the entwined flows of global capital and transoceanic migration that has corresponded with an increased poetic interest in the preservation of endangered forms of 'storied matter' that surface in the form of linguistic fragments, local histories, and regional mythologies.[4] Much as O'Malley and Cannon position the ocean as a cultural and material space that

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[1] Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, '"A perfect and absolute blank": Human Geographies of Water Worlds', *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean,* ed. by Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp.3-23, (p.3).

[2] Philip Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: CUP 2001), italics in original, p.188.

[3] Anderson and Peters, p.4.

[4] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', *Material Ecocriticism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp.1-21, (p.1).

aids in the proliferation of identities and new modes of belonging, the work of the contemporary Scottish poets Kathleen Jamie and Jen Hadfield similarly turns to the flows of the global ocean in the consideration of environmental and political change.

As a space that is constituted by time, volume, depth, and flow, looking to the ocean often incurs a sense of disorientation as both anthropocentric and terrestrial orderings of time and space become inadequate. For Hadfield and Jamie, looking to the ocean aligns with a burgeoning sense of planetary consciousness within their works, where the turn towards the blue enables both poets to address what Timothy Clark has termed the 'deranging' scales of the Anthropocene.[5] We have already seen how trans-corporeal relations between watery bodies and bodies of water have allowed modern poets to engage the scale effects of the Anthropocene, where questions of toxic connectivity permit us access to the complex interconnections between personal and planetary scales of environmental encounter. We have also seen how the ocean has gained importance within contemporary poetic works that respond to changing scales of relation that have arisen in the wake of migrant narratives, where the turn towards transnational seascapes reflects an underlying impulse to craft a sense of planetary 'citizenry' that might address questions of global inequality and ecological crisis. Within the work of Jamie and Hadfield, these 'deranging' scales of environmental relation in which the 'broadest effects' of climate change emerge 'in the smallest day-to-day phenomena' continue to be of central concern.[6] The 'day-to-day phenomena' addressed across their poetry embraces a range of storied matter, from limpets and rubber ducks to tides, motorways, and plastic rope; their respective encounter with these vibrant materials encourages a sense of global citizenship, as they bind local places to wider 'animate and inanimate networks of influence and exchange'.[7] In looking to the material characteristics of oceanic space, their works not only allow them to 'think beyond the boundaries of their own cultures, ethnicities, or nations to a range of other sociocultural frameworks', but also enables them to envisage themselves as part of a 'planetary community' that correlates with a sense of 'biosphereic

[5] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.14.
[6] Ibid, p.9.
[7] Ursula Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p.61.

connectedness' catalysed by their material entanglement within marine environments.[8]

In her work *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Ursula Heise suggests that due to the spatial and temporal distortions evinced by globalization, the 'advocacies of place' drawn from an 'individual's existentialist encounters with nature and engagements with intimately known local places'[9] are increasingly inadequate in their ability to address the scale of global environmental change. Thus, while the conjunctive 'and' of her title suggests that both scales of (local) place and (global) planet must be addressed when comprehending the Anthropocene, her argument ultimately implies a sense of 'or' that incurs an abandonment of the local in the face of the global. Further to this, despite her recognition that the move towards the global may incur a 'neglect of political and cultural heterogeneity', Heise's conception of 'eco-cosmopolitanism' tends towards a troubling utopian and homogenising vision.[10] Heise's eco-cosmopolitan vision is predicated upon repeated invocations of the 'Blue Planet' that have served to allegorise a sense of planetary community since the late 1960s when the infamous photograph of the 'Blue Dot' was adopted by American environmentalist movements that attached themselves to the aesthetic potential of 'visual portrayals of Planet Earth as a precious, marble-like jewel exposed in its fragility and limits against the undefined blackness of outer space'.[11] The image was lauded for its ability to summarise 'the abstract complexity of global systems in relatively simple and concrete images that foregrounded synthesis, holism and connectedness'.[12] While the underlying ethos of such holistic visualisations is not without merit, for Stacy Alaimo the prevalence of 'visual depictions of the Anthropocene [that] emphasize the colossal scale of anthropogenic impact by zooming out – up and away from the planet' are in fact harmful as they diminish any sense of human culpability as the distances invoked by zooming out 'removes us from the scene and ignores the extent to which human agencies are entangled

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[8] Ibid, p.62.
[9] Ibid, p.55.
[10] Ibid, p.63.
[11] Ibid, p.63.
[12] Ibid, p.63.

with those of nonhuman creatures and inhuman substances and systems'.[13] The now highly familiar image of 'spaceship earth' visualised as:

> patterns of bright blue or shimmering gold lines that span the planet and demonstrate the expansiveness of human habitation, commerce, and transportation networks, marking human travel, transport and activity against a solid background [effectively] obscures winds, tides, currents, and the travels of birds, cetaceans, or other creatures. Nonhuman agencies and trajectories are absent.[14]

For Alaimo, the sanitised and distanced image of the 'Blue Planet', that derives its harmonious colouring from the seemingly pristine deep seas, further erases the already difficult-to-trace flow of toxins and pollutants that circulate the world's oceans. The static image not only obfuscates the dynamism of planetary ecosystesms, but also places humans at the centre of planetary discussions. It is our scientific accomplishment that takes centre stage, as the sanitised satellite images sent back from space ultimately render questions of toxicity, climate change, migration, and pollution undetectable and untraceable.

This holistic image further disrupts the sense of alterity that Gyatari Spivak has outlined as a key component of planetary thinking: 'If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us'.[15] For Spivak, to think of ourselves as 'planetary creatures' necessitates an opening to otherness and a recognition that the 'planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan'.[16] Unlike the logic of globalisation that is attached to discourses of knowability and control, Spivak's 'planetarity' entails a recognition that the (eco)system we inhabit does not derive from us, belong to us, nor can it every be fully knowable, it is only ever 'on loan'. For Spivak, planetarity is thus attached to a corresponding sense of the uncanny, a recognition that we exist within an (eco)system, a home that is intimate yet strange. As noted earlier, one of the central proponents of the Blue Humanities arises from the understanding of the ocean as a planetary ecosystem, a 'connecting and structuring' medium, a 'difference-engine' that prompts conditions of plurality

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[13] Stacy Aliamo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2016), p.145.
[14] Ibid, p.145.
[15] See: Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
[16] Ibid, p.73.

and 'radical alterity'.[17] For Steve Mentz and Rojas the recent critical turn towards the ocean allows for the production of new visions of geographic and cultural multiplicity that include experiences of 'deterritorialization', 'an understanding of the global environment as "more-than-human", and [a shift] from static equilibrium to dynamic ecosystems' that interconnect and extend across the planet.[18] For Astrida Neimanis, the solution may be thus to conceive of a sense of '[w]ater as planetarity', suggesting that the 'engaged, embedded, embodied' nature of watery narratives presents 'a way of knowing that is somewhere, situated, implicated — in time, in space, in other bodies of other beings — but is also a form of knowledge in which that location will always exceed my bounds'.[19] The ocean arises both as a site of relation, allowing us to experience conditions of trans-corporeal kinship and migratory relation, but also presents a limit that 'determines which milieus are habitable, withstand-able, and thus knowable'.[20] In recognising that water can never fully be known, the ocean becomes a space of uncanny encounter that 'underlines questions of incursion, hubris, and humility'.[21] Through their lyrical attentiveness to the seascapes and coastlines of the Scottish islands, the respective work of Hadfield and Jamie registers the ways in which the deeply local and familiar is continually made strange by the deranging scale effects of the Anthropocene.

i. 'pluck such rubbish from the waves': From Plastics to Planetarity

The significance of what Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann have termed 'storied matter' has emerged at several key points across the course of this thesis.[22] Whether it be the geological agency of stones and beaches in the work of Louis MacNeice and Hugh MacDiarmid, the liveliness of derelict objects and trans-corporeal toxins of Derek Mahon and John Burnside, or the organic and cultural flotsam of Moya Cannon, the archipelago is teeming with 'the world's material phenomena', each material fragment interlinking the poetic subject to a

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[17] Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas, 'Introduction: "The Hungry Ocean"', *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture*, ed. by Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.1-15, (p.5, p.9).

[18] Ibid, p.5.

[19] Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury 2017), p.145.

[20] Ibid, p.142.

[21] Ibid, p.142.

[22] Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Introduction: Stories Come to Matter', *Material Ecocriticism,* ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp.1-21, (p.1).

'vast network of agencies, which can be "read" and interpreted as forming narratives, stories'.[23] As Clark suggests, the Anthropocene 'manifests itself in innumerable possible hairline cracks in the familiar life-world, at the local and personal scale of each individual life' where the politicisation of familiar 'day-to-day practices' means that seemingly benign objects and actions are infused with a new environmental potency.[24] Whether it be Oppermann and Iovino's 'storied matter' or what Jane Bennett has termed 'vibrant materials', the world's oceans are increasingly populated by materials that are the by-products of the global capitalist system whose flows and force continually exceeds the boundaries of localities and nations. Across the work of Hadfield and Jamie, the quotidian realities of climate change emerge within familiar settings and mundane objects that have become imbued with an uncanny sense of wider planetary environmental decline. In particular the repeated encounter between 'local rock and global plastic' within their works prompts us to consider how the storied matter of oceanic ecosystems not only alerts us to the uncanny liveliness of materials, but how encounters with such 'storied matter' enable us to 'negotiate the juncture between ecological globalism and localism and how [...] they link issues of global ecology with those of transnational culture.'[25] This first section examines a series of poems by Hadfield and Jamie that respectively engage the transnational flows of storied matter, whether this be rubber ducks, gannet skulls, or plastic rope, and proposes that their repeated encounters with marine materials prompts them to consider questions of scale, relation, and alterity.

The work of the contemporary poet Jen Hadfield is marked by a distinct concern with the dynamism of place, the fragility of the environment and the decentring of the human position. Since the publication of her first collection, *Almanacs* (2005), her poems have been marked by a fascination with the ways in which more-than-human forces, substances, and bodies relate to the human subject to form new narratives of place attachment. In the poem 'Staple Island Swing', prefaced with a quote from Edwin Morgan's 'A View of Things' Hadfield's traces an intimate relationship with place through a liturgical attentiveness to the island's nonhuman inhabitants:

What I love – the tall clock of thermals, blackbacks.

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[23] Ibid, p.1.
[24] Clark, p.9.
[25] Ursula Heise, 'Local Rock and Global Plastic: World Ecology and the Experience of Place', *Comparative Literary Studies,* 41 (2004), 126-152, (p.126).

> turning on Sunday axles. A guillemot gaping,
> mouth like a mussel shell. The grooved bright meat.
> What I hate – cormorants –
> when there's one chick too many, sprawled
> on the rock like an over-loved fuzzy bear.[26]

The litany of loves and hates continues to map the island's sea-life, describing seals, gulls, cormorants, and guillemots through a series of playful juxtapositions where 'a bull seal kippering' is compared to 'those fish in red cellophane | we laid on palms to tell fortunes'.[27] The use of similes continues throughout the poem, allowing Hadfield to overcome the nature/culture divide through a series of unexpected and inventive comparisons that incite a relation between the human and nonhuman: 'beaks wagging like metronomes, | bakelite black of cormorants, | the guffy jazz of sea-cliffs'.[28] Described as a 'mythic scrapbook, bag of cats, a one-man band' *Almanacs* 'is concerned with lists, rules and archetypes and what they don't account for', namely the way personal experiences with place rarely conform to such rules.[29] Crafting a sense of place and community in line with her own poetic idiosyncrasies, the collection manipulates a range of literary sources, languages, and legends in a bid to answer the central wonders: '"what's beautiful?" (tarmac? Sheep? Carcasses? Sunburn?) and "where's your native home?"'[30] The collection forms a narrative of place through the continued accumulation of unexpected yet everyday materials and traces both Scottish and Canadian landscapes in intimate detail.

