

Becoming-Ocean

theories towards a marine lyric

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by Sarah Elizabeth Hymas

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Abstract

This thesis speculates on how the intimacy of the lyric can incorporate the vastness of ocean. It takes an interdisciplinary approach, steering between poetry, philosophy and marine science. Section one is a eco-critical exploration, where a phenomenological posthumanist lens inspired by the philosophers Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze is used to read marine-sited poems of Jorie Graham, chiefly from *Never* (2002), *Sea Change* (2008) and *Fast* (2017). Working through perspectival approaches of what is seen, blurred and unseen, the three chapters of this section consider Graham's poetic handling of the shoreline, the marine ecosystem and offshore waters to devise a framework for what I term a 'marine lyric'. In chapter one, I consider the embodied, protean dynamic between human and ocean, working through the phenomenology of perception to experience the marine lyric as an emergent imaginative force of poet and shore. In this conception the white space of the marine lyric has as much a role to play in embodying imagination as its language. The second chapter introduces the Deleuzian concept of 'the fold' to decentralise a humanist perspective and illustrate how multiple subjectivities can unfold across a marine lyric. This poetic immanence is explained through a myopic blurring of certainty; I show how the marine lyric uses a disruption of syntax to communicate the ongoing uncertainty that is ocean. The final chapter enfolds the marine lyric's mode of phenomenological posthumanism to speculate on its role in mediating unseen futures and offshore pollution to promote a sense of wonder and applied affirmation. The marine lyric seeks a response-ability for an alternative perspective which promotes endurance over endings and a potential for experiencing transformation as inevitable and continuous.

Section two is an original portfolio of poetry and fragmented prose written in tandem with the critical thesis. It plots a course from the Irish Sea to Arctic Ocean, seeking possible new ecological niches for its human protagonists in a time of marine and climate catastrophe. The application of the fold is made explicit within the structure of the portfolio, enveloping global currents to convey the various narratives, poetic sequences and clusters as interwoven processes of intra-subjective enrichment. The creative portfolio demonstrates a new methodological approach arising from the entanglement of philosophical theories with a hands-on creative practice that included the making of artistbooks, writing on the shore and at sea, and a fieldtrip to the Arctic.

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Part One | Critical

Rocking against a slight swell, a small fishing boat is tied to the stone jetty. It is an old Lune whammel, used by fishermen of Morecambe Bay, wide beamed and sturdy under strong winds. Its dry bilge offers a perfect place to write. I climb in, lie down and lean against the hull so all I can see is mottled sky encompassed by the boat's rim. A slow oscillation turns over the rhythm of my thinking, easing it, rewinding and unspooling it forward. No words rise from the tongues of water, but a gurgling at the whammel's ribs, and my spine pitches in different directions under grey cloud. The long swell ends in abrupt slaps against the boat, each pushing my vision further into the salty air and light, until the wind pulls at the sea and the boat bucks at the extent of its mooring line. My head smacks against the transom. Then the line must slacken because the boat sways free, sloshing through various angles before cracking into the jetty. A shoulder blade crunches a wooden rib. The thwart punches my shins. Then we bounce again, lightfooted, aerated bouncing until the boat jerks at its line's limit. Sea is more solid than water ought to be. Lines of rope, boat and flesh scribble and my stomach roils. I lodge my feet against the topsides, sit up to grab the end of the rope to drag us to the jetty. Sea is all white veins and bulging. A slow co-ordinated strength of hand over hand on the rope brings us close enough for me to jump off the sparring boat, hammering onto wall. My legs buckle against the immobility of stone. Boat does not splinter but rears against its containment, tossing my notebook and pencil case overboard, between boat and jetty wall. I do not risk reaching for them, for fear of the boat crushing my fingers, so watch as waves enfold them, saturating the papers until, smudged dark, they disappear.

Introduction

I live in an old lighthouse keeper's cottage in northwest England, overlooking the mouth of one of the four estuaries that feed Morecambe Bay. With a tidal range of up to ten metres at spring tides, my immediate surroundings alternate between the mud flats of low tide and waves of high water. A glassy, windless surface can transform to turbulent swells that transgress the border of saltmarsh and seawall. Before I lived by the sea I sailed it, as crew, then later as skipper of a syndicated yacht. My experience of the sea, spanning thirty years as sailor and coastal inhabitant, is one of collaboration. To sail is to be part of a dynamic cluster of forces that include other crew, the boat, the weather and ocean. To live metres away from the edge of high water is to know when and how high that tide will be. I watch the weather roll in from the horizon and witness its power in relation to shipping, rock, or marsh. Living on or alongside the sea demands a state of alert reflexivity, a constant reading and re-reading of the changing surroundings that impact on where I can go, how I function, and the possible consequences of any action. It is a life in which I am stripped of any intermediary shield from the elements and am ensured an awareness of the ocean's agency, unfolding histories and power. The ocean, not only uninhabitable to humans, is often inhospitable to us. I have an on-going respect for it and a fascination with what I can and cannot perceive of the 'mind-stretching vastness of sea'.¹

This thesis arises from my phenomenological engagement with ocean and each chapter is introduced by a foregrounding of marine encounters. These interstices intend to frame the ideas of the ensuing chapter, through an autophenomenological lens. Both critical and creative parts of the thesis explore how the ocean might be enveloped within the occasion of a lyric poem. From intertidal zone to unseen depths and distance, it navigates an eco-critical immersion into the lyric's capacity for an intimate commitment with the more-than-human ocean.

The project's concerns exceed my personal experiences, coming at a time when the ocean has absorbed 'about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the CO₂ produced by the burning of fossil fuels and as a result

¹ Steve Mentz, 'Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature', *Literature Compass* 6.5 (2009), 997–1013 (p.1008).

[is] currently around 0.1 pH units more acidic than in preindustrial times.’² It has soaked up more than 80% of the heat added to the climate system since 1961.³ Throw in almost 10% of the annual production of the world’s plastic that has already entered the ocean and it is undisputable that marine ecology is under increasing pressure from human terrestrial activity.⁴ Ocean temperature rise, acidification, toxification from chemical contamination and microplastic waste, depletion of fish populations and off-shore industrialisations are all elemental to the disruption of our marine ecosystem. I seek to highlight the literal and material ocean which occupies 71% of the world’s surface in a ceaseless circumnavigation that connects continents and micro-ecologies in our radically-changing world.⁵ I believe in a continuing need for new perspectives on what Steve Mentz describes as ‘the unstable and destructive environment in which we live now [that] increasingly resembles the dynamic sea rather than stable land.’⁶

The Blue Humanities project, engaging a cultural history of our relationship with the ocean, offers a discourse around the involvement of humans in marine destruction. It also ensures the discussion moves beyond humanist perspectives, recontextualizing the human as one of many species. It questions previously established borders of selfhood, politics, culture and the marine environment to acknowledge the uncertainty and flux of where we find ourselves is disorientating and on-going. Aligning myself with the Blue Humanities project, I have coined the term ‘marine lyric’ in order to explore the aptitude of marine poetics for communicating a co-constitutional worlding of the embodied lyric ‘I’ and the ocean’s uninhabitable-to-human nature. These co-worldings are collaborations between the human and more-than-human bodies, sited in the immanent occasions of any give moment.⁷ I do not have the space in this thesis to engage with elements of the Blue Humanities such as the Atlantic Slave trade or other socio-political issues.⁸

² Michael Dobson and Chris Frid, *Ecology of Aquatic Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.16.

³ R. K. Pachauri and A. Reisinger. ‘Climate change 2007. Synthesis report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the fourth assessment report.’ (2008).

⁴ Carlo Giacomo Avio, Stefania Gorbi, Franceco Regoli, ‘Plastics and microplastics in the oceans: From emerging pollutants to emerged threat’, *Marine Environmental Research* 128 (2017), 2-11 (p.2).

⁵ Dobson & Frid, p.2.

⁶ ‘Blue Humanities’, *The Posthuman Glossary*, ed. by Rosi Braidotti & Maria Hlavajova (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p.71. It is Braidotti’s definition of posthumanism I am following; that of a nondualistic view of the body, rethinking the potential of what the human can be and do in our ecologically disrupted era.

⁷ I have chosen the term ‘more-than-human’ over ‘non-human’ that designates its signifier in negative relation to the human. ‘Earth-other’ is a popular alternative, but feels too terrestrially based for this thesis. I

Even in the 21st century, the ocean is a relatively unknown place. We see its surface yet only 15% of the seabed has been mapped to a 100m resolution.⁹ I intend, then, to offer, as Jorie Graham puts it, ‘a possibility of encountering a reality which is more paradoxical, or contradictory, or complex or simply surprising than I thought I had gleaned through ‘mere’ experience or thought.’¹⁰ Graham is a philosophical poet and has been the subject of many studies of how she interacts with the world. The question of where the lyric ‘I’ fits within the self, culture and environment is one Graham has been asking since her first collection, *Hybrids of Plants and Ghosts* (1980). Thirty nine years later and her environmental ethics, exploring the intersection of memory and self, of language and thought, of self and selves, and the human and more-than-human, have become increasingly complex. Championing Graham from the outset, Helen Vendler has written on Graham’s attempts to marry language with physicality, and William Speigelman, across several essays and reviews, has focused on the visual and aural ambiguities across Graham’s work. Building on their analyses, and those of many others, I will focus this thesis on Graham’s poems that inhabit the intertidal and abyssal zones, from *Erosion* (1983), *Never* (2002), *Sea Change* (2008) and *Fast* (2017); using them as infrastructure for this study of a marine lyric’s potential.¹¹

Through an analysis of a selection of her marine poems, I will explore how Graham’s use of language, form and syntax can generate a new sensibility of oceanic forces. Her poetic engagement with an embodied subjectivity in relation to the ocean offers a route to exploring how the marine lyric might highlight the interdependence of human and marine life. Graham’s work provides an interesting model in resisting easy linguistic sense-making, and highlights the paradox of language as a system for connecting us to and

am still reaching towards a satisfactory alternative. Within the framework of this thesis, the term ‘posthuman’ applies to human potential, while ‘more-than-human’ is applied to those elements of our planetary ecology that are not human.

⁸ Although the creative portfolio begins to open out my preliminary thinking around my whiteness in regard to the ocean that was ignited by reading Sara Ahmed’s essay ‘The Phenomenology of Whiteness’ in *Feminist Theory*, vol. 8.2 (2007), pp.149–168.

⁹ Dr. Tim Le Bas, *Modern Mapping*, online video recording, Futurelearn, University of Southampton, 2014 <<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/exploring-our-oceans/3/steps/36485>> [accessed 7 September 2015].

¹⁰ Jorie Graham in interview with Sharon Blackie *Earthlines 2* (2012), 36–41 (p.41).

<<http://www.joriegraham.com/system/files/Jorie+Graham+Interview.pdf>> [accessed 20 April 2016].

¹¹ In keeping with a posthumanist perspective, my reading of these poems will not always keep to their chronology.

separating us from our being-in-the-world.¹² For this thesis I intend to use a selection of Graham's poems as models for what a marine lyric can achieve. My aim is for an in-depth analysis of their poetics to illustrate the philosophical underpinning of a marine lyric; as such this thesis will balance close reading of poems with wider philosophical concepts.

I take a phenomenological posthumanist perspective, aligning myself with Merleau-Ponty's view of 'the subject of perception never being an absolute subjectivity' and Deleuze's views on perception, evident in *The Fold* (1988).¹³ Bringing together the thoughts of these philosophers allows me to examine lived experience alongside lived potential. I find Merleau-Ponty's writings on what he terms 'flesh', the site of embodied exchanges between human and other worldly bodies, a corporeally useful way of understanding how to bring the oceanic body into that of the perceiving body.¹⁴ Deleuze's theory of the fold is an aspect of his view of the world as a unitary whole. To envelop his concepts into Merleau-Ponty's allows me to feel my embodied experience while situating it within the processes of oceanic, biological, temporal, and other ontological modes of experience. This way I can acknowledge my humanity but without privileging it beyond the intertwinement of the immanent bodies of self and sea.

Graham, in interview, has described her reading of Merleau-Ponty as 'passionate', and much of her work can be read as a poetic response to his theories.¹⁵ She also provides evidence of engaging with Deleuze as notes to her poem 'The Guardian Angel of the Swarm' attest to it using 'fragments of [*The Fold*] - often rewritten - to review, and in spots to argue with, his brilliant intuitions.'¹⁶ Buoyed by Astrida Neimanis' discourse on 'hydrofeminism' (2016), where she writes of the 'combustion' of the space between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze as fuelling her feminist regard for the difference and connections between the individual body and the wider body in which she is situated, I

¹² This phrase, while originating with Heidegger, is, in this thesis, drawn from Merleau-Ponty's usage.

¹³ *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p.240. Merleau-Ponty also describes this as 'the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed' in his 1964 essay 'Eye and Mind'.

¹⁴ *The Visible and Invisible*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis, ed. by Claude Lefort (Everston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.84.

¹⁵ Interview with Thomas Gardner, 'Jorie Graham: the Art of Poetry' in *Paris Review*, 165 (2003) <<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/263/jorie-graham-the-art-of-poetry-no-85-jorie-graham>> [accessed 22 February 2019] (para. 57 of 174). Her poem 'Solitude' from *Never* (2002) uses direct, if fragmented, quotes from Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and Invisible*.

¹⁶ *The Errancy* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p.112.

have made my own topological flows between the philosophers that eddy through these theories towards a marine lyric.¹⁷ I aim for a reorientation of the self so the sea no longer is distant or peripheral but drawn into and out of the occasion of a marine lyric; providing it with a sense of resilience through its unpredictability and scale. It is Rosi Braidotti's 'radical immanence' that includes 'the notions of political passions, affirmative ethics, and the rigorous vision of affectivity' that drives my interest to communicate these theories both critically and creatively.¹⁸

In any hundred litres of seawater there are as 'many life forms as there are stars in our entire Milky Way Galaxy', life forms that for the most part are microscopic.¹⁹ Two thirds of the planet's oxygen is produced through its microscopic marine plants.²⁰ Every second breath I inhale draws on the oxygen produced by these plants. The carbon dioxide I breathe out is absorbed by the same plants. I am biologically entangled with the marine ecosystem, and recognise our intra-subjectivity. This notion of intra-subjectivity is used throughout the thesis to highlight the ethical dynamic of our relational and reciprocal co-existence; and to embed this position into the language and theories of the thesis I will not hyphenate the word from here on. To actualize the intrasubjectivity that arises from my phenomenological posthumanist perspective I will chart the transformation of the notion of the lyric 'I' to a nomadic 'I', while acknowledging the 'I' operates from a body, and its place in history, society, geography, biology and politics.²¹ The marine lyric is an engagement with this entanglement. It understands the value of an embodied existence that phenomenologically locates oneself in the physical world, while tracing a posthumanism that allows an engagement with what Braidotti describes as the 'flow of relations with multiple others' beyond the single experiencing body.²² The marine lyric is an occasion of

¹⁷ *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p.6. Other new materialists, such as Jane Bennett, whose work I will draw upon in chapter three, also couple the two philosophers' thinking. My bringing together of these philosophers has also been inspired by Fred Evans' article 'Unnatural Participation: Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, and Environmental Ethics' in *Philosophy Today* 54 (2010), pp.142-152.

¹⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p.272.

¹⁹ Jon Copley, *A Living Soup*, online video recording, Futurelearn, University of Southampton, 2014 <<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/exploring-our-oceans/3/steps/36512>> [accessed 14 Sept 2015].

²⁰ Yadigar Sekerci, Sergei V. Petrovskii, 'Mathematical Modelling of Plankton–Oxygen Dynamics Under the Climate Change' *Bulletin of Mathematical Biology* 77-12 (2015), 2325-2353 (p.2325).

²¹ This is a similar personal pronoun as the one Val Plumwood describes as exceeding its 'solipsistic hyperbolised individual' in *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.227.

²² Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Oxford: The Polity Press, 2013), p.50.

body folding into body: human, ocean and poem. Its poetic intimacy is of a proximity that is not necessarily geographical or temporal.

The marine lyric occurs as a shared world-unfolding of the embodied 'I' and the ocean's uninhabitable-to-human nature. This necessarily demands what Neimanis calls the divestment of phenomenology's 'humanist commitments'.²³ Through its engagement with the physicality and ecology of the ocean, embodying its material flux, a marine lyric does not reinforce a sense of human exceptionalism or entitled control over the ocean - viewing the ocean as resource. Rather it highlights the complexity and unfamiliarity of the new, on-going marine orientation it offers.

The marine lyric is a process: an embodied occasion unfolding in a space felt as deep or distant ocean, a practice of Braidotti's nomadic theory that embraces 'transition, hybridization and nomadization'.²⁴ It offers an on-going, fluid encounter between language, imagination, corporeality and the unknown. I perceive the marine lyric as a hybrid modernist lyric, and will explore how Graham's modernist inheritance includes intertextual layering and references to Wallace Stevens as a touchstone to her poetics and philosophical engagements. Stevens' poetic preoccupation with the relationship between imagination and reality links the projects of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, both of whom build their respective arguments from a coupling of the virtual and actual.

The interdisciplinary nature of the thesis's critical component places it within the larger Blue Humanities project. Recognizing the ocean as simultaneously essential and remote, I will draw upon marine biology and oceanography to inform part of the convergence that is the marine lyric. Scientific findings will be evident in both the critical and creative sections of the thesis. While science, described by Merleau-Ponty as a 'second-order expression', is distinct from direct, embodied experience, it offers access to the ocean's microscopic entities, deep-dwelling creatures and possible future scenarios.²⁵ Indeed it is the technological development of sub-aquatic optics – from pearl-divers' polished shell eye-goggles to the modern scuba kit of masks and air-tanks – that has enabled us humans

²³ p.31. The gendered perspective of *Hydrofeminism* swims beneath the surface of my reading of Graham's poems, as it is rarely explicit in her marine lyrics. It surfaces more explicitly in my creative work.