While Hadfield's poems venture deeply into one specific location, her sense of place is often defined by a condition of being in-between. Her poetic subject is frequently located between places, be it on motorways in 'M74 Glasgow to Carlisle', or in 'Marking' where she remarks 'On Skye I was washed up| between a shattered house and a sheep's carcass'.[31] In 'Fool Moon Voices' Hadfield plays with feelings of estrangement and connection that pervade this liminal sense of 'native home':

> Fetaland, the two oceans
> are metres apart
> and desperate for each other –

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[26] Jen Hadfield, *Almanacs* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2005), p.12.
[27] Ibid, p.12.
[28] Ibid, p.12.
[29] Ibid, dust jacket.
[30] Ibid, dust jacket.
[31] Ibid, p.72, p.23.

> the greasy green feathers
> of the North Sea, the reaching
> brown kelps of the Atlantic.[32]

The striking image of two seas separated by a few meters (or a single dash), establishes a sense of place that is shaped by detail, distance, and longing. Positioned between the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, the poet becomes a force of mediation, bridging the gap between the seemingly separate bodies of water. The intertwining fronds of kelp and seaweed highlight that this division between oceans is manufactured; a construct of cartographic practices and the politics of control. Across the collection, Hadfield interrogates the construction of borders and boundaries, often unravelling a sense of isolation or peripherality in the process.

The questions 'what is beauty' and 'where is your native home', are also present in her second collection *Nigh-No-Place* (2008). Written between Canada and Shetland, *Nigh-No-Place* is again concerned with in-between places and a desire to 'push myself back and let the uncontrolled world push in; a sensation of wanting to thin the skin, to be a less controlled and discrete critter: dissolved in the present tense and present place, more like plankton'.[33] Marked by a sense of flow and interconnection, the collection is drawn to the creative, cultural and ecological potential of rockpools. Hadfield's fascination with rockpools aligns with her tendency to employ a 'macro' lens in her work which often attempts to craft poetic 'close ups' of specific ecosystems and local practices.[34] She is often drawn to the mutability of rockpools as they are spaces created by extreme fluctuations in temperature, salinity, tides and weather. Despite the relatively diminutive scale of rockpools, for Hadfield the rich biodiversity of these tiny pools is embraced as a means of opening the self to grander oceanic scales. As sites that only exist in relation to the wider ocean, the rockpool arises as a motif of scale and relation.

The poem 'Blashey-wadder', a Shetlandic term for wet and unsettled weather, presents the first encounter with rock-pools in the collection.[35] The short

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[32] Ibid, p.35.

[33] Jen Hadfield, interviewed by Zoë Brigley Thompson, 'Interview with the poet Jen Hadfield: Humble, Sincere, Honest', *The Midnight Heart* [online] (6 September 2010) <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/zoebrigley/entry/interview_with_the/> [accessed 26.04.2017] (para 2 of 33).

[34] Ibid, (para 4 of 33).

[35] Jen Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2008), p.62.

lyric moves across the small parish of 'Bracadale' on the Isle of Skye, tracing the wake of a storm as it reshapes the coastal landscape. Much like the storm it follows, the poem transforms familiar objects through unexpected, precise and playful juxtapositions where a waterproof jacket becomes a crackling 'roasting rack of lamb', and 'a gritter' rolling 'a blinking ball of orange light|ahead of it' becomes 'a dungbeetle | that had stolen the sun'.[36] Toying with 'the tug of the strange and familiar',[37] the poem unsettles the natural order of the islandscape as the ferocity of the storm forces waterfalls 'right up off the cliff| in grand plumes' so that 'even the puddles ran uphill'.[38] The repetition of 'and' ('And across the loch', 'And on the road', 'And across Bracadale', 'And a circlet of iron was torn from a byre', 'And seven wind-whipped cows', 'And in a rockpool', 'And even the dog won't heel since yesterday', 'and I mean more'n wet weak hail'),[39] reflects an unsettled and dynamic sense of place, as the seemingly discrete elements of land, wind, body and water blend in the wake of the storm. While the opening line 'At dusk I walked to the postbox' gives an initial sense of time and place, the repeated use of 'and' serves to further disrupt the chorological sequence of narrative in favour of a more urgent and unpredictable order that is attached to moments of sudden attention. The final stanzas of the piece simultaneously move backwards and forwards in time where 'even the dog won't heel since yesterday| when – sniffing North addictedly – he saw we had it coming –'.[40] The incursion of dashes into the sequence not only reflects the natural chaos brought about by meteorological events, but echoes a wider sense of spatial and temporal disorder. Both time and space are turned strange and uncontrollable in the poem, where the image of a 'rockpool' in which 'a punctured football' reels 'around and around' belies a sense of uncontrollable repetition, of going round in circles, similarly invoked through the continued use of 'and'.[41] It is at this point in the poem that we come across a hint of pathetic fallacy, where the closing line – 'he saw we had it coming - | and I mean more'n wet weak hail| on a bastard wind' – prompts us to consider whether the storm is meteorological, or metaphorical, the wet and unsettled weather reflecting an unspoken argument between the lyrical 'I' and an

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[36] Ibid, p.31.
[37] Hadfield, 'Interview'.
[38] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.31.
[39] Ibid, p.31.
[40] Ibid, p.31.
[41] Ibid, p.31.

unidentified 'you', or whether the ominous 'we had it coming' refers to a wider sense of global community.[42]

In 'Daed-traa', translated as 'the slack of the tide', Hadfield continues to explore the significance of the rockpool as a site formed through interconnections between nature and culture. Employing a range of pop-culture references to describe the pool's miniature ecosystem we see how 'the crustaceans, plants and other creatures of the pool are figured in cultural terms'.[43] Described as a 'Little Shop of Horrors', the rockpool has 'its cross-eyed beetling Lear. | It has its billowing Monroe' and is depicted as a 'theatre' of vibrant biotic performance.[44] The subsequent lines that repeatedly begin 'It has', initially seem to refer to the changing contents of the rockpool, yet can also be applied to the very construction and content of Hadfield's poetics. The rockpool becomes a paratactic environment in which neither culture (the poem) nor nature (the numerous creatures and plants) are seen to subordinate the other, but are instead viewed side by side. Within 'Daed-traa', the human and the nonhuman connect in the act of composition, where the 'crossed and dotted monsters' of the pool relates both to the sea-wrack, beetles, and barnacles that inhabit the rockpool, while also recalling the process of writing 'alluding to the idiom 'crossing i's and dotting t's', the meticulous completion of a document or task'.[45] In so doing, Hadfield's poem reorientates the anthropocentric paradigms of observation which often place the lyrical, human, 'I' at the centre of traditional nature poetry. Described as possessing 'ventricles, just like us – | pumping brine, like bull's blood, a syrupy flow', 'feverish locks of hair' and 'puddled, podgy cheeks and jaw', the vibrant and visceral contents of the rockpool map onto the human body.[46] The construction of the poem maps the 'flows' of the pool, tracing the 'ebb, the easy heft of wrack from rock', and 'its *flodd*' through a typographic style that mixes 'the concrete and the metaphysical'.[47] As the human and saltwater bodies blend and blur into one another, Hadfield effectively sets aside the conquering gaze of the usual lyrical position, and instead invokes a fresh perspective that exhibits a

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[42] Ibid, p.31.
[43] Garry MacKenzie, 'Utopias, Miniature Worlds and Global Networks in Modern Scottish Island Poetry', *Green Letters*, 17.3 (2013), 200-210, (p.207).
[44] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.35.
[45] MacKenzie, p.207.
[46] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.35.
[47] Timothy Baker, 'The Lonely Island: Exile and Community in Recent Island Writing', *Community in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. by Scott Lyall (Leiden: Brill, 2016) pp.25-42, (p.33).

keen sense of attention to the rockpool's ecological minutiae and the trans-corporeal influx of wider cultural materials. The relationship between culture and nature is also invoked through the very act of crafting a rockpool poem, where the opening, middle, and closing lines of the text actively respond to the ecopoetic sensibilities of Hadfield's work: 'I go to the rockpool at the slack of the tide| to mind me what my poetry's for'.[48] The repeated question brings to light Hadfield's poetic ethos, whereby poetry is not meant to exist in inertia or isolation but is always 'for' something.

By focusing the wide '*flodd*' of the Atlantic Ocean into the 'grooming millimetre' of the rockpool, Hadfield plays with the differing scales of cultural and ecological relation that looking to the ocean incurs. In a sequence of three rockpool poems titled 'Teatros', Spanish for 'theatres', the minute rockpool ecosystem is again juxtaposed with wider global frames. In 'Jellyfish', jellyfish as small as 'thimbles| on the tide' are described as 'constellations' whose 'milky domes| and faint fontanelles' form a 'mussed map of heavens', while in 'Dénouement' 'Across a rockpool's frilled theatre, | a limpet budges| a devastating millimetre'.[49] The short sequence advances the sense of 'minding' that shapes the 'Daed-traa' sequence, where the microscopic scales of attention invoked throughout underscores a deep attachment to locality that is also conscious of wider scales of connectivity and relation. Across these poems, the ocean 'becomes a vast, assembled space riddled with the strange facts of human and nonhuman agency'.[50] Poised between land and sea, nature and culture, the rockpool becomes akin to what Patricia Yaeger has described as the 'quasi-ocean' a space that is not 'quite nature nor quite society; neither the opposite of the land nor a realm that is unknowable, mute, eternal, or mythic, the quasi-ocean becomes a locus for "collecting associations of humans and nonhumans" in an awkward common world'.[51] The communality of Hadfield's rockpools teeming with hermit crabs knitting waves, thimble-like jellyfish, and popculture icons, presents marine environments as 'a vast, assembled space riddled with the strange facts of human and nonhuman agency'.[52] Emerging as a unique intersection between the local

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[48] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.35.
[49] Ibid, p.49.
[50] Patricia Yaeger, 'The Ocean as Quasi-object, or Ecocriticism and the Doll from the Deep', *The Sea and Nineteenth-Century Anglophone Literary Culture*, ed. by Steve Mentz and Martha Elena Rojas (London: Routledge 2017), pp.166-185, (p.169).
[51] Ibid, p.169.
[52] Ibid, p.169.

and the global, the personal and the communal, the natural and the cultural, Hadfield's rockpools engage questions of beauty, scale, and community that mark her interactions with place.

Filled with vibrant cultural, linguistic, ecological, and economic materials, her rockpool poems help draw attention to the ways we currently value marine space as sites of either recreation or disposal. In 'Snuskit', defined as being 'in a sulky frame of mind', Hadfield's attentions to the banal and quotidian aspects of island life – that awkward and common world – are engaged as means of challenging the common configuration of the island space as a disconnected environmental utopia:

> The shore is not nice. Good. The hashed basalt is black
> and all the rubberduckery of the Atlantic is blown up here – a
> bloated seal and sometimes skull, fishboxes and buoys, a cummer-
> bund of rotting kelp. The wind topples me, punches me gently
> into a pool. Beyond, strafed with hail, the sea teems like TV, with
> frayed aerial. I step back onto my tuffet, boots pooled in buttery
> light. The wind punches me gently into a pool. I'm doing my best
> impression of a gull – pesky, pitied, lonely, greedy, hopping up
> and down on my tuffet. The wind punches me gently into a pool.[53]

The poem opens with a definitively banal statement in which the speaker describes the island's shore as 'not nice', followed with a simple affirmative and amusing, 'Good'. Instead of images of pristine beaches we are instead presented with the 'hashed' 'black' 'basalt' of the coast which actively removes the islandscape from any form of sensational imaginary. In 'Snuskit', the scale of waste encountered at the shoreline increases from that of 'Blashey-wadder' where the single reeling football is displaced by 'all the rubberduckery of the Atlantic', 'a| bloated seal and sometimes skull, fishboxes and buoys, a cummer-|bund of rotting kelp', even the aural atmosphere is polluted, the teeming hiss of the ocean is likened to the white noise of a 'TV, with| frayed aerial'. As Garry MacKenzie has noted, 'Hadfield is a poet unafraid to highlight the unpleasant and banal aspects of island life'.[54] In a similar vein to the work of MacDiarmid and MacNeice, and later Mahon and Longley, here Hadfield's attentiveness to the banal realities of island life ensures that pastoral visions of paradise do not mask the pressing environmental and social concerns of island communities.

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[53] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.39.
[54] MacKenzie, p.206.

In 'Snuskit', the materials washed into the tidal pools of the islandscape further open us to transnational scales of economic and ecological flow. While the dead seal, skull, fishboxes and buoys retain a sense of local place-attachment – invoking the fishing industry of Shetland – the term 'rubberduckery of the Atlantic' likely refers to the 1992 shipping incident in the Pacific Ocean in which '28,800 plastic animals produced in Chinese factories [including] 7,200 red beavers, 7,200 green frogs, 7,200 blue turtles, and 7,200 yellow ducks – hatched from their plastic shells and drifted free'.[55] Despite the initial wreckage of the shipping containers occurring in the Pacific Ocean, oceanic currents and arctic melt ultimately dispersed the plastic animals across the global ocean where they have since begun to circulate around the Eastern Seaboard of the Atlantic archipelago. The distribution of these synthetic creatures across the global ocean has aided oceanographers such as Curtis Ebbesmeyer in mapping the flow and circulation of ocean currents, and has further aided scientists who are currently tracking the widening gyre of the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch'. The poem's inclusion of the 'rubberduckery' amongst the more common flotsam and jetsam of the island, allows for Hadfield's scales of attention to oscillate between the local and the global. Further to this, the inclusion of the plastic waste alongside the organic flotsam found at the shoreline instils an uncanny element into the seemingly benign and humorous rubberduck. As we have seen with the work of Mahon, ecopoetic encounters with waste materials are increasingly mediated by the 'recognition that these banal objects, intended for momentary human use, pollute for eternity'.[56] Unlike the organic bones and fishboxes that wash ashore, the inability of plastic materials to biodegrade renders [such materials] surreally malevolent'.[57] Despite the joviality of the poem with its nursery-rhyme repetition of 'tuffet' and use of slapstick humour, the uncanny plastic wilderness found at the shoreline, where which rubberducks supplant the seabirds flying overhead, alerts us to disturbing scenes of environmental crisis.[58]

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[55] Donnovan Hohn, 'Moby-Duck: Or, The Synthetic Wilderness of Childhood', *Harpers Magazine* (January 2007), 39-62, (p.39).

[56] Alaimo, p.130.

[57] Ibid, p.130.

[58] Stacy Alaimo notes the work of visual artist Chris Jordan, whose 2009 project 'Midway' similarly 'display[s] the painful contrast between the muted browns and grays of the decomposing bodies [of albatrosses on the Midway Atoll], and the eerily cheery, super-colorful bits of plastic, predominantly bottle caps – the banal but persistent detritus of consumerism' p.130.

We see a similar accumulation of, or salvaging of, human and nonhuman material relations in Kathleen Jamie's recent poetry and lyrical non-fiction. Her essay collection *Findings* (2005), published one year after *The Tree House* (2004), provides some of the key source material for her poems. We see this crossover in poems such as 'Moult' which focuses on the arrival of shed seabird feathers that 'At a certain time of year| come floating shorewards'.[59] Even though 'they are dead things| washed up on the sand', the speaker understands that each feather carries with it a history as each 'black tip, say, to the vane' conveys a part 'of the pattern' of the wider archipelago.[60] Detached from their original bodies, the materials are imbued with a narrative potency where the speaker considers the arrival of the feathers and questions: 'What| can one frayed feather| tell of that design, | or the covenant they undertake, | wind and kittiwake?'[61] This hanging question, one of many unanswered in the collection, acknowledges the speaker's inability to access the resonances and histories of creaturely movement across the ocean. The poem directly recalls images from the essay 'Findings' in which Jamie describes her journeys around the Monach Islands in the Outer Hebrides, presenting a 'gentle but searching exploration of the affective impact of material "things"'.[62] The essay opens with the discovery of a gannet's body washed ashore and the desire to keep its skull:

> When the head was at last free, I rolled the body with my foot. It was light and dense at once, still with much of its plumage, but the white breast was dirty and the black-tipped wings bedraggled. No doubt it was an Ailsa Craig gannet because it was washed ashore on Arran. Then I left the body among the dried wrack and shell-grit, and took the head home in my bag.[63]

Noting how 'most seabirds die at sea, and their weightless bones are pulverised by the water or the wind',[64] Jamie instils the gannet's skull with a sense of rarity and fragility that is echoed in 'Moult' by the delicate description of 'one frayed feather' attached to an 'outstretched wing'.[65] The fragility of the skull and feathers imparts Jamie's materials with a sense of both value and vulnerability that recalls Moya Cannon's beachcombing poems. Though notably it is only the skull that

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[59] Kathleen Jamie. *The Tree House* (London: Picador, 2004), p.38.
[60] Ibid, p.38.
[61] Ibid, p.38.
[62] Pippa Marland, 'The Gannet's Skull versus the Plastic Doll's Head: Material "value" in Kathleen Jamie's "Findings"', *Green Letters,* 19.2 (2015), 121-131, (p.124).
[63] Jamie, Kathleen. *Findings* (London: Sort of Books, 2005), p.49.
[64] Ibid, p.49.
[65] Jamie, *The Tree House*, p.38.

gets such careful treatment; the body, abandoned amongst the 'wrack and shell-grit' is not given the same status as the head of the bird. While the gannet's skull serves as a trophy of sorts, the macabre description of the bird's beheading begins 'a subtle and self-reflexive meditation on material "value" that cumulatively conjures a sense of material kinship with certain found objects'.[66] For Jamie, the question becomes: which objects conjure this 'material kinship', and why?

The opening epigraph to the titular essay, 'Findings' draws us to further consider this delicate relationship between humans and materials, stating simply: 'Bone is subtle and lasting'.[67] The epigraph is taken from George Mackay Brown's 'Ships in the Ice' a poem that narrates the tale of the Orkney explorer John Rae and his finding of the lost Franklin Expedition which was last seen in Stromness harbour in 1845. This subtle invocation of shipwreck and beachcombing is extended through Jamie's later direct references to Mackay Brown, who 'once wrote that "the past was like a great ship that has gone ashore, and archivist and writer must gather as much of the rich squandered cargo as they can"'.[68] The act of gathering and finding is explored most fully in Mackay Brown's poem 'Beachcomber' which traces the passing of time through materials that wash ashore. Monday brings a boot covered in 'Rust and leather' which the speaker returns to the sea, Tuesday brings 'a spar of timber worth thirty bob', 'Wednesday a half can of Swedish spirits', while 'Thursday I got nothing, seaweed,| A whale bone, | Wet feet and a bad cough'.[69] While in 'Findings' Jamie covets whale bones and bird skulls, Mackay Brown's text only instils value in those items which can be actively recirculated in to the economy of the island. Regarding the organic flotsam as 'nothing', Mackay Brown's work is concerned only with the 'squandered cargo' of distinctly human orientated materials which, despite their shipwrecked status, retain a form of durability and use for the community. We see a similar contemplation of use-value throughout 'Findings' where Jamie's interaction with island landscapes 'choked with plastic' prompts her to think about 'what we'd valued enough to keep'.[70] Listing the items she chooses to 'take away from Ceann Iar: a bleached whale's scapula, not the door of the plane; an

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[66] Marland, p.125.
[67] Jamie, *Findings*, p.49.
[68] Ibid, pp.66-7.
[69] George Mackay Brown, *The Collected Poems of George Mackay Brown* (London: John Murray, 2005), p.123.
[70] Jamie, *Findings*, p.59, p.66.

orb of quartz, not a doll's head'[71] Jamie highlights the cultural and economic devaluation of materials that, without use, are abandoned as waste mater.

Much like Hadfield's rockpools, Jamie's shorelines are filled with a range of organic and synthetic materials. Across the course of the essay Jamie encounters and collects a multitude of things:

> Here in the rain, with the rotting whale and the wheeling birds, the plastic floats and turquoise rope, the sealskins, driftwood and rabbit skulls [...] Here was a baby's yellow bathtime duck, and here the severed head of a doll. The doll still had tufts of hair, and if you tilted her she blinked her eyes in surprise.[72]

Unlike Mackay Brown's valuing of human orientated items that, having endured the seas, can be recirculated into the island economy, Jamie's list of materials treasures those items that bear the trace of natural erosion and decomposition, 'transformed by death or weather'.[73] While the opening half of the essay addresses the valuation of organic materials in the form of whale bones, quartz orbs, and bird skulls, the finding of the plastic doll's head with her uncanny 'sea-blue blinking' eyes, prompts Jamie to reconfigure her valuation of materials: 'I wondered if it's still possible to value that which endures, if durability is still a virtue, when we have invented plastic, and the doll's head with her tufts of hair and rolling eyes may well persist after our own have cleaned down to bone'.[74] Familiar, yet different, the doll's head invokes a sense of the uncanny that Timothy Morton has suggested 'is essential for thinking the ecological thought' in which '[h]ere is shot through with *there*'.[75] As ecological interconnectedness dissolves 'the barrier between "over here" and "over there"' it does not produce sameness, but rather encourages us to recognise 'that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge'.[76] In 'Findings', ultimately it is not the fragile gannet's head that prompts the deepest sense of ecological connection, alterity, and material relation, but the doll's head. As Marland suggests, the closing juxtaposition of the doll's severed head with the gannet's skull 'dramatises the more dissonant kinship of plastic

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[71] Ibid, p.60.
[72] Ibid, p.60.
[73] Ibid, p.66.
[74] Ibid, p.69, p.67.
[75] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), italics in original, p.53.
[76] Ibid, p.39.

materials – the sense that they emanate from the human world but are also strange strangers to us in ways we should acknowledge'.[77]

In a similar form to Derek Mahon's 'The Apotheosis of Tins', in 'Findings' plastic waste is imbued with its 'own fascination, the shampoo and milk cartons, the toilet-cleaner bottles we could turn over with our feet. Though the colours were faded and the labels long gone, we knew their shapes, had seen them ranked in supermarkets'.[78] The turning over of the plastic bottles recalls the opening image of Jamie rolling the gannet's body with her foot. Unlike the gannet, which Jamie suggests most likely comes from Ailsa Craig, the numerous pieces of plastic waste with their eroded labels, and faded colours are eerily universal and placeless. As with Hadfield's invocation of the rubberduck, Jamie's fascination with the endurance of plastic toys adds a sinister element to these domestic materials, as objects previously used for play and entertainment become 'the stuff of horror and destruction; these effects are magnified by the strange jumbling of scale in which a tiny bit of plastic can wreak havoc on the ecologies of the vast seas'.[79]

The pervasiveness of plastic in 'Findings' also filters into Jamie's poetry collection, *The Overhaul* (2012) which includes several beachcombing poems that directly respond to the environmental significance of plastic waste. As Tobias Döring suggests, beachcomb poems are generally concerned with notions of 'recycling' and 'consequence', where fragments of 'literary flotsam' are incorporated and recirculated by poets into new forms of cultural production.[80] Importantly, Jamie's poems and essays are not only sensitive to the question of consequence and recycling provoked by encounters with plastic waste, but are also attentive to the cultural resonances of literary flotsam which circulate the archipelago. Invoking the dynamics of recycling and bricolage, several poems in *The Overhaul* invoke Hugh MacDiarmid's fascination with materials and concepts of Deep Time as explored in his poem 'On a Raised Beach'.[81]

[77] Marland, p.123.
[78] Jamie, *Findings*, p.59.
[79] Alaimo, p.130.
[80] Tobias Döring, 'Caribbean Beachcombers', *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*, ed. by Ursula Kluwick and Virginia Richter (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp.107-121, (p.116).
[81] Kathleen Jamie, *The Overhaul* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2012a).