²⁴ *Nomadic Theory*, p.14.

²⁵ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.ix.

to spend longer periods underwater. Alongside the opportunity to witness that which is beyond my immediate perception, science brings a collective ontology into the poem, so what is learnt through others becomes deciphered through the poem's sensory experience. This intermingling acknowledges the multiplicity of selves that exist, through what Stacy Alaimo calls 'trans-corporeality', occurring within 'networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial.'²⁶ Alaimo also writes of how science 'offers no steady ground', a pleasing affinity to the fluid on-goingness of ocean. This perspective of the ever-shifting natures of science, sea, subjectivity and other networks ensures the realization of a convergence of the multi-vidual that forms a marine poetic voice.

A marine lyric follows Teresa Shrewy's *Hope at Sea* (2015), where she analyses Pacific marine literature's response to marine change. She places the marine world as central to a reworking of our ontological understanding required in the resource-centric world of capitalism that seeks to exploit rather than engage with others. Hers is a position that refutes separatist standpoints and works to embed our intertwinement with ocean. The hope Shrewy explores is a posthumanist one rising from a porous nature of subjectivity. This more objective sense of hope is found in facing the unknown, where nothing is fixed and everything is in process. This form of optimism relinquishes familiar Western narratives of human endeavour and conquest, and seeks to promote non-hierarchical modes of engagement.

Underpinning these poetical, philosophical and scientific considerations is recognising the marine lyric as assemblage – of forces including language, white space, form and the intersection of imagination, emotion and corporeality of writer and reader. Into this theoretical understanding I will enfold the sense of ocean as assemblage: an ecosystem enveloping and responding to pollutants to become something beyond its original self. In the methodology chapter I detail my investigations of extending the materiality of the marine lyric into the physical entities of artistbooks.²⁷ This practice enabled me to apply the concept of the fold into an immersive experience with tactile dimensions. The

²⁶ *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.20.

²⁷ My deliberate conflation of the term 'artistbook' is explained in-depth in the methodology chapter.

artistbooks also encouraged my understanding of how the marine lyric could be as concerned with form as with non-linguistical experience. Because of this, the critical section of the thesis touches on contemporary visual depictions of the ocean. These visual depictions intend to affirm the phenomenological exchange between the forces of art and the forces of ocean.²⁸

My critical investigation intermingles with my creative process of writing my own marine lyric, from folded page poetry to the flat pages of the creative portfolio in section two. The creative portfolio, *melt*, has an internal pagination system where its pages numbers start afresh, indicated as M1, M2, M3 etc. for clarity. The creative section has been deliberately printed as double-sided to present the work as it was originally envisioned. Throughout both sections of the thesis, the marine lyric is explored as a process that begins with an embodied occasion enfolded by the shore to unfold in a space felt as deep or distant ocean. This is an im/personal marine cartography. I lived my first five years with undiagnosed myopia, experiencing the world with extreme short-sightedness. This experience has fuelled an interest in how embodied perception informs our relationship with the world and has shaped my commitment to fuse mind and body within the language and form of a poem. This line of perception provides a framework for the thesis: carrying the critical inquiry from what can be seen to what can't, tracing the role of imagination as a mode of perception alongside the phenomenological and posthumanist enquiry.

Chapter one, *The See-able Sea*, engages with the flux of coastline and sea-surface to explore how a sense of self can be informed and reformed by a sense of placelessness. Focusing on poems in *Never* (2002) this chapter reads them through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception to explore how the politics of location play between poet, sea and lyric. It follows the recalibration of the relationship between embodied self in relation to ocean body. Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh, as the 'means of communication' between perceiver and perceived, enables a deeper understanding of the embodied nature of perception at work in Graham's poems.²⁹ Selected marine poems of

²⁸ It is also worth noting that both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze explored their theories through visual art (Cezanne and Monet for Merleau-Ponty and Francis Bacon for Deleuze).

²⁹ *The Visible and Invisible*, p.135. The full context of this thought, in a chapter entitled 'The Intertwining', is 'It is that the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication'.

Wallace Stevens are drawn upon to trace the modernist lineage of Graham's work and the marine lyric, in which the imagination is drawn on as an active element of synaesthetic perception. Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasm', as a metaphysical mediation of flesh, is employed to explore the relationship between perception and language, and will be explained further in this chapter. As this phenomenology of perception supports the marine lyric to become an occasion of intimate, reversible exchange it opens the poetic consciousness to the mutability of self in the world. This restlessness is elemental to the marine lyric itself and encourages the relinquishing of an anthropocentric viewpoint for an ecocentric one where the potential of white space is examined as a material manifestation in its own right. It is analysed as a realm of the unsayable, unknowable, where authority is unbounded and we begin to recognise more-than-human agency.

Chapter two, *The Blurred Lyric*, untethers the poem from shoreline for the sublittoral ecosystem, and so too from the single experiencing body to an intrasubjective experience. It focuses predominantly on poems from *Sea Change* (2008). This chapter incorporates the proximity forged through reversible perception into the concept of the fold where bodies do not lie outside of each other, rather are perceived as matter, folding and unfolding. This decentralises the experience of the human body and situates it as a fold within many others. I will trace these folds through food chains to probe the relational dynamic between species and the changing nature of the ocean. The fold, functioning as another plane of Deleuze's becoming, is a two-way process experienced in the emergent marine lyric. The phenomenology of perception that enabled me to engage with ocean is applied to the phenomenology of myopia and offers a springboard into the 'zone of indiscernibility' between two folds of subjectivity.³⁰ The unfolding of ocean as language is chartered through Deleuze's theories of de- and re-territorialization. These processes, by which things can no longer be attributed to their origins and have not yet become something else, are illustrated through examples of Graham's syntax.

Chapter three, *The Unseen*, probes ways of exploring the unseen through the materiality of the sea, through poems from *Fast* (2017). It asks how the temporally and spatially distant can be encountered and embodied within a marine lyric. In it I look at how ocean

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press Ltd, 1996), p.280.

circulation can provide an entry point for exploring the field of presence: the incorporation of past, present and future temporalities within a poem, and how this might enable an imagining and embodying of possible future scenarios. Hope is embraced as a mode of activism, and this is expanded to consider how faith and wonder can unpin the ethics of the marine lyric in relation to the challenges of climate change. Finally I ask how the lyric's consideration of sea as a polluted assemblage can give rise to the notion of the marine lyric as assemblage and the response-ability of its nomadic 'I'.

Four miles off the west coast of the Rhins of Galloway on a windless June afternoon and land, with its scattered white cottages, field boundaries and small woods, is clearly visible in the sharp sunlight. We are sailing north at five knots, five miles an hour. It feels we are moving in the direction the boat points, into the wind whipping my face, sea spraying across the deck, sails tight with wind, our faces cold and stomachs getting emptier. But I see how we remain parallel to a squat white cottage on a hill, making no progress. For the next six hours we will travel against the current running south at five knots. This negates our speed over ground until the current turns to carry us north. We could switch the engine on, plough faster than the current and northward, but we have to arrive at Portpatrick on the rising tide to avoid Half-Tide Rock that, when the water is low, protrudes in the middle of the harbour entrance. This decision, wisping with the cirrus, is delayed by the hourly log: notating our lat/long coordinates, course direction, speed, wind, current, visibility, barometer and cloud cover. The top of every hour becomes a hook in an otherwise seamless day of helming, sail trimming, making tea, snacking, watching gannets dive into the sea around us, listening to herring gulls call. The pitching of the bow in and out of water is a soporific metronome I do not want to cut by starting the engine that will slap the tide hard against us. I read again about the entrance procedure for the harbour, best tidal heights for arrival, look at photos of the harbour wall, the lifeboat station, the rock-tip. The tide that is slowing us down is a factor in what lies ahead. I slosh between the thrill of the gannets' lemon yellow necks piercing waves, frustration at it being the same square cottage we do not pass, a growing anxiety for arrival, and accepting I will need to go below, into the rocking hull, pore over the chart and navigate by abstraction.

“The ocean kisses every inch of the seeable” | The See-able Sea

i. The Perceiving Body as World

In a poem, one is always given, I would argue, a sense of a place that matters—a place one suffered the loss of, a place one longs for—a stage upon which the urgent act of mind of this particular lyric occasion (be it memory, description, meditation, fractured recollection of self, or even further disintegration of self under the pressure of history, for example) “takes place.” And although it is, most traditionally, a literal place ... [it] is felt as a location that compels action, reaction, and the sort of re-equilibration which a poem seeks.”¹

Jorie Graham’s reflection of place being inseparable from the ‘act of mind’ that is a poem appeared a year before the publication of *Never*. The collection dwells within woods and on the coast. This observation reinforces Wallace Stevens’ belief that ‘reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it.’² Both the work of Stevens and Graham illustrate a sense of place that arises from an act of intentionality, where the mind comes into a relationship with whatever it observes. In doing so, place becomes lived. Merleau-Ponty describes a similar view: ‘there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself.’³ In this chapter I seek to read poems to illustrate the relationship between the self and the world they find themselves in, and how the poetic sense of selfhood rises from the place they’re in. I am expressly interested if the poem’s occasion is sited somewhere overtly moving, undergoing constant change. The ocean is flux: be it tidal rise or fall and currents. Its surface light varies according to wind, weather, terrestrial interventions, sun or moonlight. At sea place and temporality are clearly entwined, illustrating Doreen Massey’s claim that place is ‘open and porous’: we cannot be in any single place in relation to ocean because of its constant mutability.⁴ A sense of oceanic place is momentary - either at sea or on the shore with its ebbing or flooding tide. The sea is both conceptual - in determining where we are on it, or when exactly is high tide - and experiential - the nausea of our stomach, or wetness of paddling foot. Any search for

¹ ‘Introduction: Something of Moment’, *Ploughshares* 86, Vol. 27/4 (2001) <<https://www.pshares.org/issues/winter-2001-02/introduction-something-moment>> [accessed 23 April 2019] (para. 3 of 7).

² *Necessary Angel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p.25.

³ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.xi.

⁴ *Space, Place and Gender* (Chichester: Polity Press, 1994), p.5.

a 're-equilibrium' between the emotional focus of the poem and the location at which it occurs must be on-going, moving with the water.

This chapter uses examples of marine poems from Stevens as springboards into the marine lyric's world-making of Graham's work.⁵ Her marine lyrics can be experienced as upwelling from his philosophical inquiry into the role of perception in how we inhabit or make our worlds. Stevens' 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds' in *Harmonium* (1923) illustrates his ideas on the interplay between the external scene and the life lived within it. Five sections depict the same sea voyage off the Mexican city of Tehuantepec. Each repeats the event of observing the sea, but switches details of the central images: so, after a long 'slopping' night, the deck is seen first through the hue of 'summer', before being recast as 'jelly yellow', then as 'pale silver', then to where 'a mallow morning dozed', until finally the day '[c]ame, bowing and voluble'.⁶ These various images, distinct in texture, shade or composition in their separate section, each reflect a concurrent moment of light moving across and off the sea's surface.⁷ The poem's experiencing perception shifts with the ocean's motion. The scene of ocean, and how it 'makes one think' of the various images, is repeated so each section conjures an altered reality, none of which is absolute, illustrating what Stevens later states as 'no fact [being] a bare fact, no individual fact is a universe in itself.'⁸

The 'fact' of the sea can only be presented through the filter of how it is seen, which becomes inseparable from the sea itself. So the deck in the summer morning light, infused with memories of food then plants before becoming animated as a clown, suggests each glancing moment that makes up the sea of the poem. The activity of Stevens' poem rewrites and re-engages with its subjectivity, merging inconsistent memories with the world, to become the unpredictable world of the poem. Light fluctuates, displacing the perceiver's memories and present moment through malevolence to certainty to

⁵ While I agree with Matthew Griffiths in *The New Poetics of Climate Change* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) that modernist aesthetics are well suited to articulate the complexities of climate change, I hope to argue the case for enfolded them with a lyric subjectivity, and the phenomenological experience of the lyric 'I'.

⁶ *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), pp.85-8.

⁷ Monet's similar project, his series of paintings of Rouen cathedral, explore a similar fascination with how varying light conditions and times of day affect the created world of the art form. The crucial difference is that Monet's project (and his haystacks) studies changes occurring across days rather than in such a short durational period as Stevens'.

⁸ *Necessary Angel*, p.69.

thoughtfulness to indolence and more, while also describing the varying states of ocean. The sense of place in this poem manifests as a mutable intradependent field that is the poem, narrator's perspective and sea simultaneously. The movement is alluded to, but destination is unknown. The sea-ness of the sea is not its destination but its movement.⁹

This intermingling of perception, place and poem locates the 'one' Stevens identifies as perceiver within this poetic event as part of its happening. This 'one' is not merely documenter but also a contributor within the now recreated episode of the poem. The relationship between poet and poem is made actively explicit, and embodied, by Graham when she explains her terminology:

You are not the narrator but the protagonist of your poem. You undergo it. It is an encounter with the so-called subject – I prefer Stevens' word 'occasion'.¹⁰

Calling a poem an encounter suggests a new experience of the initial 'so-called subject', hence the poem becoming an 'occasion' in its own right. Both James Longenbach in *The New York Times* (2008) and Sarah Howe in *PN Review* (2009) similarly describe Graham's writing as 'constructing' and 'constituting' experience.¹¹ To uphold this view of a poem as an occasion experienced by the writer (rather than a disembodied voice recounting an experience), I shall henceforth refer to the 'protagonist' of poems. In this way the poem becomes its own phenomenological event, the 'act of mind' the poet 'undergoes' in the writing out of the 'so-called subject'. The poet and protagonist, it seems, can both be viewed as elements of the 'fractured recollection of self', or the 'disintegration of self'.

A poetic occasion's 're-equilibrium' could be the constant balancing of protagonist with place. This balance is under increasing load in our current environmental crisis, and the collision of our marine and climate crisis is apparent in many of the poems of *Never*. On

⁹ Hondartza Fraga's 'It Turned Me to Admire the Magnanimity of The Sea Which Will Permit No Records' (2013), a pen and ink image of a choppy sea as the peeling cover of a closed book, wordlessly gives this sense of sea as surface container of more; sea as beginning and end, as a story in its own right. *The Sea Full Stop* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, 25 September 2015 –25 September 2016)

¹⁰ Interview with Sharon Blackie in *Earthlines*,

<http://www.joriegraham.com/system/files/Jorie+Graham+Interview.pdf> [accessed 20 April 2016], p.41.

¹¹ 'The Wasted land' <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/books/review/Longenbach-t.html>> [accessed 5 February 2019] (para.1 of 7). 'To Imagine the Future, Review of Sea Change', *PN Review* Vol. 35.3 (Jan/Feb 2009), 22-25 (p.22).

one level this crisis is made manifest in the recurring appearance of plastic across some poems, but perhaps more profoundly it comes through the collection's preoccupation with the incursions of body into sea and vice versa, and the sense of precarity arising from that. The shoreline is a boundary described by Graham as where 'the ineffable erodes the known, and the known makes inroad into the ineffable.'¹² The collection coalesces around how where we are and what we perceive affects our mutating, unfolding sense of self. Throughout, the protagonist's act of mind is integrated with the emotional sensibility of the body, and explicitly engages with Merleau-Ponty's claim of 'perception as a re-creation or re-constitution of the world at every moment.'¹³ While the on-going dialectic between the perceiver and the world she perceives is as inseparable as that of Stevens' poem, Graham makes more explicit the embodied nature of this perception.¹⁴ Through the embodied use of the 'I' in her poems she reminds us of Merleau-Ponty's focus that we must see from somewhere; our body is always fixed, attached to the world, providing a perspective for what we see. We are as much bound to the world as we are to our body; situated by both.¹⁵ This phenomenological experience is stated directly in the poem 'Gulls' where the red of sun is seen shining in water and on her body before into her vision:

[Or onto my feet, then into my eyes].¹⁶

The protagonist's whole body, then, is presented as a receptor for perception. Focusing on the feet infers the impact made with their next step. Graham's work is constantly asking us to feel our situatedness in the world. In this line she occludes sun and sea onto the body before the protagonist appears to register it intellectually.

The embodied reality of Graham's marine lyric opens up a dialogue between protagonist, their sense of place and temporality in relation to the known terrestrial, and the less known

¹² 'Jorie Graham & Thomas Gardner in Conversation from *Regions of Unlikeness: Explaining Contemporary Poetry*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, Chapter 6)

<http://www.joriegraham.com/interview_gardner_1987> [accessed 17 January 2019] (para. 100 of 148). She is describing Elizabeth Bishop's poetic sense of place here but could equally be speaking of her own.

¹³ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.207.

¹⁴ While using the term 'dialectic' here, I am much more in favour of thinking of this in terms of 'exchange', which reduces the emphasis on dialogue, or a two-way conversation, and incorporates a recognition of the elements that support us.

¹⁵ Both Braidotti and Neimanis reference Adrienne Rich's 'Notes towards a Politics of Location' in their exploration of a feminist embodied subjectivity, and while Graham writes from an embodied situation, as Kirstin Hotelling Zona writes, her work 'resists easy labelling', such as a feminist reading, in 'Jorie Graham and American Poetry', *Contemporary Literature*, 46.4 (2005), 667-687, (p.669).