Jamie's poem 'A Raised Beach' clearly plays with the resonances of MacDiarmid's text, where Jamie's use of parenthetical dashes in the opening line: '– of course, that's what –'[82] almost responds to MacDiarmid's paratactic opening: 'All is lithogenesis – or lochia'.[83] As we have seen, MacDiarmid's poem is fascinated with the material agency of stones, where the 'stupendous' geologies of the raised beach allow him to place the human figure within non-anthropocentric scales of deep time. Equally, Jamie's poem attends to questions of temporal scale, noting 'the same slight| ridges and troughs| as thousands of years ago| when the sea left'.[84] Yet Jamie's poem is less concerned with the seeming permanence of stone than with the 'retreating' action of the sea. Describing the beach as 'a sea' of 'grey| stones', Jamie's poem conjoins the flow of geologic and oceanic movements, where the seemingly inert and ancient grey beach is tied in the tidal force of the Moon which has 'turned to me| your dark side'.[85] The tidal pull of the Moon and the declaration that this beach 'a plain of stones', though seemingly static '*is* a sea',[86] highlights the vitality of geological matter and, like MacDiarmid's poem, emphasises the need to readdress our conception of material agency. The Moon's slow revolution coincides with the sea 'retreating with long stealth', bringing a dynamism to the seemingly inert beach that possesses 'not| a solitary flower, nor a single| blade of grass'.[87] Tied to the tidal forces of the ocean and the ebb and flow of life and death, Jamie's configuration of the raised beach as a place 'all with one face| accepting of the sun| the other ... Moon' reconfigures MacDiarmid's similar contemplation of life and death on the beach: 'Death is a physical horror to me no more.| I am prepared with everything else to share | Sunshine and darkness and wind and rain|And life and death bare as these rocks'.[88] For Jamie, the Moon and 'sea, dear mother', are aligned with the figure of her recently deceased mother who having '*sung to you | quite long enough*', has now departed.[89] Employing her favoured device of the unanswered rhetorical question, Jamie asks of the moon 'why have you turned to me| your dark side, why am I | examining these stones?'[90] The sense of abandonment incurred by Jamie's maternal Moon turning away, correlates with the realisation

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[82] Ibid, p.18
[83] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Complete Poems: Volume 1* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), p.422.
[84] Ibid, p.18.
[85] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.18.
[86] Ibid, italics in original, p.18.
[87] Ibid, p.18.
[88] MacDiarmid, p.428.
[89] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, italics in original, p.18.
[90] Ibid, p.18.

that the Moon is merely another bare stone whose silent, distant, unending revolutions highlights the relative transience of human life.

In 'The Beach', Jamie again invokes MacDiarmid's 'storm beach': 'Now this big westerly's| blown itself out, | let's drive to the storm beach'.[91] However, unlike MacDiarmid's solipsistic lyric Jamie's storm beach begins with an invitation, where the inclusive 'let's', brings a sense of community to the event of beachcombing. Continuing her recycling of MacDiarmid, 'The Beach' exhibits a fascination with materials, but instead of stones, Jamie turns her attentions to plastics. Examining the 'heaps of frayed| blue polyprop rope, | cut loose, thrown back at us –',[92] the poem echoes scenes from 'Findings' in which Jamie's encounter with the landscape covered in 'all this plastic – all these floats, bottles? All this plastic rope!' leads to her describe the islands as 'a 21st-century midden of aerosols and plastic bottles'.[93] The pervasiveness of plastic on the islands, conjures images of that other great floating plastic midden, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, one of several gyres located in the North Pacific Ocean. The Garbage Patch has often been described as an island but is in reality a continuously fluctuating accumulation of pelagic plastics which, due to circulating currents, concentrates waste into a smaller more visible area. As a result of photodegradation, the larger pieces of plastic debris fragment and break into smaller micro-plastics (in some zones micro-plastics outnumber plankton) and subsequently enter the food chain of marine mammals and sea creatures, and eventually, human beings. In 'The Beach' the surfacing and arrival of plastics onshore makes visible the un-locatable and otherwise invisible offshore and trans-corporeal movements of these marine pollutants. Interestingly, the encounter with waste in the poem – the image of heaped plastic rope that is 'cut loose' and forcibly 'thrown back at us' from the ocean – inverts the anthropocentric act of disposal.[94] Nondescript and severed from any identifying features, the rope that is expelled from the waves incites the speaker to pause in disbelief, or perhaps embarrassment, declaring 'us – | What a species –'.[95] The move from the singular lyrical 'I' to the inclusive taxonomy of 'species' broadens

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[91] Ibid, p.3.
[92] Ibid, p.3.
[93] Jamie, *Findings*, p.66.
[94] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.3.
[95] Ibid, p.3.

the scale of responsibility in the poem, acknowledging the culpability of the entire human race in the production and prevalence of plastic waste.

The opening and closing poems of *The Overhaul* present encounters with plastic waste that, instead of existing as inert matter, is problematically recycled into the 'natural' landscape of the coast. The heap of rope that is actively discharged from the sea in 'The Beach' supplants the usual heaps of seawrack that sit at the water's edge, and in the concluding poem 'Materials' we see how plastic waste has begun to be incorporated into the habitat of seabirds. Noting the 'scraps of nylon fishing net' that winds across the seascape, 'Materials' focuses on the few remaining gannets who in winter deign to 'pluck such rubbish from the waves, then | hie awa'| to colonies', embedding the strands into their 'swagged' nests.[96] Taking the place of 'threads of moss fleeing a nor'wester', the scraps of nylon are recycled into the dwelling sites and habitats of seabirds, becoming merely one more naturally occurring material within the coastal landscape.[97] Much like Hadfield's 'rubberduckery', Jamie's incorporative recycling of plastic materials into the 'natural' seascape produces a weird plastic wilderness that reflects the uncanny futurity of waste – the nests may decay over time, but the plastic will remain adorning the cliffs like a 'shoddy, bird-knitted vest'.[98] This naturalisation of seemingly unnatural substances prompts us to consider our very understanding of the term 'nature'.

Responding to the Romantic construction of 'nature as an object "over there" – a pristine wilderness beyond all trace of human contact', Morton proposes a new conception of 'ecology without nature', one which might allow us to overcome the forms of separation that 'nature as object' reinforces.[99] For Morton, the construction and communication of an idealised vision of 'nature' that is presented as a form of environmental 'reality writing' is harmful to the entire project of environmental aesthetics.[100] The environmental realities of 'Materials' with its unravelling plastic ropes, seabirds that 'mediate between sea and shore' and mossy threads which thread between 'an unsung cleft in a rock', weave a literal meshwork of entanglement that corresponds to Morton's

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[96] Ibid, p.50.
[97] Ibid, p.50.
[98] Ibid, p.50.
[99] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.125.
[100] Ibid, p.125.

declaration that we must render 'inoperative the belief that there is a "thing" called nature that is "out there"'.[101] In 'Materials', Jamie's intertwining human and nonhuman agencies together in one 'shoddy', 'cursory sketch', formed through the entanglement of 'Bird-bones, rope-scraps' and 'us!',[102] works to establish a sense of 'nature' that importantly includes those elements 'we'd rather do without'.[103]

This sense of entanglement runs through the formal movement of the collection itself wherein the opening line of the final poem – 'See when it all unravels – the entire project| reduced to threads of moss fleeing a nor'wester' – recalls images of 'The Beach' that is shaped by a 'big westerly' wind.[104] The frayed rope of the opening poem echoes in the unravelled 'project' of the closing sequence, giving an internal sense of circulation to the collection where the closing lines' assertion that 'Bird-bones, rope-scraps, a cursory sketch –but a bit o' bruck's| all we need to get us started, all we'll leave behind us when| we're gone',[105] alert us to the ethical questions that underpin environmental relation; namely with regards to questions of responsibility and culpability. Referring both to scraps of food and broken fragments, (or as Hadfield glosses it, 'rubbish'[106]), the closing suggestion that 'a bit o' bruck' is 'all we'll leave behind' simultaneously plays with the environmentalist idea of 'leave no trace behind' whilst also acknowledging that currently all humanity is likely to leave behind 'when we're| gone' is rubbish.[107] The final line of the poem brings an ominous recognition that the things we deign to leave behind will last for centuries, where 'birds, like good environmentalists, will "reuse" these bits of plastic [...] One bottle cap – such negligible bit of stuff to humans – may persist in killing birds and fish for hundreds (thousands) of years'.[108]

Jamie's encounter with plastics across *The Overhaul* and *Findings* effectively serves to 'decontextualise the island's remote location and its uninhabited state, and point to the links between seemingly disconnected places and actions that signify the global implications of the interconnectivity between

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[101] Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, p.183.
[102] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.50.
[103] Kathleen Jamie, *Sightlines* (London: Sort of Books, 2012b), p.36.
[104] Ibid, p.50.
[105] Ibid, p.50.
[106] Hadfield, *Byssus*, p.69.
[107] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.50.
[108] Alaimo, p.130.

the human and the non-human'.[109] Within her poems, it is not only history, language, and song that surfaces through an engagement with saltwater space, but plastic pollutants that alert us to global scales of environmental crisis. Taking the place of biodegradable bones, shells, and stones, both Hadfield's and Jamie's poetic plastics narrate a global story of environmental crisis. Their interaction with the seemingly benign and quotidian materials that are instilled with an uncanny malevolence (rubber ducks, plastic rope, punctured footballs), broadens the range of their localist attentions to engage a sense of planetarity whereby encounters with the ocean's 'storied matter' prompts them to think on wider spatial and temporal scales, and further enacts a reconsideration of what the term 'nature' means.

Indeed within the logic of late-capitalism, ideas of 'nature' are increasingly attached to abstract systems of global commerce whereby the continued use of aqueous metaphors used in relation to the global capitalist system (flows, currents, streams, offshore etc.) effectively naturalises the flow of capital lending 'materiality to a world that becomes more ethereal every day'.[110] As noted in the preceding chapter, for Patricia Yaeger, 'an oceanic ecopoetics will [...] have to start with the recognition that our relation to the sea is always already technological' and secondly that we 'have to amend our definition of ecosystems to acknowledge that late capitalist seas are becoming more techno than ocean'.[111] Noting the 'dense amalgams of thrown-away plastic' that choke the world's oceans to the extent that 'sea trash is as ordinary as plankton' Yaeger remarks how within a world formed through the 'fleshy entanglement of sea creatures, sea trash, and machines [...] the singular *nature* becomes a speech impediment or stumbling block'.[112] Within both Jamie's and Hadfield's seascapes, the flow of marine materials and modern capital intermix to form a sense of the ocean as a 'biotic world or swarm of agencies', [113] producing an understanding of nature that includes those objects and perspectives that we so often choose to ignore. In making plastics not only visible, but audible, both Hadfield and Jamie work to counteract the construction of the ocean as an offshore, invisible, site of disposal

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[109] Deborah Lilley, 'Kathleen Jamie: Rethinking the Externality and Idealisation of Nature', *Green Letters*, 17.1, (2013), 16-26, (p.25).

[110] Patricia Yaeger, 'Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons', *PMLA*, 125.3 (2010), 523-545, (p.523).

[111] Ibid, pp.526-7.

[112] Ibid, italics in original, p.528.

[113] Ibid, p.535.

and extraction, and further acknowledge the ways in which looking to the ocean can aid us in reconceiving the very notion of 'nature'.

ii.   Island Constellations: Coast, Cosmos, and Eco-cosmopolitanism

In looking to the ocean, the territorial and bioregional scales of relation that we have encountered across previous chapters, are actively drawn into relation with wider scales of attention that rove between the 'cosmic and the regional'.[114] For Carmen Flys-Junquera, the ability to mediate between the local and the global is one of the key elements of cosmopolitan subjectivity in which:

> place becomes the locus of multiple tensions. Place is perceived through multiple sensitivities, allegiances and identities; it is felt and experienced by both the senses and the intellect, in its material physicality, as an emotional referent, and also through its cultural intertextuality; any perception is submitted to comparison and juxtaposition to other experiences in very different but equally familiar contexts [...] for those with a sense of place there is always an openness to appreciate the strangeness and diversity of a new place, an attentiveness to the stories of inhabitation to the history inscribed on the land, a concern with both ecology and evolution, an acceptance of circumstance, contingency, and the complex mixing and layering of the local and global.[115]

In the work of Jamie and Hadfield, the coastal dimensions of their works are juxtaposed with wider cosmic scales that combine in the formation of a sense of community that is constantly created and reworked in line with the nonhuman realm. The resultant sense of dynamic interconnection and multiplicity that arises from poetic encounters with marine space prompts us to question the ways Jamie and Hadfield present watery spaces as sites of cosmopolitan potential, and further interrogate the extent to which their poems position saltwater as a conduit to consider not only local ecological encounters, but global ecological crises.

Jamie's work has been noted for its attentive acoustic practice and bioregional tendencies, however when these intimate landscapes become punctuated by invasive materials from distant places – whether it be in the shape of plastics or rhododendrons – the sustained cultivation of purely bioregional

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[114] Gairn, p.81.

[115] Carmen Flys-Junquera, 'A Cosmopolitan Sense of Place', *Spaces in-between: Cultural and Political Perspectives on Environmental Discourse,* ed. by Mark Luccarelli and Sigrid Bergman (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2014) pp.51-73, (p.57).

sensibilities becomes strained. For Mitchell Thomashow, the experience of globalisation brings with it pressing questions for the bioregional imagination; how can a mode of thought that is attentive to the specificities of local watersheds 'accommodate the bifurcation of economic globalization and political decentralization, the instability and dislocation of ecological and cultural diasporas, the elusiveness of pluralistic identities and multiple personas?'[116] As Thomashow suggests, rather than perceiving place-based reinhabitation as a narrow and restricted sensibility, bioregionalism presents:

> an alternative to fragmentation by suggesting the construction of an ecological identity [...] of orbits and connections that integrate mind and landscape, self and ecosystem, psyche and planet, without worrying about the paths not taken, but focusing instead on the tasks at hand—cultivating mindfulness about human/nature relationships.[117]

As local places can no longer be thought of without recognising their entanglements within wider patterns of economic, ecological and cultural circulation, for Thomashow the bioregional necessarily becomes cosmopolitan. As Iain Galbraith has suggested within post-devolutionary Scottish literature, the question of cosmopolitanism has come to the forefront of critical and creative writing in Scotland, aiding in the production of 'culturally and ecologically sensitive contexts for global citizenship'.[118] Such texts express a fascination with local concerns, languages, and places as mediated by relationships with other places beyond the confines of the nation-state, allowing such work 'to make connections beyond [the nation], be they with England or Europe or North America or Afghanistan, or be they with realms which are non-human'. [119] Noting how Hadfield's attention to 'the weather and vowels of her adopted Shetland home are pervious to heterogeneous localities and idioms, bird-calls, rain and sparkling northern light', Galbraith argues that Hadfield's work often presents 'a breathtaking spatial and temporal arc from local landscape, via the planetary, to a galactic rush'.[120] Through repeated references to satellites, constellations, and celestial bodies that are placed in relation to the material seascapes and specific

[116] Mitchell Thomashow, 'Towards a Cosmopolitan Bioregionalism', *Bioregionalism*, ed. by Michael Vincent MicGinnis (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.121-133, (p.121).
[117] Ibid, p.124.
[118] Iain Galbraith, 'Scottish Poetry in the Wider World', *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, ed. by Peter Robinson (Oxford: OUP, 2013), pp.558-576, (p.560).
[119] Kathleen Jamie, interviewed by Attilla Dosa, 'Kathleen Jamie: More Than Human', *Beyond Identity,* ed. by Attila Dósa (New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp.135-147, (p.139).
[120] Galbraith, p.562.

localities of the archipelago, both Jamie's and Hadfield's works respond to sensations of familiarity and difference that emerge from the local/global dialectic. Through their material encounters with migrant ecologies that flow in from the global ocean, their work presents place as an assemblage of processes and connections that emerge between, across and through the human and the nonhuman. What becomes central to their respective practice, is the ways in which encounters with celestial objects and marine materials incites a new sense of community and 'nature' that importantly includes the nonhuman – whether it be in the form of ocean plastics, sporous fungi, or Galilean moons.

As we have seen, Hadfield often uses her seascapes as a means of exploring the changing relationships and scales of encounter between local and global dimensions of place. Her poems are at once telescopic and magnifying, engaging a lyrical perspective that roves from 'the shore' to 'the Djub' (an old Shetlandic term for the sea) as 'green as ten green bottles' 'twinkling like space-trash' to a wider 'galactic roar'.[121] Her works engage the fluidity and interconnectedness of the global ocean as a means of accessing a burgeoning planetarity that is activated through her poetic movements between a 'vivid and intimate sense of the local, a shared heritage of memories, traditions and meanings' and a continued gesturing towards wider transoceanic networks.[122] As Hadfield has noted, while her practice is marked by a 'tendency to go deeper in a small area than range widely', the act of going deeply does not prohibit an openness to wider vistas and a sensitivity to 'something coming from elsewhere'.[123] Likening her writing process to the lives of plankton or limpets, a creature that 'covers a fair bit of territory, grazing, but always return[ing] to the same footprint on the rock that perfectly fits the contours of its shell',[124] her work is porous yet distinctly place-based, engaging a range of lenses, scales and levels in the search for meaningful connections between the human and nonhuman. While the retreat into deep localities is central to her practice, in remaining open to the arrival of 'something coming from elsewhere', Hadfield's poems remain sensitive and responsive to alterity. Her shifting scales of attention correspond to a broader sense of global

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[121] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place,* p.41.
[122] Gairn, p.83.
[123] Hadfield, 'Interview', (para 2 of 33).
[124] Ibid, (para 4 of 33).

consciousness that is evident through not only her deep engagements with local places, myth and language, but her continued navigation of the night-sky.

Across *Nigh-No-Place,* Hadfield presents a constant mediation of the domestic and the galactic where poems such as 'Canis Minor' transform the constellations overhead into the form of a dog with 'haunches like a telescope'.[125] Within 'Canis Minor' the overhanging 'stars […] rising through peacock dust' are grounded by the quotidian image of the dog who 'scours his butt and licks my elbow' forging a direct link between the intricacies of home and the wider universe.[126] The opening poem of the titular 'Nigh-No-Place' sequence, 'witless| aa', similarly mediates domestic and planetary dimensions where a young child playing on the kitchen floor becomes a 'triangulation point that punctuates infinity':

<div align="center">

witless
as the lass who went with Krishna
and beheld in his throat
the complete universe,
I would heft into your lap
my daughter, our *mootie* –
the triangulation point that punctuates infinity;
the diapered Daruma doll, wobbly but equilateral;
cosmic collateral, pyramidal, just *apparently* small;
hair like loose voltage – stray and sparky straw;
grey-eyed, green-eyed, blue-eyed, pie-eyed,
my Macchu Picchu of the Kitchen Floor.
Now, will we visualise
the world? Cell by cell,
Saturn to Sedna, Hells to Valhalla
this and those universes,
aa'

</div>

[127]

The scale of the poem zooms in and out moving 'Cell by cell | Saturn to Sedna' opening the homely space of the 'Kitchen Floor' to wider external 'universes'. The impressive dimension of 'the complete universe' succinctly contained within the compact 17-line poem alerts us to the ways in which Hadfield's tendency to 'go deeper in a small area' reveals such intimate places to be 'just *apparently* small'. Her fascination with macro scales of encounter thus does not prohibit her cellular poetry from accessing grander frames of narrative that are 'cosmic collateral,

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[125] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.13.
[126] Ibid, p.13.
[127] Ibid, p.30.

pyramidal'. The planetary scale of the poem is not only invoked through grandiose cosmological language, but through encounters with foreign spaces and materials such as the traditional Japanese 'Daruma doll', the heights of 'Macchu Picchu', the halls of 'Valhalla', and the sacred figure of 'Krishna'. These foreign entities bring a cosmopolitan edge to the work, reflecting Hadfield's own position as 'an outsider with insider knowledge'[128] whose repeated attempts to find a 'native home' often relies on 'sojourns in a sensuous salmagundi of localities and soundscapes'.[129] Through her interest in the dynamism of place, language, and ecology her work advances a cosmopolitan disposition that corresponds to 'a way of engaging with the world that is open to diversity [that is also] a type of practice or competence, the ability to make one's own way into other cultures through listening, observing, intuiting, reflecting, and participating in many worlds'.[130] Importantly for Hadfield, these 'many worlds' include that of the nonhuman.

Her poems attempt to engender a progressive and active concept of place through an engagement with different scales and modes of relation. Working in the style of concrete poetry, the construction of 'witless| aa' accentuates the ability of Hadfield's poetic eye/I to mediate several scales of attention at once. Moving inwards and outwards from the domestic to the galactic, the typographic form of 'the fat poem' is a conscious construction that 'hangs like a planet in the outer| inner space of the white page'.[131] The concrete tradition arises at several moments within both *Nigh-No-Place* and her most recent collection *Byssus* (2014), and aligns with Hadfield's understanding of ecopoetry as a practice that responds to questions of knowledge, control, and communication:

> The white space can mean all kinds of things, of course, but for me it often does represent those wild spaces. Air or moor. Not suggesting that it's a negative landscape, of absence, but that we might not have complete control or understanding over that landscape. So the white holes in a poem are sometimes for me the white holes in my understanding or knowledge of a place; or it's a contrasting landscape or contrasting dynamic across which a bird might fly and call, like the 'peewit' in the poem 'Burra Grace'.[132]

[128] Baker, p.34.
[129] Galbraith, p.563.
[130] Flyns-Junquera, p.55.
[131] Hadfield, 'Interview', (para 7 of 33).
[132] Ibid, (para 7 of 33).

Hadfield's use of deliberate blank spaces, in a similar mode to Jamie's use of rhetorical and unanswerable questions, recognises the limitations of poetry as a form that is able to sustain or enable ecological communion with the nonhuman world. For Hadfield, the absence of knowledge is as vital as its presence, where the abundancy of white space reflects the (in)ability of the poem to form a meaningful dialogue with the nonhuman realm. Suggesting that instead of approaching 'nature as a microcosm of the human world [...] we maybe meet it as we do people from other cultures. We ask each other about our likenesses and our differences',[133] her use of blank space highlights her own gaps in knowledge, accentuating the spaces between the human and the nonhuman in a way that sustains a sense of alterity in which the natural world is both known and unknown, familiar and yet distinctly other.