¹⁶ *Never* (New York: Ecco, 2002), p.27. Further references to poems from *Never* will, in this chapter, will be identified by page number only

wave break like surf around the body. This illustrates the reversibility of perception, smudging what Fred Evans describes as the point where ‘seeing ends and being seen begins’.¹⁹ The waves go on to ‘not-yet breaking’ then ‘just-breaking’. This scrutiny brings us back to the scientific concept alluded to in the title. A complex mechanism refers to the transfer of electrons involved when one thing becomes transformed to another. Here the wave becomes energy, vapour, gas as well as part of the perceiver. In the act of perceiving the waves breaking the protagonist records this mechanism, while also ‘surrendering’, to use Merleau-Ponty’s term, a part of the body to the vibrating world around it.²⁰

Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of flesh to describe that which connects the phenomenological body with other world phenomena, here felt through the vibrations of crashing waves. This flesh thickens the space into a sensibility that functions as circuitry between bodies, so each fuses into the other in a way that is continuous and unfixed.²¹ The point at which such a fusing is felt, as when the protagonist experiences her mind and heart relating to the wave motion, is described as by Tod Toadvine as ‘the moment where the being of nature and of the human cross.’²² That the crossing is two-way is integral to the flesh felt between them, and this exchange between human and sea is felt throughout the poem:

What is force? My love is forced from me as in retreat
from love. My gaze is forced back into me as it retreats
from thought. Sometimes the whole unravelling activity
for just an instant
pools, all its opposing motions suddenly just pattern on these briefly
lakelike flats— (p.34)

As love cannot escape love, sight cannot retreat from thought: sensibility and emotion and thought all act as equivalent forces unravelling from the body and into it simultaneously. Countering this sentence length (which continues over the next fifteen lines) are the words ‘instant’, ‘suddenly’ and ‘briefly’, piling up in an extended moment experienced as this force; the same force through which the sea perceives the body of the protagonist, whose ‘gaze is forced back’. This intertwining between two bodies informs both, given that the

¹⁹ ‘Unnatural Participation: Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, and Environmental Ethics’, p.144.

²⁰ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.246.

²¹ Merleau-Ponty writes ‘a reversibility [is] always imminent and never realized in fact’, *The Visible and Invisible*, p.147.

²² *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), p.109.

ocean can be affected by the legs of a standing body as much as the sensations of that body can be affected by the buffeting ocean. James Longenbach writes ‘[i]f we know the place intimately, we do so not in spite of our distance from it but because of the distance.’²³ This could be because, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, while the body opens on to the world, the world opens to the body, becoming a potentially never-ending realm of sensations. If the force of this opening needs to grow to incorporate the seemingly distant body, the force of the reciprocal experience grows. This can be used, within a marine lyric, to draw the pervasive, yet still apparently distant (to a Western perspective), impacts of climate chaos into the body of the poem.

The reversibility of perception that constitutes a being-in-the-world is further described, by Merleau-Ponty, as ‘a sort of folding back’ of the two surfaces upon each other.²⁴ The folding, be it unfolding, folding back or enfolding, gives a physical depth to the act of reversibility. The brackets, discussed in detail later, could be seen as a manifestation of this folding back of the moment. As hands unfold to reveal their palms, so an object unfolds itself before our perceiving. The constant happening of the world – not just that motion of sea, but the cycle of seasons and other terrestrial processes – ensures this reversibility is unremitting.

Throughout the poem waves and sky fold and unfold until the ‘whole unravelling activity’ stills. But only for an instant before the poem finally concludes - with ‘seven kinds of sound’. Sound, more than sight, is felt within the body cavity, in modulating vibrations that ‘crash’, ‘rise’, ‘soften’ and ‘lull’, as the ‘I’ of the poem becomes the second person ‘you’, altering the protagonist’s bearing towards herself. This shift could allude to the unfolding selfhood, the displacement of a fixed relational sense of self that comes from a deep engagement in a place of ceaseless movement. The final image is of ‘tiny patterns

²³ ‘The Place of Jorie Graham’, in *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry*, ed. by Thomas Gardner (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 201-218 (p.212). He is referring to the title poem of *Swarm*, but it is applicable here too.

²⁴ *The Visible and Invisible*, p.152. ‘Solitude’ includes these lines: “(it is already the flesh of things that speaks to us of our own / flesh, and that speaks to us of the flesh of the other)” - which Graham acknowledges as from Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and Invisible*.

which /seen from above', suggesting the gaze, forced back into itself, has become an imaginative extending into the world.²⁵

Responding to the restless sea, Graham's protagonists modify accordingly. The 'I', while situated physically, shifts with the movement of the world around her, defying anchorage to anything as fixed or known as biography.²⁶ The introduction to the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* declares the 'right of everyone to speak as no one in particular', and Graham's resistance to categorisation - as protagonist and as poet - ensures such an occasion of watching waves on a shore does not become reductive to the individual, but potentially folds back the flesh between the protagonist and reader.²⁷ This resistance to autobiography leads back to Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on depersonalization:

'Every sensation carries within it the germ of a dream or depersonalization such as we experience in that quasi-stupor to which we are reduced when we really try to live at the level of sensation ... Sensation can be anonymous only because it is incomplete'.²⁸

The incompleteness of witnessing the ocean crash on the shore, waves rolling and shining their patternings that will not stop, ensures the lyric 'I' of this poem is not a fixed subject. This 'I' is of a body without predefined or explicit biography, who in some sense is depersonalized, and could open to become the 'I' of bodily sensation. The anonymizing of the protagonist serves to balance the emergence of both bodies of human and of ocean; reminiscent of that search for a 're-equilibrium' between place and protagonist Graham spoke of in this chapter's opening quote. She has written elsewhere of the disintegrating sense of self:

Somewhere between the "I" that takes its authority from an apparent act of confessional "sincerity," and the "I" that takes its authority from seeing through to its own socially constructed nature, there is still the "I" that falls in love, falls out of love, gives birth, loses loved ones, inhales when passing by a fragrant rosebush--the "I" that has no choice but mortality.²⁹

²⁵ This potentially transcendental aspect of Graham's work is not of interest to me in regard to the marine lyric. My interest is in how an engagement with the marine enables a monistic view of the world, as I will explain later.

²⁶ Speigelman writes of *Never*: 'Like the ocean, the music of Graham's poetry ignores normal signatures of key and tempo; her most radical experiments may be those in which she both signals and eschews closure.' in 'Jorie Graham Listening', in *Essays on the Poetry*, 219-237 (p.232). This applies to what she does in this poem.

²⁷ <http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/20150612-xf_layout_web.pdf> [accessed 18 January 2019], p.2.

²⁸ *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp.215-6.

²⁹ 'The Glorious Thing, Jorie Graham and Mark Wunderlich in Conversation', *American Poet* (1999) <http://www.joriegraham.com/interview_wunderlich> [accessed 17 January 2019] (para. 6 of 31).

What disintegrates in this description is the bounded self, a contained self that could be seen to inhabit the lyric 'I'. A bounded sense of selfhood unfolds through the act of observance, a knowing compliance to be witness. This is distinguished from being enfolded by social influences and from the ceaseless, emotional folds of time passing.³⁰ In the same interview, Graham goes on to describe the 'I' as 'simultaneously illusory and essential', which could be, as seen, said of the sea. It is this 'I' found throughout *Never* that interests me: the 'I' that stretches the boundaries of being-in-the-world in any one moment. Observing a relationship to place, as dependent on this mutable interaction between the force of perception and what might be considered 'external', enables an awareness of our co-existence with place. This opens us up to a world that must be accepted as uncertain or tumultuous, as a continual issuing forth of events.

The marine lyrics, situated in sites of such flux, demand a reciprocal protean subjectivity. The urgency conveyed in these poems blasts any sense of shore as a place of meditation; just as the slow accumulation of climate chaos over decades is now evident in extreme weather events. *Never* offers Graham's first extended reckoning of the dynamic explosion between human and sea. The protagonist, through the course of a poem is, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, 'indivisibly demolished and remade by the course of time.'³¹ The overt and violent passing of time in these poems signals the wider urgency that was felt in 2002, that is even more so now. The titles throughout *Never* press on with this ephemerality through tidal states and other notions of temporality: 'Ebbtide', 'High Tide', 'Afterwards', 'Evolution' and 'The Time Being'. The 'sensation of duration' is referenced in 'Exit Wound' (p.53). 'Hunger' follows clock time, from 11:54 to 12:02, as bracketed announcements delineating sections of the poem. At first it jumps three minutes, then pauses at the same time over four sections, until, for the final three sections of the poem, the precision of a clock becomes simply 'later'. It seems even the passing of clock time cannot be objectified by an expected sequence of numerals, but brought into a personal

³⁰ While Graham does not address her whiteness explicitly in these poems, her phenomenology does carry resonances of the orientation of whiteness that Sara Ahmed discusses in her 'Phenomenology of Whiteness' *Feminist Theory*, vol. 8.2 (2007), pp149–168. In this essay Ahmed recalls Franz Fanon's writing of the historic-racial schema in which we all function. While the shoreline might be considered a neutral environment, it only so because the protagonist's orientation is not interrupted by her race or how her race inhabits the shoreline. In many ways hers is a 'body-at-home' (p.153) on the beach.

³¹ *The Phenomenology of Perception* p.219.

experience of time passing. Repetition here and of titles (four mention ‘Prayer’, and there are two ‘Evolution’s in the collection) punctuates and thus highlights changes occurring between them. Each repeated moment marks a return to something that is now different. As the self is demolished, so to, through the reciprocity of perception, is the shoreline.

One ‘Prayer’ opens *Never* and another closes its first section. The first occurs at a dock, where the protagonist watches them from above:

(turning, re-
infolding,
entering and exiting their own unison in unison) (p.3)

By watching, the protagonist is changed, ‘[m]ore and more by / each glistening minute’, by being enfolded into the unison of the minnows, by sensing their current and by listening and being aware the moment of their movement has passed, for ever, and can never be returned to. The momentary self also cannot be returned to, unfolding from each encounter; she is an intra-active being, alive to the reversibility of her perception, responding and reacting to the enfolding world.

I am free to go.
I cannot of course come back. Not to this. Never.
It is a ghost posed on my lips. Here: never. (p.3)

The place in time can’t be returned to. It will have changed as the protagonist has changed. The repetition of ‘never’ at the lines’ ends accrues additional weight by also being the collection title. It alludes both to an end point and the suspension of one. Simultaneously they acknowledge the endless movement forward that is unstoppable, ultimately, as Graham says, to where there is ‘no choice but mortality’. This prayer does not appear to be a transcendental spirit or deity, but a prayer to the energetic collective motion of fish.³² The second ‘Prayer’ seems to exist as the opening poem’s ghost. It comes after several poems within or around woods, and alludes back to the light and textures of the first, as an echo, a relay, or delay in the action of the minnows. In this ‘Prayer’ the fish are shadowed and implicit in the ‘flickering’, ‘transparencies’ and ‘trembling’ (p.16). The woods of this poem cast a similar light to that which strikes the earlier underwater weeds. This reoccurrence of images, echoing various senses of place throughout the collection, makes

³² In the 2005 collection, *Overlord*, Graham has several poems entitled ‘Praying (Attempt of ...)’ - the act being less successful than the thing of this poem.

tangible the interconnectivity that's more apparent at sea than on land. In the opening poem currents, made visible by the movement of minnows or kelp, are cut by the wake of an earlier boat, which disperses the creatures and weed in the present; nothing is static or becomes truly past in the co-worlding of this occasion. A monostich line in 'The Time Being' states it overtly: 'Nothing can be singled out' (p.44).³³

In 'Covenant' this mutable, intertwined self becomes explicitly involved with what often recurs through the collection: pollution, waste and questions of resilience. The reference to a 'Covenant' suggests another agreement, or pledge of the self. This self at one point feels 'unprotected' and gives thanks for that, before 'all the voices are suddenly one voice' (p.73). Here is the revelation of rocks at low tide:

The always-underneath excitedly exposed to heat, light, wind, the
being-seen. Who could have known a glance could be
so plastic. (p.74)

A 'plastic glance' is both mutable and polluting. The protagonist's inseparability to place brings her culpability into question. The poem's sense of intertwinement grows with its light and layers of colours, until the covenant is revealed as there being plenitude 'but only as a simultaneous emptying'. This filling and emptying, that echoes the abundance of plastic that in turn destroys the ecosystem, is the conflict carried by the poem. The ethical dimension of the reversibility of perception adds to the exchange between inner and outer worlds, as the interdependence between the two becomes indisputable. The Western attitude that plastic pollution and other climatic disasters are things that happen elsewhere, to affect other lives, is eroded by these poems that draw the remote into and out of the body.³⁴ The immediacy of flux as evidenced in the tide and shore gives a sense of urgency to the marine lyrics that cannot be ignored.

The poem follows the incoming tide, darting between what seems to be a loud motor and the abstract engine of life which disrupts any clear progression of thought or action within

³³ The interconnectivity of objects is a recurring theme of Merleau-Ponty; 'Let us therefore consider ourselves installed among the multitude of things' from *The Visible and Invisible* (p.160) is also quoted in 'Solitude'.

³⁴ Interestingly, recent research has found correlation between plastic production and use with rising greenhouse gas emissions. Lisa Anne Hamilton et al, 'Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet', *The Centre for International Environmental Law* (2019) <<https://www.ciel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Plastic-and-Climate-FINAL-2019.pdf>> [accessed 17 May 2019].

the poem. Everything is approaching, layer over layer of sky, humming, love and listening add to the porosity of the occasion. There is a sense of creative confusion. The covenant, perhaps, is also to a not-knowing, a pledge to accept the chaos around oneself. This collision of knowing and being (more words that repeat throughout the poem) questions our accountability, when ‘the full selfishness ... of the being’ might be ‘so full of innocence’. Love mesmerises, ‘big enough to hide the cage’ - is this the cage of delusion we trap ourselves in? The clauses shingle into each other in a spacing that is not lucid in its approach but insistent. The cacophony of thought intrudes into the silence of sensation. This intermingling of request and thought creates the final action of the poem.³⁵

This complex, ragged poem fuses a shifting self with the incoming tide and a larger, less definable threat. The sense of being filled and a simultaneous emptying brings a same tension that comes with human presence: the appreciation and understanding of our polluting the ocean:

the
context, ongoingness,
and how it does go on regardless of the strangely sudden coming un-
done of
its passing away.
Silence is welcomed without enthusiasm. (pp.75-6)

The images and ideas that reissue through *Never* as ‘silence’, ‘current’, ‘glance’, ‘gleaming’, ‘love’, and many more, immerse the reader in the poetic co-worlding, not just of each poem, but of the collection as a whole. The layering of repeated images provokes, initially, a physical response, the sense of a washing-over of things and events. This immersion in the world is a sensation that can be forgotten in the normative, terrestrial experience of surface dwelling and spatial distinctions. It might be when the wind is blowing strongly against or with us, we feel this sense of being within an environment when on land, but the constant currents of ocean ensure this same envelopment cannot ever be overlooked in the marine. To be immersed reminds us how each movement of our body

³⁵ It reminds me of Tania Kovats’ sculpture ‘Where Three Seas Meet’, glass. *Offshore: Artists Explore the Sea*, curated by Invisible Dust (Hull: Ferens Art Gallery / Hull Maritime Museum, 1 April-28 August 2017) In this piece three round bottomed flasks half-filled with water and connected by glass pipes have the semblance of womb and ovaries, both substantial by its presence and shape and made insubstantial by its transparency. This sense of materiality and immateriality seems to capture the nature of water, a perception of it and how that feeds into a sense of fluid self: ‘We, who can now be neither wholly here nor disappear’.

in the world will ripple out, having clear repercussions on those which are both near and far, ‘how old-fashioned: distance:’ states the protagonist in ‘Covenant’ (p.74).

ii. Poem as Emergent Body

Often in *Never* it seems a line could be extracted from one poem and it would speak within or from any number of the collection’s poems, giving it a different tone or texture, embracing it within its own locale. For example: ‘It seemed to furl-out, as from an opening / a gesture of mind geometric in its widening’ (‘Estuary’, pp.58-9) speaks directly to (or alongside) ‘the crystalline green risings of just-before furling, / then the furling’ of ‘The Complex Mechanism of the Break’ (p.33). This emulates the oceanic ecosystem. Kelp can live in a rock pool or attached to a rock off shore, or float miles having been torn from its holdfast. It behaves differently in each place, but superficially appears the same; similarly the individual who, day to day, adjusts her interaction with the world and its opening to her. The reciprocity of this co-worlding is fundamental to the eco-poetical ethics found within a marine lyric. The kelp, human and sea, like the extracted line, clause or image, exhibit how the same body moves through different states. In this section I will explore how the changes arising within the bodies of water and human (or of water and kelp) can emerge within the body that is a marine lyric.

In the poems of *Never* reversible synaesthetic perception enables all senses to interact within body and admit the sensations of the world. The intercausal dynamic between perceiver and perceived that Graham tracks between mind, eye and wave illustrates what Stevens wrote of imagination as ‘a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality.’³⁶ Stevens’ violent force conflates the wave with the human response. It is not simply water that makes the wave, but the motion of water that makes the wave’s force, so in imagination’s case, the process of thinking is the force. Graham writes of a similar exchange in ‘Exit Wound’:

The presence [only the mind can do
this] of

³⁶ *The Necessary Angel*, p.36.

Aligning Graham's 'feeling' with Stevens' 'imagination pressing back' includes the imagination as an element of embodied, synaesthetic perception.³⁷ More than just belonging to the human body, the imagination occupies the collision that charges the circuitry that connects two bodies. This force actualizes in 'The Complex Mechanism of the Break' as the mind ruffles alongside the waves and eyes, so conjuring the mind's eye (as distinguished from the 'watching-eye'). The lens of imagination enables the perceiver to feel both part of the world and be apart from it enough to witness her experience, and document it.

This balancing of being enfolded and unfolded is not limited to the one poem, and my exploration of it might benefit from moving beyond *Never* for a moment. Images from Graham's 'Wanting a Child' in *Erosion* and Stevens' 'Sonambulisma' in *Transport to Summer* (1947), can also illustrate how imagination is located within the world as much as the perceiver themselves. In 'Wanting a Child' Graham partially enters the sea:

Sometimes I'll come this far from home
merely to dip my fingers into this glittering, archaic
sea that renders everything
identical, flesh
where mind and body
blur. The seagulls squeak, ill-fitting
hinges, the beach is thick
with shells.³⁸

Here the sea's 'flesh' is the location of the blurring mind and body. Its visceral nature obscures the sense of which body is being blurred with the mind; creating instead a *sensation* of both human body and watery body, from where all life once originated.³⁹ Gulls 'squeak' as hinges, ill-fitting between sea and beach, another body (of land) for the poem to hold. They also articulate between sound and silence, between life and death.