This dynamic of absence and presence arises across Hadfield's Burra poems, a series of lyrics written in response to the island of Burra in Shetland. Like 'witless| aa' these poems rely heavily on textual and typographic play where the poem 'Burra Moonwalk' navigates the 'split or dual nature of the geographical landscape from which the title of the poem is taken: Burra, in Shetland, is comprised of two islands that have a collective name'.[134] In the poem the verses are aligned in two columns which can be read both vertically and horizontally:

the mumbling wind	the lapwings tumbling
the daffodil wheelhouse	March like a lion
the fancy moon	the coarse crumb, Sirius
the chapped lower lip	the Fair Isle bonnet[135]

As the poem progresses, the tight stanzas begin to fragment, with the distance between the columns broadening as the lines stretch to fill the space of the page:

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[133] Ibid, (para 12 of 33).
[134] Heather Yeung, *Spatial Engagement with Poetry* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p.71.
[135] Hadfield, *Nigh-No-Place*, p.32.

the asteroidal island   the historical Raeburn

                    the ducked head   the uncan neighbours

                    the space wave

                    the wind-thieved swans   the sieved sunlight

                    tungsten Sirius

                                                        the honeyed windows of home
                                                                                    136

The scattered lines mimic the languid leaps and bounds of zero-gravity movement as the poetic eye hopscotches across 'the fancy smalls' of the 'asteroidal island' from 'the Fair Isle bonnet' to a quick 'glinder at Foula'.[137] In 'Burra Moonwalk' we encounter shifting scales of attention similar to those found within Hadfield's rockpool poems, where the topography and biology of the islands are juxtaposed with celestial objects above: 'the fancy moon| the coarse crumb Sirius'.[138] The image of the 'crumb' is invoked in a later Burra poem, 'Burra Grace', in which the poetic speaker is seen to 'bide on this bit| of broken biscuit – ', where the 'broken biscuit' refers again to the split topography of Burra.[139] Yet within the poems, the islandscape is not shown to be fully separated. Across both poems the discrete geographies of East and West Burra are connected by the flight of 'lapwings tumbling', or the 'sobbing wimbrel' whose closing call of 'peew-t,| peew-t || peew-t,| peew-t' flows across the blank white page, forging a mobile connection between the two seemingly separate page halves.[140] Importantly it is not only the migratory ecologies of the island's wildlife that bridges the 'broken biscuit' of Burra, but the fluvial images of 'dreeping washing' and 'drowning lace' that connect the islands through the flow of weather and materials.[141]

For Heather Yeung, Hadfield's 'vocal and textual play around the figure of the enunciating I/eye [reveals how] the place (or space) inhabited by the poem's enunciating I/eye is not a stable, Heideggerian grounding'.[142] As we have seen, the

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[136] Ibid, p.33.
[137] Ibid, p.33.
[138] Ibid, p.32.
[139] Ibid, p.52.
[140] Ibid, p.32, pp.52-3.
[141] Ibid, p.33.
[142] Yeung, p.75.

lack of a stable, Heideggerian grounding, is a major feature of modern Scottish and Irish poetics which present the seas, islands and littoral landscapes of the archipelago as their primary points of ecological encounter. Rejecting the idea of a stable grounding, Hadfield's poems do not produce a sense of 'static place, but each instead highlights place as motion'.[143] In tracing the material connections that form across island spaces through lines of bird flight, puffball spores, or weird weather, Hadfield's work aligns with the sense of place outlined by Doreen Massey, in which place is viewed as an active process, 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus'.[144] Across her collections a sense of place is invoked through the always mobile and attentive poetic eye/I as it moves across the changing environments of shorelines, cliff edges, and kitchens. By engaging these different frames of encounter and connection, Hadfield's mobile poetics draws from and contributes to an understanding of the archipelago as an active, orbital, constellation of 'fluid cultural processes, sites of abstract and material relations of movement and rest, dependent upon changing conditions of articulation or connection'.[145]

Across her collections, the continued accumulation of material relations in the form of myth, language, and ecological matter helps her to define a sense of place. We see this most overtly in the sequence titled 'Definitions', written after the American poet Jerome Rothenberg whose coinage of 'ethnopoetics' in the 1960s refers to 'a way of talking about poetry, both the practice and the theory of poetry, as it exists in different cultures, with a certain emphasis on cultures without writing or in which oral poetry and poetics seemed to be dominant'.[146] Emerging at the intersection between poetry and anthropology, Rothenberg presents ethnopoetics as a movement that is interested in the linguistic, performative, and oral dimensions of 'primitive' cultures whose oral narratives can be interpreted as verbal art. In 'Definitions' we see the ethnopoetic dimensions of Hadfield's work, as her sequence of fourteen definition poems play with the ways in which the oral dimensions of poetry, and the relationship

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[143] Baker, p.33.

[144] Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', *Marxism Today*, June (1991), 24-29, (p.28).

[145] Jonathan Pugh, 'Island Movements: Thinking with the Archipelago', *Island Studies Journal*, 8.1 (2013), 9-24, (p.11).

[146] Jerome Rothenberg, interviewed by Chad Faries and Brent Gohde, 'The Cream City Interview, Part One: Ethnopoetics, Artaud & Cruelty, McClure & Chomsky, Paul Celan, etc.', *PoemsandPoetics* [online], (4 January 2009) <http://poemsandpoetics.blogspot.com/2009/01/cream-city-interview-part-one.html> [accessed 09.05.2017].

between words and place, can drastically alter the meaning and form of language. In 'The Mackerel' the fish becomes a mixture of contradictions, its skin 'as supple as the| skin on boiled milk and the eye a hard, roundel pane. It is| or it isn't wormy, it tastes of hot blood and earth […] It tastes of steak, it tastes of cream'.[147] In 'The Orange' the image of an orange at the sea shore 'Bloated, swollen with sea-water' becomes a 'boast, fraught with salt syrup' though it is nothing more than a 'round real orange| stinking of orange and the sea; stinking of cologne', 'It is über, aaber' (aaber meaning keen and eager).[148] In 'The Puffin' the seabird becomes 'A tangled marionette, strings of jerked sinew' that is both a symbol of, and signified by, 'Summer's end, the derelict burrow, a ring of dirty down. An| arabesque of smelly bone, meat for flies and the darling| turf' and in 'The Waxcaps' the scatter of red capped mushrooms across a field invokes the image of someone 'carried across this field, bleeding steadily'.[149] Across this sequence, language and place continually inform one another through an 'An ambiguous rustling',[150] where the meaning of place can only be understood by 'listening in'. Much as the 'sea returns whatever you give it, more so, realler',[151] across this sequence Hadfield transforms seemingly known and familiar objects – a cat, brisket, mackerel, a pig, puffballs a puffin, an orange – into forms that are familiar yet altered, reflecting the idiosyncrasy of both language and place through unexpected and refreshing juxtapositions. The transformative potential of the ocean reflects Hadfield's understanding of poetry, where the sea, much like the poem, is able to take familiar coordinates and points of relation and turn them into something strange and invigorating: 'You hear the waves breaking but| can't see them. You shrink down into yourself as you reach the edge:| getting your head around where you are. It's marvellous. It's aweful. It is| always on'.[152]

In *Byssus* this sense of place as formed through assemblage and interconnection is invoked through the trope of the bursting, sporous, puffball (*Vascellum pratense*). In 'The Puffballs', Hadfield describes the fungus as 'irregular pearls', 'blowing bubbles', a 'white roe;| the flesh that fries| to a savoury foam'.[153] The use of oceanic language continues throughout in the poem, aiding

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[147] Hadfield, *Byssus*, p.35.
[148] Ibid, p.36.
[149] Ibid, p.37.
[150] Ibid, p.37.
[151] Ibid, p.36.
[152] Ibid, p.36.
[153] Ibid, p.27.

the diasporic action of the puffballs whose 'anchor and bowls| forever brewing buboes' will soon spew forth a mass of spores from its 'blackened blowhole'.[154] Hadfield's lines attempt to trace the movement of the spores, where the diasporic action of the puffball is traced in the form of the poem:

<pre>
              its anchor and bowls
           forever brewing buboes, it slips
         blackened blowhole; toxic stoma. A toff
         a pocked sphincter;
       this gassy urn of moolah. Its gob gapes:
    their yellow teeth this amph of moorit smoke,   across
       of blinding business. Sheep assay with
          nova it squats, rocking its stoor
             A faux pas, unsuper

                          the

                 cliff-

                    top

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                                                    its

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                              s   155
</pre>

The bound image of the circular puffball, etched in concrete-style typography, opens out to a 'peripatetic' poetic form.[156] The scattering letters spewing forth from the 'blackened blowhole', the 'pocked sphincter', encourages the reader's eye to dance in search of the final lines that drift across the pages. In 'Puffballs', this diasporic action continues where the fungus is imbued with an inherently cosmopolitan character. Described as 'Mork eggs -| you Finns, you eyeless | Dia de Meurtos| skulls' the puffballs, much like the contents of the rockpools in *Nigh-No-Place*, engage different cultural coordinates of place beyond the confines of the Shetland landscape.[157] This sense of cosmopolitanism is extended through the communicative action of the puffballs who 'sing to blurt| your spore-mass| from your ragged| moue!' their cells caught by 'the wind' are 'broadcast' across the ocean 'like smoke| like spice'.[158] Able to move across both land and sea, Hadfield

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[154] Ibid, p.28.
[155] Ibid, pp.28-9.
[156] Ibid, p.31.
[157] Ibid, p.31.
[158] Ibid, p.31.

combines oceanic and terrestrial terms in her contemplation of the puffballs; possessing both a sphincter and a blowhole, the land-bound fungi is also a sea-going cetacean. Noting how its growth is akin to '*Löragub*' (the Shetlandic term for 'sea-haze, expanding foam') on the verge of going 'nova',[159] the poem is fuelled by the dynamics of dispersal in which the bursting image of the puffball mediates the poetic movement between intimate local environs and wider planetary scales of connection.

Placed at the shifting edges of the shoreline, continually punched off-balance, or precariously lying at a cliff edge, Hadfield's poetic I/eye encourages us to alter our perspective when engaging island places. Her lyrical works are 'built for flexibility in a coarse| sea' and present the archipelago as a continually shifting and responsive site in which the 'ruddy|conglomerate' of global discourses are fragmented and filtered into local scales of place-attachment.[160] Roaming between stars and sand her poems are 'written out within a planetary context and yet this context is not ignorant of moments of solitude in private places – the domestic space, familial relations, and idiosyncratic and regional inflections'.[161] The diasporic and fluid dimensions of her poems emphasize a form of place that is not static, and further reminds us that while each island has its own particular and specific topographical form, they are always linked by the ecological migration of human figures, non-human creatures, and vibrant matter. Across her works puffball spores float in on the breeze, sea life becomes a 'violet nebula stranded and spun| by the current', and beaches are linked by the arrival of ocean plastics.[162] Importantly it is not that Hadfield's planetary scales of attention seek to speak for *all* planetary subjects (both human and non-human); rather her positioning of the dynamic between island and ocean alerts us to the fact that archipelagic space is by its very nature inherently linked to wider discourses and global dimensions of environmental crisis.

Across *The Overhaul*, Kathleen Jamie similarly attends to planetary dimensions of place through deeply intimate relationships with local sites that are drawn into dialogue with the cultural and material flows of the global ocean. In her 'Five Tay Sonnets' sequence, Jamie engages the bioregion of the Tay in a

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[159] Ibid, p.31.
[160] Ibid, p.48, p.8.
[161] Bristow, p.8.
[162] Hadfield, *Byssus*, p.21.

way that is responsive to the dynamism of place. In the first sonnet '1. Ospreys', the combination of migratory birds and local language highlights the (bio)diversity of the Tay region. The ospreys' arrival 'from Senegal' is greeted by the local cadences of a 'teuchit storm' (a Scots term for a period of bleak wintery weather) and the whisper of local townsfolk: '*that's them, baith o' them, they're in*'.[163] In a similar mode to Hadfield's use of Shetlandic terms, Jamie's use of Scots accentuates a form of local place attachment that is further invoked through images of 'Scots pine', local roads 'the A9', and 'the trout-stocked loch'.[164] In '2. Springs', the Tay undergoes change as the dual action of the 'Full March moon and gale-force easters' combine, 'sucking and shoving the river' to the point that levees fail and the Tay's 'diesel corrupted water' flood into 'front-yards, coal-holes, garages| and *there's naethin ye can dae*'.[165] The storms' draining of the riverbed presents 'Evidence of an inner life' where the 'estuarine soul' of the river revealed in one poem to be an array of 'plastic trash and broken reeds, driftwood, bust TVs...| and a salmon', and in another a 'black, dripping, aboriginal' Bronze Age 'log-boat'.[166] Shaped by the seasonal arrival of migrant birds, the pull of tides, and bleak weather, the Tay is transformed into a place that is both deeply familiar and yet altered 'like the rest of us – gale-battered, winter worn, | half toppled away...'[167] Stretching the bounds of the sonnet form, the sequence tests the limits of how far you can bend and shape familiar forms before they become unrecognisable. Her interactions with the 'self-same riverside' that is 'all a mere two fields'| stumbling walk away' undergoes a similar sense of transformation, revealing both poetry and place to be an ever changing, dynamic process that is shaped by the incursion of elsewhere.[168]

In a similar mode to Hadfield, Jamie plays with different lenses of perspective, utilising domestic and galactic scales of relation as a means of engaging different notions of community and 'nature'. Across *The Overhaul* Jamie is drawn to the figure of the moon, a powerful object that is tied to the rhythmic cycles of tides and seasons. In 'The Study', the moon is invoked as a force of transformation and connection, where 'entering my room like a curiosity

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[163] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.5.
[164] Ibid, p.5.
[165] Ibid, italics in original, p.6.
[166] Ibid, p.6, p.8.
[167] Ibid, p.5.
[168] Ibid, p.5.

shop' the Moon draws 'the inescapable world | closer, a touch'.[169] The 'work-| worn face' of the Moon, peering in at the objects of celestial navigation 'a telescope mounted | on its tripod, the books, | the attic stair', 'unnerves' the poetic figure.[170] Imbued with the power of the 'gaze' the Moon inverts the objectifying observational dynamics of nature poems in which the human speaker is usually in the position of visual control; unsettling the power balance of the poem so it is no longer the poet who studies the Moon, but the inquisitive Moon who studies the speaker. Imbued with its own agency the moon is not a static celestial object, but is a slowly revolving, inquisitive creature that pours over the human figure for reasons unknown: 'why| query me?'[171] By imbuing the Moon with a curious gaze, Jamie reveals the domestic space of the study with its human inhabitant to be a natural space in which the poet sitting at their desk is no different from a deer 'browsing in a glade'.[172] The use of the term 'browsing' further forms a connection between the human and nonhuman, referring both to the act of 'feeding by animals on the young shoots, leaves and twigs of shrubs and trees' and the act of 'examining or looking through a book or books'.[173]

This sense of interconnection between nature and culture is repeated in 'Moon' in which the Moon is again depicted as a lively feminised figure who slips into Jamie's 'attic-room | as an oblong of light' to 'commiserate' her on the recent death of her mother.[174] In her essay collection *Sightlines* (2012) the essay 'Pathologies' traces the period including, and following, the death of Jamie's mother, prompting consideration of the false binaries of nature and culture, human and nonhuman. Examining her own understanding of nature, Jamie declares:

> 'It's not all otters and primroses'. There's our own intimate, inner natural world, the body's weird shapes and forms, and sometimes they go awry. There are other species, not dolphins arching clear from the water, but bacteria that can pull the rug from under us.[175]

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[169] Ibid, p.14.
[170] Ibid, p.14.
[171] Ibid, p.14.
[172] Ibid, p.14.
[173] 'Browsing, n.', *OED* [online], <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/23884?rskey=QUp2FX&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid> [accessed 26.07.2017].
[174] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.39.
[175] Jamie, *Sightlines*, p.24.

Much like her examination of uncanny plastics in 'Findings', for Deborah Lilley, Jamie's ensuing 'examination of nature on a visceral scale challenges conceptions of nature as external or stable: reminding us of the transience and temporality of its forms [...] In another way, by drawing attention to nature as disease, she highlights its "otherness"'.[176] In 'Pathologies' Jamie describes the experience of examining liver cells through a microscope as being:

> admitted into another world, where everything was pink. I was looking down from a great height upon a pink countryside, a landscape. There was an estuary, with a north bank and a south. In the estuary were wing-shaped river islands or sandbanks, as if at low tide. It was astonishing, a map of the familiar.[177]

The essay presents an understanding of ourselves and of the external world as being simultaneously 'nature', where the pink landscape of liver cells mapping onto the contours of the Tay, reveals the human body to be a similar ecosystem of interacting organs, cells and bacteria. By scaling 'up the absurdly small', interior landscapes of the self, Jamie highlights a sense of otherness and estrangement that permeates our understandings of the body, where her study of a 'bright blue' Giemsa stain (used to study pathogenic bacteria in human cells) prompts her to remark: 'So close to home, but people had landed on the moon before these things were discovered, free in the wilderness of our stomachs'.[178] Retaining a 'hawk-eye' view, the essay undertakes a series of 'little journeys to strange new shores [exploring] the Nature within. Nature we'd rather do without' forming a sense of interconnection between the unknown landscapes of the 'inner body' and the 'outer world'.[179]

In 'Moon' Jamie plays with the dynamic relationships between the internal and external, self and other, as the intimate domestic space of the attic is drawn into dialogue with the external night sky. As in 'The Study' the Moon possesses an inquisitive gaze that inverts the poetic subject's telescopic examination of the sky. Said to be harbouring 'some intention', the Moon slips into the domestic space and peers throughout the house, prompting a sense of openness and connection between the human and nonhuman.[180] Looking in at 'the bookcase | while other

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[176] Lilley, pp.21-2.
[177] Jamie, *Sightlines,* p.30.
[178] Ibid, p.30.
[179] Ibid, p.30.
[180] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.39.

objects | stirred, as in a rockpool', the active movement of the Moon awakens the vibrant materiality of seemingly inert objects as 'strings of beads in their green bowl gleamed, | the paper-crowded desk;| the books, too, appeared inclined| to open and confess'.[181] As with 'Pathologies', in 'Moon' Jamie remains conscious of the mediating influence of the poetic subject, where the Moon slipping in through the window trains its gaze upon 'a flower sketch | pinned on the far wall'.[182] The imprecise description of the 'flower sketch' highlights the problems evident in the construction of nature as an ideological form. Pinned to the 'far wall', the sketch retains the sense of distance that is used to produce such an image in the first place, in which 'nature' becomes something external to the human, 'an object "over there"'.[183] The description of the 'sketch' is also found in the closing poem 'Materials' where the poet's accumulation of 'Bird-bones, rope-scraps' join to form 'a cursory sketch' of the coastal environment.[184] In assembling such fragments in one frame, Jamie's practice becomes a means of connecting with the nonhuman realm through a 'composite picture of relations around a place or object' that attempts to counter 'the dominant "I"' of nature writing that often seeks to craft a direct representation of the world on the page.[185]

In 'The Galilean Moons', the visual dynamic of 'The Study' and 'Moon' reverts so that it is the poetic subject who puts their 'eye| to the eye-piece' to watch 'how a truth unfolds −| how the moonlets glide| out of their chance alignment'.[186] The unnerving lively presence of the Moon in 'The Study' and 'Moon' is transferred to the unsettled contemplation of the speaker's children who 'in just | one Jovian year'

> [...] will be gone
> uncommonly far, their bodies
> aglow, grown, talented −
> mere bright voice-motes
> calling from the opposite
> side of the world.[187]

A Jovian year refers to the time taken for Jupiter to complete its orbit (approx. 11.86 years), within that time the proximity of Jamie's children lying asleep in

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[181] Ibid, p.39.
[182] Ibid, p.40.
[183] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, p.125.
[184] Jamie, *The Overhaul*, p.50.
[185] Lilley, p.20.
[186] Jamei, *The Overhaul*, pp.34-5.
[187] Ibid, p.35.

another room is drawn out, their presence reduced to disembodied 'voice-motes' that call in from unknown foreign sites. As in 'The Study' the encounter with the moon, 'sequestered in the telescope lens', prompts Jamie to ponder questions of distance, scale and connection in relation to the intimate and personal world of the family.[188] The departure of the children is linked to the little 'moonlets' of Saturn's Galilean moons who slip into the eyeline of the poet 'like seed-pearls| or coy new talents'.[189] Both 'uncommonly close' and unreachably far, the description of the children who 'lie asleep, turning| as the Earth turns, growing| into their own lives, leaving me',[190] brings the domestic and the galactic together in a way that accentuates the interconnectivity between the human and the non-human. The orbital flow of the poem with its 'unalterable course', necessitates the creation of new networks of communication that can reach across the vast distances of time and space. Consequently, the poem becomes one of several 'long-sighted instruments' that tries to 'assure us' that ecologial interconnectivity is not inhibited by physical distance.[191]

Through her engagement with intimately local places in addition to the more disturbing forms of nature we'd 'rather do without', Jamie's works do not present a uniform or utopian form of eco-cosmopolitanism as defined by Ursula Heise. Through her constant flickering between conditions of unease and discomfort, Jamie's work responds to the felt otherness of both 'nature' and place, 'reminding us of the transience and temporality of its forms'.[192] As she has noted, Jamie's practice is marked by an openness to change: 'My poetry would be a dead thing if it couldn't retain its liquidity, couldn't change shape or direction'.[193] Formed through a range of material relations that are never entirely static in nature but instead possess a vibrant and migrant agency, Jamie presents a sense of place as a constellation of interconnected and interactive processes.

Across the work of Jamie and Hadfield the ocean and its littoral zones are positioned as multiscalar sites of encounter that enables the creation of a new poetics of relation between the human and the nonhuman, the local and global. Tracing the flow of marine materials and migrant ecologies, both poets thread a

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[188] Ibid, p.35.
[189] Ibid, p.34.
[190] Ibid, p.35.
[191] Ibid, p.34.
[192] Lilley, p.21.
[193] Kathleen Jamie, 'Author Statement', *British Council Website* [online], <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/kathleen-jamie> [accessed 09.05.2017].

commonality between island spaces whereby the local is caught within a matrix of movement that is not rooted to a static sense-of-place, but is open to an interactive, orbital, planetary assemblage of human and nonhuman relations. Their poetic seascapes respond to the economic commodification and control of oceanic space, while also presenting the ocean as a site of historical, cultural, and ecological interconnection. In so doing, their works display the means through which distinctly intimate and local places are also 'bases from which to engage in the international transaction of ideas between cultures and languages and from which both local and cosmopolitan conceptions of environment can emerge'.[194] By remaining open to the 'strangeness and diversity' of not only *new* places, but the places we call 'home',[195] both Hadfield and Jamie express a cosmopolitan subjectivity in which the poetic figure grapples with the fact that '[w]hat is closest to home is also the strangest'.[196] Through their sustained encounters with celestial objects, storied matter, and other '"strangers" – human others, animals, and other beings who wander into and out of the world' their respective poetic practice becomes a means of exploring the dynamism of place.[197]

In looking to the complex interplay of cosmic and marine materials, both Hadfield and Jamie explore the ways in which engaging the material world allows us to develop a sense of community that significantly includes the nonhuman in all its uncanny forms. Through their interactions with the lively human experiences and more-than-human agencies of the sea, their work invokes the ocean as a site of material, cultural and ecological relation that enables the production of new narratives of belonging and forms of community. Their works move respectively from coast to cosmos in a mode that 'finds resonances, pluralities, unlikely alliances, and shared spaces, and seeks out the alternative scales and perspectives with which we might be able to "coast" new ways of belonging, new ways of exploring a politics of common welfare'.[198] Their formal practice embraces a sense of cosmopolitanism that corresponds with the unknowable dimensions of place and 'nature' (whatever its shape), where their respective use of blank spaces, surprising juxtapositions, rhetorical questions, inversion of perspectives, or manipulation of familiar forms, retains and sustains

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[194] MacKenzie, p.208.
[195] Flyns-Junquera, p.57.
[196] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, p.40.
[197] Ibid, p.87.
[198] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2015), p.255.

the sense of alterity incited by planetarity. By actively embracing 'the physical quality of the sea' their poetry becomes a similarly 'mobile medium [that is] subject to the energies and forces of nature – the wind, jet streams, the extra-terrestrial gravitational pull of the moon'.[199] By remaining responsive to that which comes from 'elsewhere', their poetry reflects a developing ability, and need, to relate to other (non)human communities through a progressive practice that is open to (bio)diversity in all its forms. Linked by the flow of spores, sea-birds, marine materials and ocean currents, these poets position the archipelago at the forefront of a vibrant and vital environmental consciousness that acknowledges, celebrates, and cautions our relationships between poet, place, and planet.