³⁷ This was touched upon at the end of my reading of 'The Complex Mechanism of the Break'.

³⁸ *Erosion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.29.

³⁹ That, as Alana Mitchell claims, 'has the same chemical composition to early stage embryonic fluid' in *Seasick* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2009), p.22.

The image of seagull as hinge echoes the gull of ‘Sonambulisma’ that rises from Stevens’ ‘old shore’ (as Graham’s is an ‘archaic sea’). In Stevens’ poem the ocean resembles ‘a thin bird / That thinks of settling, yet never settles’. The creature is both of and from the sea, flying as imagination beyond its physical space. Without the bird, the poem goes on to speculate, ‘[t]he ocean, falling and falling on the hollow shore, / Would be a geography of the dead’, a place that lacks interconnectivity, a ‘pervasive being’, from where man can no longer activate meaning (*Collected Poems*, p.266). This place is the sleep-walking state of the title. The seabird, as an imaginative dynamic, rises from an environment in flux, making visible connections between things we might not be able to see.⁴⁰ These could be the molluscs in Graham’s poem and the depths of sea a gull can reach as a diver that we physically can’t. To set Steven’s use of a gull as tangible imagination-in-process, rising from the world, alongside Graham’s gull as hinge (ill-fitting but audible) allows a means of regarding the imaginative act of mind that is a poem as a hinge. As such it can be seen as a manifestation of the flesh unfolding between world and poet, its circuitry sustained by both bodies. These are the ‘kinaesthetic unfoldings’ Merleau-Ponty describes as experience.⁴¹ The materiality of imagination, rising in and out of the perceiving body and the body perceived, becomes embodied as a distinct thing: here, the phenomenological occasion of a marine lyric.

‘Covenant’ illustrates this, as the imagination has been superseded by the written word:

This in an age in which imagination
is no longer all-powerful. Where if you had
to write the whole thing down, you could.
(Imagine: to see the whole thing written down) (p.73)

The intertwined dynamic of reversible perception enables seeing ‘the whole thing’ written down as well as to have written it down. Writing, experiencing and imagining have become inseparable. Also in *Never*, in ‘By the Way’, Graham writes, ‘Now you can enter your clearing: dazzling / imagination’ (p.87). This clearing has, in the same poem, been described as something ‘that folds inside itself / body upon body that has traversed’, and is kept cleared by the wind, which provides the force of thinking of the waves in ‘The

⁴⁰ This is as opposed to fancy, which Stevens claims, in *The Necessary Angel*, is unrooted in the physical world.

⁴¹ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.362.

Complex Mechanism of the Break'. How the immanent body of a marine lyric accomplishes its emergence is what I want to explore next.

In his unfinished work, *The Visible and Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty identifies the 'metaphysical structure of our flesh' as the 'chiasm'.⁴² The chiasm mediates the metaphysical aspects of flesh, and in this section enables an unpacking of the relationship between perception and language. 'Solitude', also from *Never*, presents a dialogue between 'editor' and 'speaking subject'. It is not preoccupied with the marine, so I won't read in detail here but it does illustrate what Graham has spoken of about the relationship between text, author and reader. In a recent recording she asks, perhaps herself, perhaps the audience:

'What is the first person? ... Who's speaking? It's not exactly me, it's not *not* me. It uses a part of me. When you write a poem and then you revise it, you're a different you every time you revise it.'⁴³

These successive writers and editors ensure the poem's body remains as mutable as the original occasion that the poem rises from. The chiasm then could be felt to occur between poet's temporal selves within the poem and the language of the poem. It crosses the on-going incarnations of self recorded in elements of the poem.⁴⁴ In 'Dusk, Shore, Prayer' a more implicit distinction between the multiple selves occurs in a response to will and perception of wave action:

the moving of the
waters

(which feels tugged)(the rows of scripting
[even though it's a trick] adamant with
self-unfolding)(wanting the eye to catch ...

(p.31)

The sensation of being tugged by water and the allusion to their 'scripting', as writing or a manuscript, are separated and connected by being placed with the multiple sets of parentheses. The distinguishing of body and mind is closed later in the poem by the desire to 'feel' and 'wrap' the 'waterlipped / scripting'. The sound of language, a 'true speech' of

⁴² Alphonso Lingis, in the translator's preface of *The Visible and Invisible*, p.xl. It is perhaps worth noting, in the context of a thesis framed by the seen and unseen, that Merleau-Ponty took the word *chiasm* from poet Paul Valéry's term *chiasma*, which "refers to the X formed where the optic nerve cross at the base of the brain, allowing for images from the right visual field to be processed in the left visual system of the brain and vice versa" Toadvine, 2009, p.110.

⁴³ In conversation with Poetry East < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90xZr_7Nz3M> [accessed 21 January 2018].

⁴⁴ Merleau-Ponty also writes of the chiasm as a "speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived circularity" *The Visible and Invisible*, p.265.

moving waters, is not 'known' in an intellectual sense, yet is inserted into what is seen. The protagonist then struggles to balance herself being apart *from* while being-*in-the*-world: intellectually, or imaginatively recording the sensational experience. This develops into a threat of being 'emptied by the wound of meaning':

The stump interpretation.
Spelled from the living world. (p.31)

The struggle seems to come from rendering the occasion as poem, making manifest the chiasm between the imagining selves (writer and editor) - whom I also identify as protagonist (as the embodied perceiver within the world of the poem) - and the language at their disposal. Graham's use of brackets seems to turn the struggle into an attempt to balance the body of waves (sensation) with the body of the poem (language). 'Spelled' could be literally how a word is constructed, or a conjuring, or both. The protagonist admits to grow 'sharper by / this sighting', as if there is benefit in the interpretation, the translation of co-worlding as emergent poem. She appears to be attempting to participate in it as she unveils her questioning of it. The path back from this inquiry is at the end of the poem 'barely findable', but, ultimately, the final word is 'findable'. Such questioning is the dynamic within the exchange of protagonist, her being-in-the-world and of her language that makes meaning of it. This fragmentation of self in the attempt to feel and interpret a presence offers no straightforward path into or back from. The meaning of this co-worlding is potentially unfindable, just as we might become lost if we are unable to understand ourselves within it, or how the opening of a poem expresses itself.

To understand the imaginative space of the chiasm as metaphysical, despite it feeling as 'ill-fitting' as the squeaking gulls, it might be useful to fold Merleau-Ponty's thoughts, across the years of his writing, back into themselves and consider the intertwinings of physical world, protagonist and imagination within his writings on language. In 'Indirect Language and Voices of Silence' (1964), Merleau-Ponty argues it is the difference in language that makes its meaning, distinguishing it from the babble of babies. What if, he asks, 'language expresses as much by what is between words as by the words themselves?'⁴⁵ He suggests that it is the difference between syllables, or words, that holds

⁴⁵ From *Signs*, trans. by Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.45. His argument builds from Saussurean linguistics.

what they attempt to codify. It is the gaps in sound that make meaning, the distinction between a plosive and soft consonant, the shapes of vowels. Once a thing is 'spelled from the living world' and enters language it is transformed from the original experience. It might also be useful here to recall Graham's observation of Stevens' 'gap, the crack in the sensibility that compels the action of the poem into being'.⁴⁶

This gap could refer to larger one arising between the unfamiliar union of words or line break. While the gaps remind us of the limitation of attempting to put into words what is essentially incommunicable, the gaps could be where the embodied sensibility lie, the chiasm that occurs between the imagination of protagonist and their language. As Graham says, 'Listen: between the words' ('Where: The Person', p.78). The embodiment of the gap - the chiasm made tangible by the words around it - is foundation for the poem's immanence. In it lies the vibrations created between words that enable an opening of being, as experienced earlier in the flesh between human and the waves. The interval is what Merleau-Ponty claims makes the ideas found in literature couple to the sensibility that provoked them. Ideas, he writes, are only known by our corporeality: 'it is the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible'.⁴⁷ The invisible Merleau-Ponty is referring to here is the same force that forms the attachment between body and ocean, as between the words, that unfolds in the current of a marine lyric, driving the rhythm, pace and structure of it. The experience made immanent with a poem offers a far stronger visceral impact than scientific abstraction. It is Graham's knotting of scientific terminology and concepts within an embodied experience, providing enough gaps that could be described as 'ill-fitting', that enable the poem to emerge as a body of its own co-worlding.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ In conversation with Thomas Gardner in *Regions of Unlikeness: Explaining Contemporary Poetry* <https://www.joriegraham.com/gardner_interview_1999> [accessed 20 November 2015]. Thomas, M. Wynn in 'Full fathom five' in *The Guardian* (2008) cites Graham as saying her writing is a 'cadenza of gaps' <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/may/03/featuresreviews.guardianreview25>> [accessed 5 February 2019].

⁴⁷ *The Visible and the Invisible*, p.151.

⁴⁸ Louise Westling, in 'Merleau-Ponty and the Eco-literary Imaginary' from *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. by Hubert Zapf (Berlin Walter de Gruyter, 2016), p.66, comments that Merleau Ponty describes modern art as 'a wild Being of visible and invisible meanings that are dynamic and emergent.' His writings on the impressionists explore how the art manifests the intersection of artist and world, the rising imaginary.

How language is levered apart through Graham's poems in the tension between line unit and sentence, the use and inversion of compound words and the interleaving of parenthesis and square brackets, and their resistance to straightforwardly consumable meaning, will be considered further in chapter two. In the remainder of this chapter I want to explore how the reversibility of the chiasm occurs between poem and its protagonist; and how this exchange might lead to understanding the marine lyric as a phenomenological occasion that informs and reforms her and its own on-going, open nature. The marine lyric, as with the perceiving of the waves, is both external and internal of the protagonist's imagination. Its co-worlding emerges between the occasion and the on-going imaginative process with the protagonist as she writes and edits the marine lyric.

The chiasm here is maintained and kept vital by a sense of depth felt between both phenomena. Jean-Paul Sartre's exploration of the imagination is referenced throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception* and I want to draw upon his thinking to help deepen an understanding of how the marine lyric, working across the chiasm, maintains an on-going emergence of occasion. Sartre claims the imagined image is 'marred by an essential emptiness' and can be quickly exhausted by the imaginer's limited knowledge of the imagined thing.⁴⁹ If I was to imagine the seashore I am limited to my preconception of it that comes from empirical and learnt knowledge. I cannot be surprised by a conjured image, because I am its conjurer. However, if the writing of the shore encompasses the internal and external moment, as Graham does, the disjuncture between the poem's language and the perception that drives it would prevent Sartre's argued limitation of an imagined thing. If meaning is held in these intervals, their lack of language ensures any meaning cannot be entirely known or fixed. There is no signifier for what is not said, therefore a protean sense of meaning is framed by the poem's language. The greater the gap between words, by which I mean the intrusion of white space, the less familiar coupling of two words, or a more disruptive syntax, the possibility of meaning created by them widens. Through embodying her imagination in the language of a poem (highlighting its gaps), the protagonist activates the imagined thing and the occasion of the poem from herself. This creates the chiasm between herself and the poem.

⁴⁹ *The Imaginary*, trans. by Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), p.141.

This chiasm creates a dynamic reversibility for both bodies. The opening lines of 'Ebbtide' highlight this reversibility:

I am a frequency, current flies through. One has
to ride
the spine. (p.36)

Frequency in physics is a vibration or transmission. So is this frequency the protagonist, or poem, or some as yet unidentified phenomena? The spine of a human or the metaphorical spine of an idea, or poem, is created by the 'outrides' here.⁵⁰ The subject of the poem is a frequency. This is identified as surf in the sixth line, which codifies the appearance of the outrides, short phrases or images set as the force of a wave. In another poem, 'Surf', a mind bends 'into those waves's waves'. The 'one' in 'Ebbtide' seems to straddle mind and surf. Four lines on:

Making one's way one sees the changes.
What took place before one
looked.
Snakeskin of darker sands in with the light. (p.36)

Process is perceived before the phenomena of the tide lines. A snake is evoked later when the protagonist has made her own mark, in the sand with a stick that 'snakes towards / thought.' As the sands change colour so the protagonist makes her own changes, both in marks to the beach and the words on the page - echoing the 'scripting' of 'Dusk, Shore, Prayer', and in 'Evolution' where 'long sentences' of kelp are 'brought forth / and left-off, phrases of gigantic backing-off' (p.22). The intertwining of writing made by surf and poet emphasizes how language could be seen as rising from the circularity of the two bodies to create a new embodied force of the imagination. The going back and forth through the language of shore and of poem ensures the imagination that crosses between the two is never static and keeps both fluid. The affective state between poem and protagonist develops unpredictably and spontaneously as long as the language remains open, in motion as the surf. A marine lyric, therefore, enables a conjuring of what Sartre calls the

⁵⁰ I have borrowed the term 'outride' from Vendler's description of the 'small piece-lines dropping down at the right margin of their precursor-line' in *The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.79.

‘inexhaustible depth’ of the occasion that provokes the poem, making it a new occasion, a new body, beyond that of poet or place.⁵¹

This intertwining between writer and that which is written, maintaining the unfolding nature of the poem-as-occasion, is perhaps enabled by Graham writing many of the poems in *Never* in situ at the shore. As she moved between writing and observing, she found herself trying to expand the poem to hold that extended moment. She describes this way of working as

an attempt to change the power ratio of witness to world, to give the world—the subject—more power. To get one’s self to where one is open to being “corrected” by the given...’.⁵²

Here I could rephrase Merleau-Ponty to say, it is by lending her body to the world that the poet changes the world into poems.⁵³ The poems, then, are charged by the encounter between world and human. Through this exchange of phenomena, perception and imagination the co-worlding of the marine lyric emerges. It is, what Merleau-Ponty calls, ‘the imaginary texture of the real’ that is conveyed and draws in the reader (in the case of a poem), to re-create a similar sense of immersion within this new phenomena of the distinct poem.⁵⁴

This force-in-the-world that is activated by the artist becomes the active subject that ‘corrects’ or affects the artist during her process of re-enactment. This transition is made explicit in the examples of circuitry between poet and shore, and protagonist and poem, such as ‘the pebbled wordlike pulling down’ of ‘The Complex Mechanism of the Break’, and the ‘nouns of large clamshells’ in ‘Evolution’ that the seagulls (those hinges of flesh)

⁵¹ *The Imaginary*, p.144.

⁵² *The Paris Review* 165 (Spring 2003) <<https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/263/jorie-graham-the-art-of-poetry-no-85-jorie-graham>> [accessed 1 December 2016] (para 53 of 174). I am reminded of painter Joan Eardley’s giant canvases of the east coast of Scotland. She also composed outside where both canvas and she are dwarfed by the sea and sky around her, creating a similar ‘power’ in the subject of the waves that tumult across the canvas to cause the viewer’s sensibility to rise up into the force of the wave and be engulfed by it simultaneously.

⁵³ He actually writes ‘It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings.’ He goes on: ‘To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.’ (‘Eye and Mind’ pp.123-4). Merleau-Ponty focuses these observations on the work of Cezanne, but has also stated the act of expression by the writer ‘is not very different from the painter’s’ (*Signs*, p.45).

⁵⁴ ‘Eye and Mind’, trans. by Michael B. Smith, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991) p.126.

are ‘dragging and retrieving’ (p.23). Such instances can be found throughout *Never* of the process of poem-making being at the heart of the poem’s co-worlding where everything is being re-made, re-scripted and re-formed. The protagonist and her writing activates rather than closes the gaps between herself and the world she writes of by making explicit the attempt to give language to what is wordless. Articulating the fluctuating relationship between the waves, selfhood and poetry comes in this manifestation of imagination that creates sensation as patterns made in one poem and remade in another. The transformation that arises from this ongoing engagement with imagination - observations of changes in self and the sea - is what Neimanis calls ‘radical imagination’. What keeps it original and vital is for the imagination - here as a marine lyric - to be ‘continually engaged and reengaged, negotiated and renegotiated.’⁵⁵ The gaps seem to be crucial in this dynamic, not just between the words but as the white space around them. They help the reader and protagonist to decentralise their experience, to attend and deepen their attunement to the nonhuman world. This positioning encourages the active participation in a meaning-making that is embodied and non-language based.

iii. The Ecology of White Space

So far I have explored how embodied perception activates a reversible space between perceiver and perceived and how this can manifest as the force of imagination unfolding in the gap between protagonist and the language of a poem. Now I will explore the relationship between reversible perception and the larger gap or white space that unfolds around a poem. While Merleau-Ponty claims that ‘the writer works on the wrong side of his material. He has to do only with language, and it is thus that he suddenly finds himself surrounded by meaning’, this disregards how much more the poet has at her disposal to work with than simply the space between words.⁵⁶ The white space around a poem, that locates (or dislocates it), builds on the gap between words to open the attentive reader up further to a pre-linguistic sensation, the mutable unsayable that language fails to express.⁵⁷ This section will attempt to fold back the meaning-making aspect of language into the

⁵⁵ *Hydrofeminism*, p.175.

⁵⁶ *Signs*, p.41.

⁵⁷ Toadvine describes silence as being ‘the key difference between the sensible and sense, that is, between the world of perception and the world of meaning’, 2009, p.128.

amorphous space around a poem to discover how this might help us to decentralise the humanist experience of language. Like following an estuary to sea, awareness of the space between words can lead us to experiencing the force that surrounds and rubs against the poem. As sea and shore shape and affect each other's integral force, it could be that the white space running through and around a poem offers a recalibration of the force between words on a page and humans in a more-than-human world.⁵⁸

My readings so far have attempted to reconfigure the relationship between what is traditionally seen as fore- and backgrounds. The more the poem's white space is felt to underpin the energetic dynamic of which it resists or shapes, the less it can be sidelined as a site of placelessness, forming a new 'environmental counterethics' within the marine lyric.⁵⁹ Such counterethics emerging through this focus on white space depend on viewing the white space and language as being in a continual process of interdependence, un- and en-folding into the other. The ineffability of the white space affects the language it erodes. It offers a phenomenological experience beyond the semiotic limitation of language; just as seeing land from sea offers a new perspective on the relational dynamic between what the land contains and how it is formed.

Observing land from sea brings a new, almost unrecognizable perspective. Landmarks transit differently in relation to one another, seemingly further away or at odd angles. At night, the throng of lights (of traffic, streets, buildings) rises in an indistinguishable glow. The uniform plane of water, despite the cutting white waves and shadow of wind on surface, seems to bring the distant closer. Everything is more immediate. Focus lies in the sea state around the boat, the clouds, and what weather they might hold. Being at sea is an active ever-shifting state of not-knowing, surrender or anticipation, giving rise to an pressing scrutiny of other life, or suggestions of life or causal forces around me.

⁵⁸ Maggie Nelson makes an interesting observation when she writes 'Space is distinct from alienation. It is fundamentally about volume, rather than about distance', in *The Art of Cruelty* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2011), p.107. This section is attempting to reduce the distance between protagonist and sea by exploring the volume of the white space around a poem.

⁵⁹ Christopher Manes, 'Nature and Silence' in *The EcoCriticism Reader* ed. by Cheryll Glotfelty & Harold Fromm (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.16. Manes wants to counter the ethics of exploitation that has flourished around 'our garrulous human subjectivity'.

Rather than seeing this as disorientating, as Timothy Clark describes what he calls ‘wild nature’ as a space outside of ‘given cultural identities’, the occupation of the poetic white space needs to be regarded as an opportunity for *reorientation*. It offers a new engagement with what lies behind, beyond or within the language presented, valuing the white space as having agency within the poem.⁶⁰ The potential of white space where truth, as opposed to meaning, lies offers a site in which the reader journeys with a felt sense as much as intellectually. This way she can connect images, rhythms or sounds that might not, at first sight, be aligned. Another way of describing this is as a bringing into action our peripheral sense, which enables a wider view, less fixed on the self, a softer, more integrated absorbing of the buffeting language. Meaning does not hold the same imperative, time is not linear, but there is a gathering of impressions that will, ultimately, provoke a response. The language of the body might be slower than that of the mind, but ultimately it permeates our consciousness more deeply.

The dynamic between white space and word, as with sea and shore undergoes the same slow erosion Graham identifies in Bishop’s shoreline poems. This section focuses on how the ineffable makes inroads into the known; the push and pull of the inexpressible alongside the language of a marine lyric. My socialised self at sea undergoes a transformation, abraded by the salt wind and water. In the poem ‘Erosion’, from the collection *Erosion*, the protagonist enacts another act of disintegration that begins, metaphysically and physically, through handling pebbles on a beach:

I run them
through my fingers. Each time
some molecules rub off
evolving into
the invisible. Always
I am trying to feel
the erosion—

(*Erosion*, p.56)

The erosion is of both protagonist and the pebbles. The protagonist is ‘always’ trying to sense this act of transubstantiation, which releases them into molecules, and the white space beyond the line.⁶¹ The dispersal of these into space and silence does not reduce their agency. It is something to be felt, that has a materiality as much as the flesh of stone and

⁶⁰ Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.25.

⁶¹ Gardner writes of Graham’s ‘touching what escapes speech’ in ‘Accurate Failures: The Work of Jorie Graham’ in *Hollins Critic*, 24.4 (1987), p.1.

woman, as the flesh between them now fills with particles of both. The particles, while invisible, will form something else - this marine lyric, for example, emerging from the pebbles and on to her dying grandfather, ageing lover and

the erosion
of the right word, what it shuts,
or the plants coming forth as planned out my window,

The 'right word' alludes to mortality, already touched upon with the grandfather, a dissolution of mind, and the poem itself. What is 'shut' is not made explicit, the hard line end stops the thought abruptly, as abruptly perhaps as a 'right word' might fix meaning that is in the same process of erosion as the human and pebble. Nonetheless the sentence runs onto a new line to offer new life in the form of plants on a window sill. The possibility of there not being a 'right word' rings out later in the poem with glasses of water, where:

The less full the glass the truer
the sound.

(*Erosion*, p.57)

If the right word closes the possibility of meaning, does the poem suggest that the sound of an open-mouthed wine glass is somehow 'truer'? As felt in 'The Complex Mechanism of the Break' sound is brought into the body by its vibration and made physical, material, against the eardrum. This sense of vacuum as vibration brings us back to the erosion of words and the materiality of the space around words. Here the vibration of sound holds a truth that can be felt rather than the explicit meaning of language.

Many of the poems in *Erosion* have short line lengths, less employed in Graham's later work. Of this, and the greater white space short lines generates, Graham writes: '[t]he voice in that book was, in fact, so aware of the overriding presence of the white space that it just tried to mash words into that space.'⁶² Extending and foreshortening the lines, enabling the poem speak into and be rubbed by the white space, suggests a greater engagement with bearing the 'weight' of it. Acknowledging the white space the poem emerges from is the first step in sensing its agency and the pressure it places upon the language and poem.

⁶² Jorie Graham & Thomas Gardner in Conversation from *Regions of Unlikeness: Explaining Contemporary Poetry*. <http://www.joriegraham.com/interview_gardner_1987> [accessed 23 April 2019] (para. 79 of 148).

In 'The Time Being' (from *Never*) sounds such as 'bird-chatter' and 'dog-bark', subject and their sound compounded into one word, are initially at the centre of a 'supreme unfolding' of the poem. When the poem focuses on fishermen casting a net it catches the previous sounds of the poem as the whiteness of an 'uncanny' light whose shadows also snare the protagonist. The whitening (that is 'wind really'):

juts wild through
all strands of
the netting (sash, grout, palmfrond) and is, of a sudden, made to let up, slow
down, as the
caught fish must.

(p.46)

This interjection into the white space emphasizes its action, catching the 'juts wild through' which then vibrates into the space beyond the line. The poem's second section, located explicitly on Palm Beach Todos Santos, begins, 'The whole of the unfolding like a skin / coming-off'. What was sound and light, the knots of sensation, are now like sand, tiny molecules of eroded land. The line break emphasises the unfolding, the 'coming-off' as a peeling back, impelled by the white space. As pebbles and words were coupled in 'The Complex Mechanism of the Break' and 'Erosion', language might also be felt as skin of the poem's body, touched by the vibrating white space, the invisible that sustains the marine lyric.⁶³

The ethics of the dynamics between human, nonhuman and their more-than-human worldings are encapsulated in the ethics of how we read or listen to the white space. As Graham has said, '[i]t is as if that silence — what is in that silence — were asking a question. You have to hear the question the silence — or what is in the silence — is asking of you.'⁶⁴ White space does more than simply allow a reverberation or extension of meaning. It offers a lack of authority or certainty, a realm of imaginative unknown and unsayable. In contrast to the imperfect precision of language, the expansiveness of the white space needs to be heard alongside the visible ink. It, like the potential consequence of our actions, has a scale that Timothy Morton calls a 'hyperobject: a phenomenon so

⁶³ This fusion also appears in 'The Complex Mechanism of the Break': 'the pebbled wordlike pulling down and rolling up'.

⁶⁴ JP O'Malley, 'Interview: Jorie Graham's poetry', in *The Spectator* (2012) <<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2012/06/interview-jorie-grahams-poetry/#>> [accessed 23 January 2019] (para. 6 of 16).

extended in space and time that it exceeds description.’⁶⁵ White space challenges the sense of human exceptionalism held through use of language. The more it intervenes in the form of the poem - through outrides, the diversity of line length, indentations and other mechanisms Graham uses - the more it asks to be heard. In ‘Evolution’ the protagonist asks:

What good is my silence for, what would it hold
 inside, keeping it free?
Sing says the folding water on stiller water—

(p.25)

This is one of many of the shoreline poems of *Never* that speaks to Stevens’ ‘The Idea of Order at Key West’ from *Ideas of Order* where ‘the water never formed to mind or voice’. On the page Stevens’ poem appears not to intrude irregularly into the white space, keeping to pentameter line units, it describes how the sea’s ‘empty sleeves’ mimic the constant song of a woman singing on its shore. It is ‘not ours’ this strangely ‘understandable’, ‘inhuman’ cry. What she sings is what she hears; while the sound heard by the poem’s narrator is more than the spirit of sea or of sky, more than the singer’s voice among

Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped
On high horizons, mountainous atmosphere
Of sky and sea.
 It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.

(*Collected Poems*, p.110)

Everything around the singer provides the circumstance for her voice. Without the sky and sea there would be no origin, or framing, of her voice, and yet she is also the maker of ‘the world / In which she sang’.⁶⁶ The images of the above lines overreach the poem’s pentameter, the end words of ‘heaped’ and ‘atmosphere’ allude to the unseeable distance which continues beyond the poem’s visual form. Her voice accentuates how the environment vanishes, the tautology of creation: as something is made it simultaneously disappears. When the singing stops, by the end of the poem, the night becomes ‘mastered’ by boat lights that apportion the sea in an imposed ordering of it. But within, or beyond this, is the swelling of words that are of ‘ourselves and of our origins’, in a ghostly, affecting echo of what rises from the sea.

⁶⁵ This definition is by James Bradley, ‘Writing on the Precipice’ in *Sydney Review of Books*, 21 February, 2017 <<https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/writing-on-the-precipice-climate-change/>> [accessed 20 January 2019] (para. 28 of 40).

⁶⁶ Merleau-Ponty describes speech as ‘a fold in the immense fabric of language’ in *Signs*, p.42.

The only shortened/indented lines in the poem come where white space interjects between the images of sky and sea and the voice, as seen above. This sense of voice being part of and apart from the flowing environment is a reminder of how imagination enables both a witnessing and documentation. The receiving and making of this world is analogous to the co-worlding of the marine lyric. Like the words on their page, the singer animates her environment to the extent of obscuring it. The water ‘never form[ing] to mind or voice’, vanishes; the singer becomes more than it and has transformed it, ‘like a body wholly body’.⁶⁷ If white space corresponds to a sea that surrounds and connects landmasses, shaping the continents of our planet, it could denote the influence the climate and atmosphere exerts on land. In a marine lyric I’m interested in understanding what ‘truer sound’ this sea of white space can give to the issuing atmosphere of the poem.

Graham’s use of outrides are a good place to begin. The second ‘Prayer’ of *Never* is longer, overlaying elements of shoreline with woodland. Throughout is a searching for a sense of place within a historical sweep. There are details of birds, fringes of weeds or trees that make allusions to a larger story the protagonist is part of. Many of the lines are punctuated with a word or two, attached to the previous line through sense but accentuating a sensation of space by their singularity on the page. For example, in ‘Prayer’:

For better [she said] or for worse [he said]
taking their place alongside the thirst
in line, something vaguely audible about
the silence
(a roar
actually)(your sea at night) but not as
fretful not as monstrously tender
as the sea wind-driven was
earlier on
in “creation.” (p.15)

The ‘roar’ hanging in open parenthesis on that short line suggests for the instant of the line the space is roaring, expansive, energetic. The silence here is also a roar, as the sea is.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ This has resonances of Graham’s hinged bodies of sea and woman in ‘Wanting a Child’.

⁶⁸ Reminiscent of WS Graham’s ‘we two go down / Roaring between the lines’ in ‘Letter V’ from ‘Seven Letters’, *Collected Poems* (London, Faber and Faber, 2004), p.132. As an aside, this line was used as the title of Adam Piette’s ‘Roaring between the lines’: WS Graham and the White Threshold of Line-Breaks’ in *W.S.*

watching the gulls, is amplified by the changing angles of movement and sound. The reversibility of touch is made explicit. Gulls are pressed in their flight by the wind and words buck back beneath the line they are inherently attached to.

The wind swallows my words one
by
one. The words leaping too, over their own
staying.
Oceanward too, as if being taken
away
into splash—my clutch of
words

(p.28)

The act of reading is affected by the wind inherent in the white space. As silence can roar, so tenderness can be monstrous. Everything is precarious. All must be attended to carefully, even the silence, the white space, of wind and ocean beneath the waves. Following just the outrides in this poem offers an alternative reading: ‘by staying away words saying no out there grows peated designation forgetting me as if unspeakable inwardness of meanings...’. I love this enigmatic spluttering, the near unspeakability of sensation: almost as if the words are pebbles in the mouth. This alternative reading doesn’t exactly make sense but alludes to something jarring, alive, that is as yet unknown to the protagonist. At this threshold of land and sea, where sea-wind erodes into our known language, we are given spits of communication, hints of a required reorientation. What we know to be true changes, if we engage with our not-knowing.

This resistance to meaning-making moves us away from the anthropocentric management of our world, where it is viewed as a thing to be read then mined. Rather, the marine lyric embraces white space as sea as an agency that operates beyond the authority of the poet, or protagonist. It provides the open flow of possibilities to be felt by the body of experience and absorbed into a wider body of relations. Here at the end of the poem, the realized body is not alone, she is entangled in word as she is in world, as listener as reader. Longenbach writes eloquently on how these poems inhabit the world when he says, ‘[t]o recognize that place becomes unspeakable as it is spoken is to recognize that we habit the world because we inhabit language.’⁷⁰ The body of the poem is used by the body of the protagonist in navigating the unknown.

⁷⁰ ‘The Place of Jorie Graham’, p.217.

The white space of a poem is not merely an extension of the printed poem but a place of activity and movement that encourages awareness of the porosity of boundaries between language and its silence, form and its environment; between different modes of being. This trans-corporeality continues and is suspended by the between-ness of these different bodies, a fluidity maintained by the reversible on-goingness we have explored between perceiver and place, poet and poem, language and silence. The protagonist's 'I' extends the poet's original experience and moves through the spatial and temporal dissolutions a marine co-worlding creates. This co-worlding realizes the locatedness of being and the being in the location that opens the perceiver to their responsibility for being in and creating the world. I shall explore further dissolutions between perceived boundaries in the next chapter, 'The Blurred Lyric'.

Fear, thigh deep in large white rollers destabilizing my attempt to remain standing, crashes away as I plunge into deeper water. I am buoyant. Horizontal, face down in the water, I need do nothing but float, buffeted by the crumbling waves, caught in the glossy stream that pushes them onward. The water is clear enough for me to see the seafloor, more than three meters below. There large volcanic boulders, rounded by the force of tide and currents, stretch out from the shore, falling away in to deeper waters. Small shoals of oval fish, lime green and turquoise, flit below me. Atlantic wrasse. They gleam ultra violet, invisible but for their muscling. I truss with them. My hair, tendrils on the sea's movement, swims in front of my face. Lines of sunlight cut through the swash of waves in penetrating sheets that angle this way and that. Bream, one moment brown against the rock, turn into a daze of flashing silver and nibble at the outcrop I am trying to tether myself to. The propulsion streaming me backwards is easier to relinquish to. Elongated, my arms reach over my head, hands, whitened by the blue light, are wafted by cold currents, while my feet flipper in warmer water. Fish shimmy past and beneath me, treating me as a driftwood trunk. I have never spent so much time so close to such large creatures so indifferent to my presence. The fizzing and whooshing of oxygen over the rocks, bubbling through my fingers, is as immersive as the thrusting current that carries me. I have no voice here, nothing but muscle and gesticulation. And to come out, staggering, I am caught by waves slapping my calves. And how dizzy I am, now I'm upright without the water to bear me aloft.

‘Blurring, yes, but alive with separateness?’ | The Blurred Lyric

i. The Unfolding Self

Deleuze’s concept of the fold offers a mode of perception that carries the felt experience between bodies through what he calls ‘microperceptions or representations of the world’.¹ His project is committed to a monistic philosophy where an infinity of tiny folds, vibrations, folds within folds, within every thing, are being imperceptibly released, at ‘diverse and indiscernible rhythms’.² His idea of the fold encompasses a single force within which all things unfold and enfold. See it as universe, consciousness or ocean this monism is in a state of process. It is a means by which a marine lyric can unfold the phenomenology of perception explored in chapter one towards a widened subjectivity within the body of a poem.³ Through the application of the fold there is no break between perceiver and perceived, rather the interest lies in how and where they relate to each other.

The reciprocity of being-in-the-world as explored in *Never* are built upon in *Sea Change*, where the world is undergoing growing environmental and political upheavals.⁴ The title of the collection refers back to *The Tempest* with its themes of metamorphosis, conquest and violence. Doubt and transformations recur throughout the collection’s poems, dislodging the protagonist from the shoreline and her perspective. The sea change of the growing climate crisis, coupled with war and post-capitalist economics, is embodied within the poetic occasion, as protagonist tussles with the spindles of hope and despair. I want to use poems from this collection to delve deeper into this complexity of an unfolding being-in-the-world, in a world becoming increasingly erratic. By navigating a more

¹ *The Fold*, trans. by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p.98.

² *Ibid*, p. 99.

³ Evans, on this coupling of philosophical concepts, writes: ‘Merleau-Ponty becoming-Deleuze transforms ‘flesh’ ... into just one couple or block of becoming among the many others that emerge in Being’s line of continual variation ... Deleuze becoming-Merleau-Ponty renders us personal and gives us the status of agents in our own becoming. Moreover, it turns us into phenomenologists insofar as we must admit that we cannot escape ourselves’, p.148.

⁴ The intervening years were a turbulent time for extreme weather events. 2004 saw the Indian Ocean earthquake and ensuing tsunami. In 2005 the US Gulf coast was hit by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma and in 2007 an IPCC report, for the first time, placed the responsibility for climate change on human activities. Catherine Brahi, *New Scientist* (2 February 2007) <<https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn11088-blame-for-global-warming-placed-firmly-on-humankind/>> [accessed 16 April 2019].

turbulent realm what appears chaotic brings forth a more intermingled ontology.⁵ This is not non-sense, nor is it a clearly defined sensible.