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[199] Anderson and Peters, p.10.

CONCLUSION
An Oceanic Imaginary

In his recently published collection, *Angel Hill* (2017), Michael Longley dedicates the following poem, 'Inlet', to Kathleen Jamie:

> I have seen your face
> Among the pebbles
> In a Highland pool.
> Seeping into grass
> The sea at spring tide
> Leaves bladderwrack there.
> You will have noticed
> A planetary rose-hip
> Hanging from the sky,
> A slippery plank
> Bridging the inlet
> And the last of the sea,
> A mussel shell
> Filling up with rain
> As you reach the pool.[1]

The title of the poem reflects Longley's continued fascination with notions of attention, interconnection, and entanglement as the term 'Inlet' is defined variously as 1) 'Letting in, admission' 2) 'A way of admission; an entrance', and 3) 'A narrow opening by which the water penetrates into the land; a small arm of the sea, an indentation in the sea-coast or the bank of a lake or river; a creek'.[2] While the poem serves to highlight the resonances and affinities between his and Jamie's poetic works (the poem was first included in Faith Lawrence's specially edited collection *Kathleen Jamie: Essays and Poems on Her Work* (2015)), the piece also reflects Longley's understanding that poetry is itself akin to an inlet: a means of admitting entry not only into a place, but a particular mode of reading, writing, and engaging with place. Longley's 'Inlet' provides a key frame for the concluding reflections of this thesis, as it highlights not only the continued dialogue between Scottish and Irish poets, but also draws attention to questions

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[1] Michael Longley, *Angel Hill* (London: Random House, 2017), p.4.
[2] 'Inlet, n.', *OED* [online],
    <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/96192?rskey=LIToaw&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>
    [accessed 30.06.2017].

of scale, lyrical expression, entanglement, precariousness, culpability, belonging and relation that have been germane to each of the preceding chapters.

This project has in many ways sought to provide an inlet of its own: admitting entrance into new critical frameworks and modes of reading that are sensitive to conditions of environmental and political change. The preceding six chapters have examined the ways in which modern Scottish and Irish poets have increasingly turned towards archipelagic frameworks as a means of charting new relationships with one another, and the wider nonhuman world in a period marked by significant political and environmental crisis. Concerned with notions of scale, relation and connection, this body of work has displayed a marked proclivity for engaging littoral and oceanic spaces. Across the works of Hugh MacDiarmid, Louis MacNeice, Derek Mahon, Michael Longley, John Burnside, Kathleen Jamie, Jen Hadfield, Mary O'Malley and Moya Cannon, the watery spaces of archipelago are not figured as cultural or historical voids but are revealed to be key sites of ecological, historical and cultural relation. Their respective engagements with the oceans, islands and coastlines of the Atlantic archipelago have arguably aided in the production of an emergent oceanic imaginary within the contemporary literature of these isles.

Whether it be the decline of local bird, mammal and fish populations, local instances of water pollution, coastal erosion, and decay, or imagined futures where human waste pollutes not only the world's coastlines but the wider cosmos, the poets discussed within this thesis have exhibited a marked ability to access global scales of environmental decline through intimate engagements with local landscapes. Through their respective engagement with the spatial and temporal dimensions of the archipelago, the locational politics of ecology have been both embraced and challenged by the authors discussed here. The turn towards the archipelago has subsequently allowed for the exploration of new scales and modes of relation that extend beyond the purely terrestrial, domestic, or national allegiances of local communities and places. While these local territorial framings remain important, they exist in active relation to wider world systems, giving rise to a body of work that is 'local in context and global in

connection'. [3] As we have seen, for these poets thinking with the archipelago enables the consideration of alternative narratives of belonging and modes of relation that directly question 'entrenchments of national identity, reminding us that such moments exist within fluid constellations of identity and relation, constellations that are as diversely networked beyond the traditional borders of the nation-state as they are variegated within those borders domestically'. [4] Fuelled by experiences of migration and displacement, the archipelago provides the means through which to find and foster new resonances, alliances, and communities. At a time when nostalgic and reductive imperialistic discourses are on the rise across both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, the creative and cultural potential of the archipelago is increasingly valuable in its ability to produce new forms of relation that are plural, connective, and constantly on the move. Able to navigate multiple scales and forms of relation, from the bioregion to the biosphere, archipelagic literatures remind us of the inherent fluidity and plurality of place in an increasingly bordered world.

In addition to advancing discourses of multiplicity and interconnection that have arisen in the wake of political change, this body of work has also exhibited a distinct fascination with discrete issues of environmental crisis as mediated through a variety of geographic and temporal scales. Thus, while the turn to the archipelago allows for the articulation of a 'geography of inclusion, connection and openness', the constant attention to 'local distinctiveness and plurality' across this body of work ensures that the archipelago 'offers no utopian vision' of holistic unity, but instead fosters 'a politics of common welfare' that actively draws from the science and philosophy of ecology. [5] As this thesis has suggested, the literary turn towards the blue has 'come during a time when the uncertainty about our relationship to the places in which we live on this Atlantic archipelago has undergone considerable strain, both politically and environmentally'. [6] Across the preceding chapters watery spaces arise in various shapes and sizes, in the form of coasts, beaches, inlets, rivers, estuaries, seas and firths, each site providing a distinct frame for the poetic contemplation of the

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[3] Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith, 'Introduction', *Coastal Works: Cultures of the Atlantic Edge*, ed. by Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom and Jos Smith (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp.1-21, (p.4).
[4] Allen, Groom and Smith, p.10.
[5] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh: EUP. 2015), pp.254-5.
[6] Allen, Groom and Smith, p.4.

'evolving and sometimes contrasting, experiences of time, space and motion' that currently shape narratives of belonging in Scottish and Irish literature.[7] While this project has attempted to examine a wide range of literary responses to the archipelago, it has necessarily restricted its analysis of archipelagic poetics to a small cluster of Scottish and Irish authors whose works have expressed an overt fascination with the ways in which poetry is 'alive to our reckoning of landscapes and spaces [and] mindful of planetary breakdown'.[8] While the work of these authors may be familiar to some, their works have only recently begun to garner overt ecocritical interest, and have rarely been discussed in a comparative form. This project has sought to address this neglected interface between Scottish and Irish literary studies. The archipelagic dimensions of modern English and Welsh poetry currently lie beyond the current scope of this project; however, it must be noted that the work of poets such as Ted Hughes, Alice Oswald, Robert Minhinnick, Christine Evans and Karen McCarthy Woolf also display an intense fascination with place as directed through engagements with watery space. This project does not present an exhaustive study of archipelagic literatures, nor does it mean to. Rather this study provides a key admission into new dimensions of ecocritical scholarship that take our multiform relationships with both land and sea, the green and the blue, as its central concerns.

Concerned with notions of being and dwelling within a more than human world, the collections and poems discussed across this thesis have frequently turned towards the ocean, and in particular the littoral zones, in the course of contemplating the often complex relationship between cultural practice and the environment. Understood as a 'kind of interface' between the 'domestic and international',[9] green and blue, local and global, human and nonhuman, the littoral zone has emerged as a key site of poetic fascination across this thesis. Serving as a powerful metaphorical trope for the exploration of liminal or peripheral identities, and as a potent space through which to consider environmental change, the littoral zone emerges as a definable cultural, economic, and material space that has the power to shape the way we live in, and relate to, the wider nonhuman world. The poetic turn towards watery space necessarily complicates the critical field of ecocriticism and ecopoetics as

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[7] Ibid, p.4.
[8] Tom Bristow, *The Anthropocene Lyric*: *An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.13.
[9] Allen, Groom and Smith, p.5.

understood in relation to their 'etymological root[ing] in the Greek *oikos*, meaning "home" or "dwelling," the prefix "eco-" indicates *where we live*'.[10] While this concept of ecology has proved invaluable to ecopoetic concerns with not only *where* but *how* we live, the often terrestrial and anthropocentric dimensions of this formulation begin to blur when we realise that this 'home (this place, this body, this time, this planet) is composed largely of water'.[11] For the poets considered here relationships with the sea lie at the heart of their encounter with place, and encourages a form of writing that asks us 'to think of these nations, regions, localities, and people as less firmly determined by the ground beneath their feet than by the challenge that connecting with one another has represented'.[12] In a world shaped by colonial violence, economic decline, and environmental crisis, this turn away from 'the ground beneath' is perhaps unsurprising. Without a stable notion of ground upon which to forge connections, the poets within this study have exhibited the need to reformulate the parameters of ecopoetic and ecocritical discourses that take notions of unity, harmony and stability as central to their aesthetic and ethical project. Looking to the ocean and its related watery spaces necessitates the production of new concepts of dwelling and belonging that respond to conditions of displacement, estrangement, and difference. As Chen et al. suggest while the prefix 'eco' signals towards familiar or comfortable dimensions of home and belonging, the inclusion of water within the ecocritical imagination can help to accentuate the ways in which 'homes can be radically uncanny, and [that] "coming home" can be fraught with risk, uncertainty and ghosts'.[13] For the poets examined here, it is not merely that watery spaces are included within their respective works, but that water is shown to both shape and constitute our conception of both nature and culture. Through their engagement with the watery dimensions of place, their poems reveal how notions of harmony, organic rootedness, and stability are incompatible for those persons for whom language and place are not certain. In looking to water, their works not only emphasise the mobility of figures that move between and through places, but reveal the inherent mutability of place itself.

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[10] Cecelia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, 'Introduction: Towards a Hydrological Turn?', *Thinking With Water,* ed. by Cecelia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press 2013), pp.3-22, (p.14).
[11] Ibid, p.14.
[12] Allen, Groom and Smith, p.8.
[13] Chen, MacLeod and Neimanis, p.14.

The writers examined in this study are not only concerned with exploring the experience of environmental or political crisis, but are frequently attuned to the crisis of representation itself. While the focus of their works vary widely their collections share a certain anxiety with regards to the limitations of poetry (and language more generally) in the Anthropocene. Their contention is not only that the experience of the Anthropocene poses challenges to poetry as a medium of representation, but that poetry itself must do more to accurately represent and affect our experience and understanding of place. The question of 'reckoning' that first opened this project thus remains of central importance for these poets, whose lyrical engagements with notions of deep time, trans-corporeal relation, waste, migration, value, distance, and vibrant matter has seen the production of a distinctly watery ecopoetics, one that seeks to both account for and recount our place in an intimately strange and changing world. Through their poetic reckoning, this cluster of poets gestures towards the rise of a new oceanic imaginary within modern Scottish and Irish literature, one that responds to the disturbing and unsettling coordinates of climate change, through a terraqueous poetics that reconfigures our relationship with water as central to questions of history, ecology, and culture.

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