For Deleuze the fold both differentiates between things and connects them. It enables a perception of planes - geological, historical, biological, and so on - unfolding from other planes of perception in 'fold over folds... of microscopic and macroscopic processes'.⁶ In 'Underworld', from *Sea Change*, Graham illustrates this as each line unfolds from its predecessor.

The lesson carves
a tunnel through
an occupied territory. Great beaches come into existence, are laved for centuries, small
play where the castles are
built, the water carried up for moats, the buckets lost at the end of the exciting
day, then even the dunes go under, it takes a long while but then
they are gone
altogether, ocean takes place, as today where the overpass revealed the fields gone
under & ⁷

The ampersand, featured throughout *Sea Change*, can be seen as a visual expression of the folds, folding, enfolding and potential unfoldings that populate *Never* as verbs, nouns and adjectives. Its use, rather than the word 'and', ensures it stands out from the words surrounding it. Graham speaks of how 'the ampersand, keep[s] the poems accumulative', building resonance between seemingly distinct aggregates.⁸ At the end of 'Underworld' there are five in five lines. The symbol, folding around on itself, accentuates the enfolding of the 'and' and what it symbolizes. Here, however, it comes as the lines unfold from war to play to history to geology to agricultural loss. The poem continues to unfold across these planes of perception. Even the line lengths, much discussed in reviews of the book, give a sense of this folding and unfolding.⁹ Deleuze makes the point that unfolding is 'not

⁵ As Caroline Williamson notes, '[a]ny sense ... of the body as reliably engaged with the mind, has been displaced into the violence of wind and ocean', in 'Dissecting the Apocalypse: Jorie Graham's *Sea Change*', *Cordite Poetry Review*, May 2017, <<http://cordite.org.au/scholarly/dissecting-the-apocalypse/>> [accessed 28 January 2019]. It is interesting that in her analysis, Williamson also touches on the complexity of the writing self who re-engages with her work as editor. This complexity, evident in the poems of *Never*, is also a feature of these *Sea Change* poems.

⁶ *The Fold*, p106.

⁷ *Sea Change*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), p.12. Further references to poems from *Sea Change* will, in this chapter, will be identified only by bracketed page numbers.

⁸ Katia Grubisic, 'Jorie Graham: Instructions for Building the Arc' *Fiddlehead*, Issue 244, (2010) <<http://www.thefiddlehead.ca/BackIssues.html#FH244>> [accessed 5 February 2019] (para.9 of 19)

⁹ James Longenbach in *The New York Times* (2008) describes them as a 'release from constraint' <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/books/review/Longenbach-t.html>> [accessed 5 February 2019].

the contrary of folding, but follows the fold up to the following fold’, which is how I experience these lines of Graham’s.¹⁰ The images bank up, as particles of sand forming the dunes, to circle back, as if in wind, to continue on, further in the poem, to be re-imagined as a dance-floor, amputation, souls, and the declaration of a God.

Folds, then, contract or extend distances between events. They also cross-hatch, unfold and enfold in any direction, any linearity of time is re-presented haphazardly, or in a circular fashion.¹¹ As Deleuze writes, ‘these are the minute, obscure, confused perceptions that make up our macroperceptions’ as seen in the mutating sand unfolded through the lines above.¹² There is no predefined sequence to where the folds will unfold, as quickly as ‘great beaches’ can be compressed into buckets for play. The world is made up of folds vibrating constantly. Each fold reveals a ‘plane of immanence’ as it occurs.¹³ The importance of the fold lies in its movement, its continuous trajectory towards another fold. Each fold draws one plane into - or out of - another, as easily as the poem turns the protagonist from considering the sweep of history in the beach to its fence-posts to:

maybe one is
inside a seashell, one is what
another force

is hearing— (p.12)

Experiencing the world as folds requires a decentralized subjectivity on the part of the poem’s protagonist, where separation and integrity work simultaneously.¹⁴ Gone is the tentative sense of being separate enough from the world to document it as ‘The Complex Mechanism of the Break’ presses to feel the activated flesh between subject and object. This protagonist is immersed within the world’s immanent unfolding. She is, in the fold of

Vendler describes them as creating a ‘montage’ in ‘A Powerful, Strong Torrent’, *The New York Review of Books* (2008) <<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2008/06/12/a-powerful-strong-torrent/>> [accessed 5 February 2019]. Garth Greenwell makes the criticism that the line ‘overflow with prolixity’ in ‘Beauty’s Canker: On Jorie Graham’, *West Branch* Vol. 63 (2008) <<https://www.bucknell.edu/Documents/StadlerCenter/GreenwellEssay63.pdf>> [accessed 5 February 2019] pp.115-135, p.122. More will be said on the lineation in the final section of this chapter.

¹⁰ *The Fold*, p.6.

¹¹ Deleuze contrasts chronic, or clocktime, that is linear, with what he calls ‘indefinite’ time where everything happens at once (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p.262). More on that cross-hatched unfolding in chapter three.

¹² *The Fold*, p.99.

¹³ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.255.

¹⁴ Lisa Jarnot’s *Sea Lyrics* (San Francisco: Situation, 1996) are unrelenting in their protean subjectivities between each ‘I’, from being the waterfront to being in the freezer, to being wind, being blown sideways. This, as Marcella Durand writes, ‘breaks’ the ‘I’ ‘down into an equality with the objects with which it defines itself.’ ‘The Ecology of Poetry’, *The Eco Language Reader*, ed. by Brenda Iijima (New York: Nightboat Books, 2010) p.120.

one line, 'being handed over to another force', before the shell, in the following line, is put to another ear. The scrolling pleats 'the last river' into the same short line as 'your ear' and the two listeners become a 'we' who then occupy a dance floor, a dance-step, which is felt more like an amputation before unfolding the line to an image of coal bursting with sunlight underground. And so the unfolding continues.

Each iteration of the fold is different. Smaller than a fold, creases offshoot, 'forever agitating the background' as Deleuze describes it.¹⁵ Just as each drop of water is different, either in its tempo-spatial occupation, or size and speed, so too is a fold captured in another, different fold. 'Underworld' begins: 'After great rain' which unfolds as carving tunnels of water, as water that washes away footsteps, then as a Biblical flood:

& the rain is falling chattering pearling completely turning-in, turning, lost
& all the words that might have held it, it now
flows through,
& the rim of the meaning crumbles—& it is the new world you wanted—
(p.13)

The fold is an act of creation. In its interplay of stimulus and ensuing response it marks change. It casts shadows, conceals and reveals height, depth and distance in order to move towards the immanence of any moment. Yet the resistance to a single dimension in the unfolding, that creases and pleats in multiple angles and relations, ensures an on-going vitality between things. These things are different but overlap in the indiscernible way we experience in this poem. The fold's movement cannot be stopped. There is no hierarchies or binaries within the fold. The emergence that comes with each fold is not a distinct object but a subject of the original. In this way everything is enfolded into another thing, depending how you view it. The marine lyric teases out these folds, into an unfolding, like waves folding out of and back into the larger body. These waves, while travelling on the reverberation of an offshore storm to the shore, are carried by deeper currents circling the globe unaffected by surface winds. So while the ocean has been superficially divided for navigational and cultural ease into the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic and Southern Oceans, and each of these oceans have seas, bays, gulfs and straits, named after explorers,

¹⁵ *The Fold*, p.106.

the abutting land, and so forth, it is still an uninterrupted mass. The marine lyric is committed to this sense of wholeness, through which everything unfolds.¹⁶

Because of this sense of world as unified one in which all things interact, Deleuze and Guattari dispute the notion of metaphor, and make the instruction to ‘Kill metaphor’, preferring instead to see things in combination rather than comparison.¹⁷ Their project argues that the virtual, imagined world is the primary world of experience. For them the idea of metaphor is false, a label fixing two bodies that are unified through their unfolding. As such, for Deleuze the fold is not a metaphor but a process that expands the single subjectivity of any thing. The lyric ‘I’ of a marine lyric follows this concept to take ‘I’ beyond its experiencing body and recognise it as the fold between external world and the internal power of imaging that is in constant flux. Perceiving what constitutes ‘world’ underpins the unfolding of a marine lyric into a new co-worlding of all the folds vibrating in that occasion. Boundaries in the ocean, as in a marine lyric, are not fixed. The fold celebrates this. Graham’s claim: ‘I really do not speak for others — it is not useful’ makes a case for poems in *Sea Change*, and later in *Fast*, to be heard as an emergent process between the mutable interaction between internal and external forces.¹⁸

Poems throughout *Sea Change* unfold through the embodied protagonist and other bodies in the world she co-creates. The ocean offers the marine lyric an interestingly mutable environment. For example, wrasse, not the only marine hermaphrodite, change sex in their lifetime to aid survival of the group. When the single male wrasse dies the eldest female of the group will turn male to continue reproduction.¹⁹ The protagonist of a marine lyric similarly unfolds with the immanence of the occasion. Her unfolding can be felt to occur

¹⁶ Irma Boom’s book on fashion designers Viktor and Rolf offers an interesting take on this sense of unfolding from a unity, in which pages fold out beyond the central architecture of the book form in a theatrical and three-dimensional recreation of the work contained within the book. <<https://uk.phaidon.com/store/fashion-culture/viktor-and-rolf-cover-cover-9780714876054/>> [accessed 21 February 2019].

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p.70. As Joe Hughes in *Philosophy After Deleuze* points out, this imperative, lifted from Kafka’s journal, is a metaphor itself, making the assumption to murder a metaphor. (London: A&C Black, 2012), p.102.

¹⁸ Katia Grubisic ‘Jorie Graham: Instructions for Building the Arc’, *Fiddlehead*, Issue 244 (2010) <<http://www.thefiddlehead.ca/BackIssues.html#FH244>> [accessed 15 January 2017] (para. 21 of 24).

¹⁹ Robert R. Warner and Stephen E. Swearer, ‘Social Control of Sex Change in the Bluehead Wrasse, *Thalassoma Bifasciatum* (Pisces: Labridae).’ *Biological Bulletin* 181.2, (1991), 199–204 (p.199).

between what she imagines and what she perceives. The fold between them is indiscernible.

ii. Myopia as Indiscernibility

In a reversal of deep sea divers equipping themselves with optics to direct their vision in the oceanic realm, I go underwater when I remove my prescription glasses and the world blurs. As a newly-diagnosed myopic child I would remove my glasses to revert to a world of blended edges, where everything melded into swathes of light, colour and patternings. To perceive phenomena as distinct might have required an effort I wasn't always prepared to make, a strain that perhaps felt unpleasant, or at least unrewarding. I don't remember exactly. To reject my prescription and remain in a blurred world where I chose to retreat inwards might seem illogical, but it did allow me to, as Donna Haraway describes it, 'keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections...'²⁰ I would stare at the wallpaper to see creatures rather than flowers. Haraway's call for the reshaping of traditional stories to reconfigure the hierarchy between people and their wider environment underpins this appraisal of the marine lyric. The blur of myopia offers a mode by which to explore the schema of what is seen, what it might be and the perceiver's subsequent engagement with it. It offers an alternative, possibly more creative, mode of perception, where the role of imagination is magnified and so extends the potential of being-in-the-world.²¹

When experienced through the phenomenology of reversible perception, myopia not only pushes through surfaces in an engagement with the world, but barely recognises it has penetrated a surface. I have already explored how imagination flourishes in the perceived circuitry between phenomena, keeping the exchange between things active and on-going. My hearing, although not brilliant, becomes more alert without glasses. My focus swivels from directionally narrow, to a wider peripheral sense. This expanded mode of perception acknowledges the pores covering the body make skin the two-way membrane it is. Rather than giving prominence to a perception converging at the orifices - eyes, ears, mouth -

²⁰ *Staying with the Trouble* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), p.101.

²¹ This phenomenological experience depends on the belief one holds about their perception, not realizing they are myopic. If one became myopic later in life I suspect the experience would be different.

which leads to a process of interpretation, a peripheral vision encourages a felt-sense.²² The felt-sense of peripheral vision also opens an awareness to how the surroundings are unfolding as the body responds to them.

Being uncertain of what is perceived ensures that any definition is loose and incomplete. Haraway's desire to keep the edges open enables an awareness of 'gathering up the complexities' that contributes to any given occasion, complexities occurring at microscopic and macroscopic levels or along temporal and spatial folds. Reversible intertwinement between perceiver and perceived is more likely to lead to an ontological destabilization if the perceiver is unable to discern something accurately. If I don't know what I perceive, I cannot be sure how to respond, perhaps going closer, recoiling, or remaining suspended, waiting, depending on the wider unfolding circumstances. Unless I'm in a known safe place, this wheeling of responses brings up an uncertain sense of self, an unsteadiness made more acute by a bodily alertness reaching for sensory information. Dismantling a certainty of familiar self through such an event divests the self further from her stable position. There is no starting point to erode from; no defined self responding to a delineated occasion. Haraway goes on to argue that if we are truly shaped by who or what we encounter, it becomes inevitable that the subjective experience is decentred. The extended engagement of a myopic experience, then, could be said to make indistinct what is self and what isn't. The subjective encounter oscillates with the interaction of each moment of perception. I have few memories from before I was prescribed glasses aged five. Those I do are of being securely contained: in bed, in a sandpit, with my security blanket. I wonder if the lack of memories arises from a diffused sense of self. How could I remember if I wasn't sure of the position I was remembering from? The phenomenology of this unfolding self proposes an intimacy with the more-than-human realm of the ocean. If the self is mutating, then its variance is potentially endless.

If there is criticism of Merleau-Ponty being too anchored to the human body in his dialectal exploration of perception, then lessening the certainty of what is being perceived offers the opportunity to increase the uncertainty of who is perceiving. The 'zone of indiscernibility' is a useful concept in perceiving connections between that which isn't

²² Graham says, 'peripheral vision is an incredible instrument ... It apprehends totally different things.' 'Jorie Graham & Thomas Gardner in Conversation' (para. 126 of 148).

local or seen clearly; where two points, distinct when viewed at one level, can at another be swept into a proximity of each other.²³ This proximity does not need to be a geographical proximity, but ‘something shared or indiscernible’, on a molecular level.²⁴ This extends my imaginative engagement with the felt-sense through which Merleau-Ponty has guided me so far. Graham’s use of scientific terms has already brought into question the distinction between perceiver and perceived along folds that incorporate geographical and political movements. These differing planes of perceptions of the world ensure a continual unfolding of relations that reoccur and modify; and are necessary when engaging with climate chaos from a position of perceived security in the West.

The zone of indiscernibility occurs within the fold, as a process of becoming. Like the fold it can operate across different scales. It is millions of years in duration between mussels and the limestone walls that define fields and hillsides in the north of England. The shells of mussels, and other molluscs such as oysters and clams, are made from calcium carbonate which when sedimented down is compacted into limestone.²⁵ The limestone rises to become exposed as the level of the land changes over millennia. Once appearing as huge swathes of rock, it is cut into walls, to be washed and eroded by wind and rain so eventually the lime finds its way back into the ocean to contribute to shells of more creatures and back to sediment.²⁶ At the opposite end of the temporal scale, the indiscernibility occurs immediately: when the discarded aspirin bottle becomes shell to a hermit crab, or polythene carrier bags float as jellyfish to be eaten by sperm whales or other toothed cetaceans.

²³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press Ltd, 1996), p.280.

²⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.273. On writing about Moby Dick and Ahab, Deleuze and Guattari state they ‘simultaneously loosen up the other’s molar presence and convert it into a molecular existence as they enter the zone of indiscernibility (p.306–07). In this zone Moby Dick becomes the writing of the novel and Melville’s words take on the rhythm of the whale. Evans writes interestingly about this point: ‘Melville becomes not just Moby Dick, but a multiplicity, the entire whale pod. Similarly, and simultaneously, Moby Dick becomes the multiplicity of the anomalous or ‘minoritarian’ group of writers and readers for whom Melville and his book serve as a ‘threshold,’ ‘borderline,’ or ‘doorway’ to becoming- animal’, ‘Unnatural Participation: Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, and Environmental Ethics’ p.146.

²⁵ *British Geological Survey*

<<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/limestoneLandscapes/whatIsLimestone/home.html>> [accessed 25 February 2019] (para. 1 of 4).

²⁶ It is interesting to note Louise Westling uses the same process to describe how music and art (and I would add literature) ‘become sedimented parts of the phenomenal world which is full of intersubjectivity’ in her essay ‘Merleau-Ponty and the Eco-literary Imaginary’ from *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology* ed. by Hubert Zapf (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), p.71.

The zone can exist spatially. Within an ecotone, where two habitats such as shoreline and sand dunes meet, diverse populations often co-relate. A more intimate, indiscernible blur is between algae and its host coral. The algae, zooxanthellae, photosynthesise and pass nutrients to the coral colony, whose waste then feeds the algae. As it grows the algae impregnates the coral with its colour and expands with the colony.²⁷ To look at coral such as dead man's fingers, you see brown and orangey red polyps rather than a white skeleton and distinct microplants covering its surface. This co-worlding of algae and coral, 'carrying one into the proximity of the other', unlike the millions of years of ocean circulation and land rising of calcium carbonate, is compressed in a microscopic width along the length of coral polyps.²⁸ Coral bleaching is the rejection of the algae by the coral stressed by warming waters.

In positioning the concepts of Deleuze alongside Merleau-Ponty's it is worth acknowledging Merleau-Ponty's work is unfinished, its edges incomplete, but for notes he'd yet to write up.²⁹ The open-ended nature of a marine lyric, then, is a joyfully, perhaps wilfully, creative occasion in which these two philosophers can be instrumental in its co-worlding, especially when we consider them within their own zone of indiscernibility. Their use of common language such as the fold makes for an interesting opening into this zone. A marine lyric provides a site for the blurred indiscernibility of embodied imagination, what Braidotti describes as 'the embodiment of the mind and the embrainment of the body' where the indistinct can be felt as connected to the distinct as to another distant body.³⁰

Much of *Sea Change* resists a sense of clarity. Clarity, Graham says, has the tendency to 'want to rip things apart into the singular, the distinct, the now'.³¹ Rather than overly focusing on certain things to the exclusion of others, the poems of the collection unfold into a peripheral expanse. As in *Never*, there are many references to seeing and eyes. In

²⁷ Catherine Zandonella 'When corals met algae: Symbiotic relationship crucial to reef survival dates to the Triassic' Princeton University (2016).
<<https://www.princeton.edu/news/2016/11/02/when-corals-met-algae-symbiotic-relationship-crucial-reef-survival-dates-triassic>> [accessed 25 February 2019].

²⁸ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.293.

²⁹ Toadvine argues persuasively that Merleau-Ponty's open-ended study of the exchange between human and the more-than-human 'anticipates' Deleuze's writings (2009), p.93.

³⁰ *Nomadic Theory*, p.2.

³¹ Katia Grubisic (para. 16 of 24).

this collection the gaze is diffused. Things are blurred, and the trustworthiness of sight is under scrutiny. The opening lines from ‘Futures’ can be read as playing out within the biological plane that unfolds between human and ocean.

I own you says my mind. Own what, own
whom. I look up. Own the looking at us
say the cuttlefish branchings, lichen-black, moist. Also
the seeing, which wants to feel more than it sees.
Also, in the glance, the feeling of owning, accordioneering out and up,
seafanning,
& there is cloud on the blue ground up there, & wind which the eye loves so deeply it
would spill itself out and liquefy
to pay for it –

(p.14)

The question of who possesses whom, recurs through the poem, expanding from the looking here, to the ownership of water, land, and also education. The complexity of what we see is emphasized in the distinguishing between ‘looking’, ‘a glance’ and ‘seeing’. Looking, as an act of intellectual interpretation, is directed, whereas the seeing is an embodied experience, ‘which wants to *feel* more than it sees’ (indeed there is a ‘eye-thinking heart’ later in the poem, where sight, thought and felt experience are conflated into one). Cuttlefish are credited with being highly intelligent creatures. Their mesmerising chromatic display is one way they communicate to others and respond to their environment, changing colours both instantaneously and incrementally.³² The description of the movement of cuttlefish’s limbs smudges whether it is the protagonist’s mind or the cuttlefish that is doing the seeing. This blends the interior and exterior imperceptibly. In an earlier poem in *Sea Change*, ‘Guantánamo’, Graham writes ‘you are asking me to lose myself. / In the overflowing of my eye, / I do’ (p.11). The looking/seeing has become more mutable than in earlier poems, less fixed to one bodily perspective. This zone of indiscernibility echoes the roaming mind of Stevens’ ‘Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shore’,

³² I watched a cuttlefish at the Musée de Oceanique in Monaco shift through pale yellow, green browns, and black to white filigree across its body from one edge of its frilling mantle, over half an hour. The transformation was so gradual I couldn’t quite believe it was changing colour until its whole body was black with white filigree markings. At that point there was no doubt the cuttlefish was not the limey yellow of my first sighting. Who was owning whom in that exchange? Throughout its metamorphosis the cuttlefish stared at me, or in my direction through the one-way glass. Given I didn’t believe what I saw I could hardly feel I was owning my looking. I tried to explain the display to other visitors, but whether my French was inadequate or no-one else had the patience, I was sole witness. As the cuttlefish was deterritorialised by the aquarium, my lack of fluency created an interesting enactment of deterritorialising language explored later in this chapter.

from *Harmonium*, which meanders moth-like across the stultified afternoon shore. In these poems mind, eyes and world intertwine to create the occasion and cannot be disentangled.

In 'Futures', the protagonist's glance, 'accordioning out and up, / seafanning', brings the reader back to the cuttlefish's muscular and chromatic movement. Working to see necessitates a deeper engagement with that which moves beyond a proprietorial perspective to the point where the 'feeling of owning' disorientates the world so there is 'cloud on the blue ground'. This is not a world where the human can easily locate herself, let alone dominate. The spilling and liquefying of the eye in wind pulls it into a zone of indiscernibility with the salt water of ocean. Waves rip out of the ocean body in wind, and the brininess of our fluids is found not just in our eyes but in blood and early stage amniotic fluid. The eye's salinity and corporeality supersede it as intellectual apparatus.

This liquefying of sight, reminiscent of the blur of myopia, does not dismiss how we exist as an individual body. In 'Embodies' the protagonist 'cannot / go somewhere/ else than this body' (p.6). And in 'Futures' the eye and sea are drawn into a molecular proximity so intense it overlaps animal cell with plant, brain with growth and sea with sky into a common biological plane. The imperative tone increases the sense of urgency to see the situation clearly. Fifteen lines on in 'Futures' (although still the same sentence) there is a scouring 'from inside the /glance'. Here the proximity of eye and ocean is a reminder of how we operate from within the world as much as from within ourselves. There is no surface here, no clear division between the blue of sky and the blue of spears, roots, waste, the cuttlefish branchings and then later how 'the heart branches with its wild arteries' (p.15).

Deleuze offers an analysis of how this indiscernibility occurs between two bodies in his writings on the paintings of Frances Bacon, where 'the blur is obtained not by indistinctness, but on the contrary by the operation that "consists in destroying clarity by clarity"'.³³ Graham's images are clear, using a level of detail arising from acute sensations felt within the protagonist's body and transmitted to the poem's phenomenological body. It is the number of images used that overwhelms the sense of clarity. The poem opens with

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Frances Bacon – The Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel W Smith, (London: Continuum, 2004), p.19. With this end phrase, he is quoting André Bazin's discourse on Jacques Tati.

the cuttlefish and goes on to include crops, radioactive waste, human waste, a drying river, a swan, and more. The blur is created, and experienced, by the piling up of images. This paradox adds to the tension apparent in the poems of *Sea Change*, where climate breakdown, the force of ocean, consequence of war and housing credit hammer into and through the lines of protagonist's felt-sense.

Deleuze links 'imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality' as being present at 'the dawn of the world'.³⁴ This creative thrust that begun the world as we know it unfolds in every immanent moment of his project. Transformation and creativity provide alternative modes of perceiving the nexus of individual, society and the environment.³⁵ Allowing a witnessing of what we see and a simultaneous understanding of *how* we see activates a non-attached subjectivity that opens us to the possibility of a collective subjectivity. In 'Futures' that intrasubjectivity ranges across all that is presented as looking: the cuttlefish, the first body, a falcon, another body swinging from a rope, eyes plucked out for food, the eyes watching a swan in a dried out river. Graham's lines move from physical to intellectual self, disrupting an authority of a singular self.³⁶

Graham initiates this experience of intrasubjectivity by incorporating the cuttlefish into the act of looking: they appear to know more than the protagonist, or enable her to see through them, so creating new knowledge of the self.³⁷ The pain in these images of 'Futures' are not an overt violence; rather they offer a more collaborative sense of proximity, an exchange cycle of how we affect each other. The role of poverty and oppression forms a

³⁴ *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, p.280. I've already touched upon how Graham's protagonists remain impersonal, without a detailed autobiography, I shall explore the imperceptible, as the unseen, in chapter three.

³⁵ The three ecologies explored by Félix Guattari in the essay of the same name.

³⁶ Kirstin Hotelling Zona, writing on the authority of Graham's lyric 'I' suggests the 'I' emerges 'in the play between ... presence and absence, desire and dislocation', 'Jorie Graham and American Poetry', in *Contemporary Literature* 46.4 (2005), 667-687 (p.670).

³⁷ The sense of reaching created by the long lines of the poem reminds me of Martina Amati's voiceover in her performative free dives, followed in film as a single shot descent into darkening blue waters. In an accompanying audio to the footage, Amati talks of how the free fall, after around 13m deep, doesn't require movement, but simply for you to fall with the water, to resist the desire to swim and hold your breath. Going deeper, wanting to hold her breath for a further 45 minutes, she reminds herself that dolphins can do it, and asks, why not herself? The mammalian overlay between the flippers human and diving dolphin, especially in the shadowy blue of the film-light, is resonant. The creative potential, rendered in the film, in Amati's pushing of her limits, is echoed by her comment of surfacing: 'every time you take your first breath after a dive, it's like your first breath. So for me it's like being born again and the water is very much like being in the womb'. <<https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/WqqVnCAAACA79Q>> [accessed 7 February 2019] (para. 8 of 10).

thematic strand in this poem, of those who are most vulnerable to the breakdown of society as a result of climatic breakdown. Soon after a swinging noose there is the possibility of being no food, conflating the inequalities of power:

& there is a
sequence in which feeding takes
place—the body is owned by the hungry—one is waiting
one's turn—one wants to own one's
turn—

(p.15)

The question of power and inequalities that upwell throughout the poem turn to a personal dynamic of love and intimacy. There is no hierarchy of affect. Recycling comes in the form of a rebirth found at the end of the poem, where despite the drying river, dry, as money is also dry, the protagonist 'has begun the action of beauty again'. Beauty, which by its nature is temporary, has been re-ignited. A new cycle begins. A swan is counted, as 'one' suggests the search for a second, perhaps a third in this cataloguing of the world. The advance of protagonist to riverbed, offering a litany of a burning river, money, lily of the valley and pond water, moves beyond precise description. Among the details is 'your speck', an indistinct mark in contrast to other phenomena in the poem. This falters the sense of authority in the rest of the cataloguing. The poem ends with the protagonist beginning to count 'again'. This attempt to list things acknowledges their existence and leads to the poem's final, if speculative act.

one could bend down close to it
and drink.

(p.15)

Its final short line renders the act as definitive, yet it is only a possibility. All sense of polluted waters and polluted bodies, is, if temporarily, eradicated. The counting has happened before, and could again. It is a creative act, thirst quenching, revitalising.

Doubt ultimately lies with the human, and foreshadows 'Sundown' from *P L A C E* (2012) in which the protagonist, overtaken by a horse on the beach, visualises - or actually sees, it's not made explicit - thousands of sandfleas appearing in the 'newly released beach'. The shedding of reliance on vision is unambiguous at the end of the poem:

and when I shut my eyes now I am not like a blind person
walking towards the lowering sun

the water loud at my right,
 with her eyes shut
 but like a seeing person
 putting her feet down
 one at a time
 on the earth.³⁸

Having been occupied by the light of sunset playing off the sea, ‘red foam’, the ‘reddish luminosity’ and ‘sparks’ contributing to the protagonist being ‘light-struck’, she now chooses to close her eyes. Here the poem’s description takes a radical turn. The blackness of her closed eyes makes the world solid, realigns her bodily focus to her contact with it. Through this process, her interiority creates an awareness at a remove. The beach, previously ‘oozing’, full of ‘microscopic life’, has now turned to the solid ‘earth’ founded on a detached observation.

Her lack of sight, temporary and voluntary, offers an imaginative intervention, as with myopia, enabling the self to become unbounded. This potential of inner sight is explored later in the same collection in ‘Of Inner Experience’, which takes place entirely with the protagonist’s eyes closed. Both these poems, as with ‘Futures’, offer an imaginary that isn’t limited to the focusing individual, but reconfigures the authority of perception to embrace the blur, the intertwining of seeing with imagining, to welcome a lack of distinction that comes from engagement within and across planes of perception.

‘Positive Feedback Loop’ illustrates an unfolding subjectivity across these multiple planes of perception. Its title refers to the unstable amplification of ocean and climatic temperature rise, preparing the ground for the poem’s traversing through various seas around the world - from Labrador to the Great Barrier Reef - within five lines. The scientific plane on which the poem is founded encompasses the tipping point, flash point, convective chimneys, the Age of Extinction, the sixth of which we now ‘are entering’. It is almost impossible to keep up with the terminology. Matthew Griffiths calls the use of such terms a ‘necessary poetic and conceptual difficulty’ given that understanding climate change itself is fraught with difficulty.³⁹ That the poem doesn’t attempt to unpack the terminology offers the blur of clarity overlaid by clarity, rising to a disorientation that pulls the protagonist and reader to feel the loop of the title’s concept that leads to accumulative

³⁸ *P L A C E* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2012), p.5.

³⁹ *The New Poetics of Climate Change*, p.167.

warming. The enfolding of meteorological, chemical and embodied planes enables a tangible feeling of concepts: a rethinking of body and a rebodying of thought.

The poem's immanence rises in this co-worlding of protagonist and ocean. The protagonist is not physically at sea, but in a garden that figures in the poem as soil, porch and grass. The chaos that is happening at sea and in our climate, is being brought into her daily life rather than been treated as, what Teresa Shrewy describes, 'a primary singular setting'⁴⁰. The sea is not exceptional, a resource, or background, but materializes in the poem in particles, molecular terms, spread throughout the poem, as its climate. As such the protagonist appears to struggle to keep up with her sense of self amongst all these elements, when she asks, 'Who is one when one calls oneself / one?' and later:

—can you ever
enter the strange thing, the name that is yours, that
"is" you—
(p.43)

Both questionings of self appear to make an attempt to step into something, a body, an identity that is an awkward, testing fit, a blurred sense of self. If one doesn't inhabit a clearly identifiable body, either on the macro or micro scale, then it might be impossible to attach oneself to a particular name.⁴¹

The poem's zone of indiscernibility spreads from the protagonist to where carbon occurs in its global cycle:

feather, invisible bog,
positive feedback loops—& the chimneys again, & how the ray of sun is taken in
(p.43)

Here the convective chimneys have been absorbed into this litany as simply 'chimneys', set amongst bog and sunshine. The list of energies that populate the atmosphere are named as the poem's own 'thin air', or 'host', that we do not necessary indentify individually but breathe in the elements of it, as words, as images, as we do the air without consciously

⁴⁰ *Hope at Sea: Possible Ecologies in Oceanic Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p.18.

⁴¹ Graham talked about 'the multiple forms of consciousness one has in oneself' when suggesting emotions such as grief and wonder were not discrete events. Per comms, John Rylands Library, Manchester, 17 November 2017.

naming each particle in it. This marine lyric actualizes the particulars to make us conscious of our enfolding of them and unfolds the indiscernibility further:

till your feet themselves are
weary not just your
heart—the
skins, the flesh, the heat, the soil, the grain, the sound of each birdcall heard over the
millennia,

Skin in the plural is confusing, it could be as in the skin of each foot, or of different bodies, of many weary things, weary together? The lineage here enfolds those ‘skins’, along with soil, grain and birds into a unifying whole in the same breath that distinguishes feet and heart in their own fold of one line. Still the protagonist does not attempt to fix herself to any one thing, rather she allows herself the plasticity of the fold to connect to all and more, loosely, before coming back to herself, intellectually at least:

the mind
finds itself uncertain again, it calls, something hangs up on it, just like that, you hear
the receiver go down, power and its end,
something else smiling elsewhere on another world,
(pp.43-4)

The poem tracks the personal pronoun through ‘one’ to ‘my’ to ‘you’ and here in a further disassociating move to ‘the mind’. The next pronoun is the first person plural, ‘we’, that could be a group of people or collective consciousness. The folds of this poem are smaller, creases of the vibrations. Could this agitation be from the sensing of the multiplicity within? In the oceanic frame of the marine lyric these creases could be seen to operate through a planktonic mode. Some plankton fuse with neighbouring cells to create colonies, long spirals of growth that eventually break off to form new chains: a model with no specific origin or end.⁴² Salps even have the appearance of a folding concertina. These microscopic creatures feed on algae and bacteria, ingesting large amounts of carbon, and are, as part of the marine food chain, fed upon by crustaceans, who are eaten by squid, and so on, in trophic transfer. Alternatively they sink to the ocean floor, so sequestering the carbon into the sediment.⁴³

⁴² Salps are an example of such plankton. ‘The Watery World of Salps’ <<https://www.whoi.edu/know-your-ocean/ocean-topics/polar-research/polar-life/the-watery-world-of-salps/>> [accessed 25 April 2019].

⁴³ Christian Sardet, p.198.

The ingestion of plankton up through the food chain could be interpreted as a gesture towards the ineffability of consciousness. I take this as a non-hierarchical trans-species model for thinking how any one of us might fit in a system transplanting Deleuze's concept of non-linear, multiplicitous engagement to the ocean.⁴⁴ This model enables a description of the marine lyric as a becoming-ocean. The term is inspired by Braidotti's 'becoming-earth' which she describes as a 'reconfiguring [of] the relationship to our complex habitat [with] the earth ... our middle and common ground'.⁴⁵ Becoming-ocean brings to the fore a place that traditionally is not seen as 'middle', 'common' or 'ground', and reconfigures our relationship to ocean within the trajectory of a marine lyric, as an occasion of unfolding between the forces of ocean, human, language and form.

iii. The Deterritorialization of Language

Deleuze and Guattari describe music as 'a deterritorialization of the voice, which becomes less and less tied to language'.⁴⁶ A similar deterritorialization of ocean could be felt to occur through the marine lyric where the physical force of ocean is captured through the forces of imagination. It is in the gaps and white space of my earlier exploration I can locate the zone of indiscernibility between imagination and ocean. In the deterritorialization of ocean as a marine lyric, the poem is becoming-ocean by taking on its pace and force and the ocean is becoming-poem through language, lineation and rhythm. When the poem is read, both it and the ocean are reterritorialized, encouraging a becoming-ocean in the imagination of the reader.⁴⁷

An example of the two-way nature of deterritorialization can be seen in the establishment of an offshore windfarm, where the installation of turbines disturb the seabed and localised set and drift of current. The maintenance vessels increase fuel, sound and light pollution levels in the sea, deterritorializing it. Industry is deterritorialized by being located offshore.

⁴⁴ Rather than referring to a rhizomatic mode of thinking we might call it a planktonic mode.

⁴⁵ *The Posthuman*, p.81.

⁴⁶ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.302. Earlier they write 'the book assures the deterritorialization of the world' p.11.

⁴⁷ Robert J.C. Young asks 'can languages be disinvented?' and goes on to argue that a language is a conceptual construction. This section explores how far a language can be dismantled and reinvented to create a new, pervasive force of sensation that of a sea-ness we can inhabit. 'That Which Is Casually Called a Language', *PMLA* 131.5 (2016), 1207-1221 (p.1207).

Simultaneously, the sea is reterritorialized as reefs on the concrete base of each turbine, with molluscs, coral and algae growing here; and industry is reterritorialized by transforming wind to reusable energy. The two-way nature of the fold occurs when something is deterritorialized, in becoming other than itself, displaced by another thing, and vice versa.⁴⁸ This exchange of deterritorializations, unfolding and enfolding each body, occurs because of their co-existence. As the marine lyric opens to the ocean, the ocean opens to the marine lyric.⁴⁹

The deterritorialization of a poem can occur through the disruption of language. This short-circuits the intellectual pathways that language serves to codify, feeding into the embodied proximity between the various subjects of the becoming-ocean. Certainly Graham (like Wallace Stevens before her) is interested in language's capacity for this:

...it was the resistance of the poem—its occlusion, or difficulty—that was healing me, forcing me to privilege my heart, my intuition—parts of my sensibility infrequently called upon in my everyday experience in the marketplace of things and ideas. I found myself feeling, as the poem ended, that some crucial muscle that might have otherwise atrophied from lack of use had been exercised. Something part body, part spirit.⁵⁰

This 'part body, part spirit' suggests an interplay between the protagonist and the ineffable imaginary, which lies at a remove from logic, or clear sight, not making sense on an intellectual plane, rather intuited or felt. Deleuze writes about this resistance to sense in art, when he claims, 'it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces.'⁵¹ The ocean does not inherently have meaning, but it does have a force. The forces Graham reaches for in *Sea Change* are the dynamics between individual and the wider ecologies. There is manifestation of the indiscernible interface of the protagonist attempting to situate herself in the precarious world that results in the blurring of how she sees herself and the world.

⁴⁸ *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.10.

⁴⁹ Deleuze and Guattari write, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book', p.11.

⁵⁰ Jorie Graham, 'Introduction' to *Best American Poetry, 1990*.

<http://www.joriegraham.com/prose_american_poetry_intro> [accessed 6 November 2016] (para. 4 of 41).

⁵¹ *Frances Bacon – The Logic of Sensation*, p.56.

In the poem 'Sea Change' these forces of submersion unmake fields and trees, 'everything at once undoing / itself', blurring distinctions. The wind is strong enough to bend bodies of news and personhood into each other:

trails, they are blown over, grasses shoot up, life disturbing life, & it
fussing all over us, like a confinement gone
insane, blurring the feeling of
the state of
being. Which did just exist yesterday,
(p.3)

The 'life disturbing life' of grasses, of human body, fields and trees, locates a zone of indiscernibility in a biological field where the molecules of vegetable and animal are superimposed to the point of incoherence. The word 'confinement' here might reference pregnancy, where reproduction could cross between species. The sovereignty of the protagonist no longer 'exists' as it did the day before. Graham has spoken of her desire to convey a human life considered in relation to other living things with whom we co-exist - 'living but non-human, living but non-mammalian, geologic, molecular, sub-atomic, and so on.'⁵² While the poem's protagonist struggles with her shutters in the wind she also references the Atlantic where the wind originated and the plankton heading north leaving cod larvae without food.

Overfishing and a change in sea surface temperature has negatively affected cod populations in the North Atlantic, specifically the North Sea.⁵³ While the temperature might not directly affect the cod, the plankton, at the bottom of the food chain, are vulnerable to surface dynamic change. The pathways are difficult to trace because of the nonlinear and unpredictable responses to climatic variations.⁵⁴ This nonlinearity is captured in the physical destabilisation of Graham's lines:

... here it is now, carrying its North
Atlantic windfall, hissing Consider
the body of the ocean which rises every instant into
me, & its
ancient e-
vaporation, how it delivers itself
to me, how the world is our law, this indrifting of us
into us, a chorusing in us of elements, & how the

⁵² Katia Grubisic, (para. 11 of 24).

⁵³ Richard Kirby and Gregory Beaugrand. 'Trophic amplification of climate warming.' *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences* 276.1676 (2009), 4095-4103, p.4095.

⁵⁴ Richard Kirby, p.4102.

intermingling of us lacks in-
telligence, makes
reverberation, syllables untranscribable, in-clingings, & how wonder is also what
pours from us...

(p.4)

Just as seas cannot be contained by the names they are given, words, here, are spread across line breaks. The alternating line lengths push and pull against each other, refusing to settle between the long lines of Whitmanesque tradition and shorter lines of modernist experiment. They drive the reader through the poem to track the enormous leaps of scale in an almost giddy fashion as the lines extend into and are compressed by the white space. Their interruption, disjointedness and stress on unexpected syllables re-makes sense that rises from sound rather than intellect. The line containing only ‘me, & its’ illustrates a compression of the sea with protagonist. While the following line ‘ancient e-’ doesn’t hold an immediate sense, but foreshadows the ‘untranscribable’ (a word which alludes to ‘babble’ by its sound). The longer next line allows the evaporation to be ‘delivered’ in a rush of rhythm and sense that comes with partaking in the flow of understanding how we are situated within the carbon cycle. The distant sea is drawn into the protagonist by the repetition and emphasis of the prefix ‘in’.

This poem is not the sea, but the sea is drawn into the body of poem as well as my reading of it through the sounds that underpin the words: the *instant*, *indrifting*, *intermingling*, *intelligence*, *in-clingings*, all ‘chorusing *in* us’ (my italics). This pleating of interiors refuses to differentiate between the outside and the in, piling up a visceral energy, a patterning that replicates the waves, similar in repetition but different in their positioning. The poem touches me as ‘reverberation’, enfolding me, as reader, into this unfolding of the ocean as the poem. The relational significance of forces is what Deleuze’s project emphasizes.⁵⁵ Giving up on an attempt of ‘re-equilibrium’ it seems the forces here are of increasing instability and climatic breakdown.

In describing the concertina’d lines in these poems Graham talks about enacting ‘a sense of a “tipping point”- the feeling of falling forward, or “down” in the hyper-short lines at

⁵⁵ Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p.135.

the same time as one feels suspended'.⁵⁶ The lineation adds a phenomenological engagement with climate breakdown. This reterritorialization of atmosphere into the poem's form blurs the boundary of language, climate, ocean, protagonist, and ultimately reader. Deleuze and Guattari say this indiscernible reality is neither an act of imagination nor a literal one, but the reciprocity of both, both being elements, folds with the experience. The act of removing a singular didactic authority of how the world ought to be seen enables its unfolding as a constantly protean perception. The choice is in which fold is focused upon to follow.⁵⁷ The flexibility required in reading encourages a response in the reader to the marine lyric's unstable forces. To read the poem I need to let go of a particular stance or stakeholding, and allow myself to move with the various dynamics that upwell through the poem.

The striking lineation that runs throughout *Sea Change* is as much a characteristic of the collection as the use of parenthesis and square brackets are in *Never*.⁵⁸ The extensive use of brackets in the earlier collection allows Graham to extend each sentence and resist a singular sense. There is a political act in refusing to compact the sentence into memorable phrasing, to thwart grammatical rules in the sentence defies the easy consumerism of language that has been charged in slogans or advertising campaigns.⁵⁹ The brackets, as the long/short lineations, challenge a straightforward consumption of meaning.⁶⁰ The reader is activated in their reading of the poem, bodily and imaginatively, and inhabits a suspended moment. Graham has written of how 'the miracle of syntax can absorb, encode, reveal, transmit, reenact' an occasion.⁶¹ The brackets - juxtaposing square brackets with round - are part of the encoding and revealing of an event - both its interior and exterior

⁵⁶ 'Imagining the Unimaginable: Jorie Graham in Conversation', 21 February 2014 <<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/imagining-unimaginable-jorie-graham-conversation>> [accessed 21 February 2019] (para. 21 of 38).

⁵⁷ Graham's poems touch on class and race, but these are not overriding preoccupations of her unfoldings.

⁵⁸ The intermediary collection, *Overlord* (2005), employs far fewer brackets than *Never* throughout its poems and is yet to instigate the concertina line folding evident in *Sea Change*.

⁵⁹ Willard Speigelman writes about both this distrust and of the language's liminality in its evocation of external and internal worlds in detail across many poems in his essay 'Jorie Graham's New Way of Looking', in *How Poets See the World: The Art of Description in Contemporary Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp.173-199.

⁶⁰ There is disagreement as to whether the brackets 'confound' (Roger Caldwell in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 June 2003) or are 'necessary' for their complexity and move towards uncertainty (Bin Ramke in *The Boston Review*, Oct/Nov 2002).

⁶¹ 'Poetic Statement' in *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language* ed. by Rankine, Claudia and Juliana Spahr (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), p.147.

processes.⁶² This stretches the limits of language, to push it into a zone of indiscernibility between thought and emotion. Deleuze and Guattari describe the lips in speech as ceasing to be an organ of the senses as it becomes an instrument of sense.⁶³ Language has ceased to become an instrument of sense to become part of a body of sensation, and perhaps partly the sound or sensation of ocean. The brackets discern between things and lock them together in that extended moment afforded by the poem. It occurs in ‘Estuary’ from *Never*:

What
 is history to this instant between the waves
 [she let herself think][although she was really
 thinking let me think, let me just think it
 will still and come forth] (*Never*, p.58)

Here, each bracket separates a sequence of thought. But can one thought be distinct from another? The growth of each is demarked by the bracket here, but at other times in the poem they occlude the thought, or draw it into the exterior such as later:

As I look out [dusk lowering the *she* as well, down,
 onto the horizon line, then drawing in, towards singleness, pulling in,
 as nets must be pulled in] (*Never*, p.59)

The brackets attempt a codification of what is essentially wordless. There is a disrupted narrative logic or sense, drawing thought into sight or vice versa. There is no one-way direction of this transmission. While the brackets attempt to offer perceptions or thoughts, they also disrupt, or widen, the moment to unfold it into multiple planes of experience, enfolding the thought sense into the felt sense. They construct a new occasion where protagonist, poem and ocean co-exist through the unfolding. The crease of thought vibrates with the setting sun (which in turn lowers the ‘she’) until the sun overwhelms that line’s image and unfolds it into a future moment (that has also been a past one) of nets being pulled in. The protagonist’s subjectivity is being reconstituted through numerous folds of the occasion. Her waiting for fishing boats to arrive is bracketed by a fractured sense of crossing water, of territory and invasion that seem to come rolling in on the waves. It is as if the protagonist is lapped by the sense of ancient water coming to shore. The interruption of one thought with another is tracked in this occasion of mind, as it tracks the moving water.

⁶² Helen Vendler categorises the syntax as follows: ‘parentheses for perception, her brackets for mental events’ in ‘Indigo, Cyanine, Beryl’ in *Jorie Graham, Essays on the Poetry*, p.180.

⁶³ *What is Minor Literature?*, p.20.

‘Surf’, also from *Never*, uses brackets to question which plane of experience - of car in driveway and surf on beach - is actually happening while the protagonist is looking at window panes into a house from a dark wood. Surfaces abound in the poem.

the escape from “here” a resolute giving-in to patience—
 the patience of story—that we are moving
 (looking at the mullioned squares of black for story to break
in them)(erasing
 the room reflected there in all its parts, again and again)
 each pane placing here at a
slightly different angle, yes
 [somebody else’s car going by terribly fast
down the main road]

(Never, p.84)

She is positioned between the house, car and surf, all of which are ‘beyond range’ except for being within her, who is the vessel in which all swirl. Inverted commas question the veracity of how these things are explained, and draw attention to the system of transcribing an experience. The protagonist is “‘here’”; the car has gone to “‘have experiences’”; she has a “‘soul’” which lines later is called “‘her’” soul’. Just where is ‘here’ in relation to everything else? Can the soul be ‘hers’? Or is it part of the larger whole, as she is? The original occasion has been deterritorialized by language into the poem’s occasion. Even the wandering soul is flagged by the inverted commas to emphasize language’s inherent contrivance that needs to be accepted, or at least acknowledged, if the protagonist is to continue through the poem, travel with the car, feel the darkness of the woods, bend into the dowsing of the waves. It is as if the reader is also looking at the mullion window panes, at another angle, apparently outside the poem, from its words on the page, but being enfolded into it by the refractions of glass, of waves of brackets into brackets. A phenomenological confusion arises from not being anchored: even the protagonist is a reflection to herself: ‘Blurring, yes, but alive with separateness?’ (‘Surf’, *Never*, p.83).

Deleuze’s chaosmos, the creative confusion, that comes from the deterritorialization of language, opens, what Braidotti describes as, ‘conditions for the implementation of transversality’.⁶⁴ Unfoldings intersect to produce a new creative force that is a multiplicity of others. Each poem is energised not by the attempt to make sense but in its potential to

⁶⁴ *Nomadic Theory*, p.114.

be. ‘Surf’, with the force of waves in the language and in the syntax of brackets, presents the potentiality of flux towards an apparently insignificant moment. This is neither in the house, nor on the adventure that is the car, or by the beach, but in the dark woods with the panes making the mosaic viewed from varying angles. Again, authority is being refuted. The focus is on the interconnectivity that gives rise to any moment, where any sense of self is disrupted, in syntax, in window glass, in listening, in thinking. The ‘here’ is the emergent co-worlding of the elements. This refusal to be definitively fixed ensures a continually creative process in attending to the world unfolding around ourselves, in which the protagonist is only one fold. Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘As long as there is form, there is still reterritorialization’.⁶⁵ By this I understand the poem’s form, as language deterritorializes the ocean, ensures an expressive force to be carried from the body of the poem to whoever reads it.

The final example of a deterritorialization of language I want to consider is what happens when a poem takes a collective stance. What deterritorialization occurs in the collective pronoun ‘we’? At the end of ‘Positive Feedback Loop’ the ‘us’ can initially be read as part of life on earth, or all life on earth, but becomes definitively human by the time the options of food and drink arise for the ‘lovely evening’ that ironically disregards The Great Dying mentioned only two lines previously. Due to the differing line lengths the two ideas have a clear relational dynamic interacting across the white space. This collective pronoun alludes to the complicity of such actions, looking only at a superficial sense of what is considered lovely, the light or warmth perhaps, and ignoring the extinctions occurring. This handling of the collective pronoun is intensified in ‘We’ in Graham’s latest collection, *Fast* (2017).

Used as the poem’s title, ‘We’ implicitly references Adrienne Rich’s ‘Notes towards a Politics of Location’ in which Rich writes ‘We who are not the same. We who are many and do not want to be the same.’⁶⁶ The poem is one of the many long-lined blocked poems of the collection, running over two pages of text that varies between lines with tight leading and others double-spaced. The form adds to the sense of how the ‘we’ of the poem

⁶⁵ *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, p.6.

⁶⁶ Adrienne Rich, ‘Notes towards a Politics of Locations’ *Blood Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979 - 1985* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 1984), p.225.

is initially a communal unit, who act en masse and later is also ‘in some strange wind’, ‘in the enigma of the past’, ‘signatories to the past’ who have ‘left us nothing but ourselves’. The ‘we’ is the past and present cycle of life. The experiencing body of the poem transfers to the reader’s experience, drawing me into the ‘we’ of communal human accountability.

The poem opens:

lost all the wars. By definition. Had small desires and fundamental fear. Gave our children for them, paid in full, from the start of time, standard time and standard space, with and without suspension of disbelief, hungry for the everyday, wide awake, able to bring about a state of affairs by bodily movement, not even gradually, not hesitating, not ever, gave brothers fathers sisters mothers. Lost every war. Will lose the ones to come. By definition. That woman. That ocean. ⁶⁷

We suffer the relentlessness of war together, even if we are distant from it or disparate. Political war takes our families, misogyny is waged upon women, and an ecological war is being waged upon and within the ocean.⁶⁸ We are presented as being united in the suffering. We affect it by our actions. We feed it. We are suspended within it, immersed as if in the ocean. ‘There is’ the poem later states ‘no private space’. The ocean interconnects everything, through its global movement or by being part of the hydrosphere that permeates all life. The poem’s scale spans out to galaxies emphasizing its topological flow. We lose all our personal, national and global wars, together.

The pace of ‘We’ evokes the body of oceanic flow. An embodied co-worlding arises between what is known and complex and uncertain. This marine lyric enfolds the flood of currents into the experiencing body, in this poem’s form. It makes tangible the complexity of our current environmental crisis: where we are not able to impose domination over a homogenous meaning or solution. This poem recognises our belonging to such otherness that is more than our individuality, recognises our subjectivity as porous. This ‘deterritorialized nationality’ understands the ‘I’ as wholly relational.⁶⁹ The collective pronoun provokes what Graham describes as a ‘physical accountability’ that includes herself as writer, editor and her reader. By calling the accountability physical, she draws

⁶⁷ *Fast* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2017), p.14.

⁶⁸ Ironic how unwanted battleships vehicles are scuttled into the depths as a so-called ‘solution’ to their disposal. Bellamy, Christopher, ‘Tons of Arms Dumped at Sea’ *The Independent* (20 September 1995) <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/tons-of-arms-dumped-at-sea-601949.html>> [accessed 4 March 2019]

⁶⁹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000) p.65. Guattari says elsewhere in this essay that ‘all sorts of deterritorialised nationalities are conceivable, such as in music and poetry’, p.65.

attention to the embodied occasion of the poem, to thought as act - the act of the mind - and the potential for the poem to embody the imagination of her reader.⁷⁰

Whether we are aware or not of that involvement, whether or not the war is geographically local, the absence of the pronoun, beyond the title, until the twelfth line, makes the concept of 'us' reverberate through the poem's early sentences. Each of them throws the imperative form taken without the pronoun. The 'we' has become disembodied from the poem. As a title it hangs alienated from the body of the poem, deterritorialized from the actions and consequences occurring within the poem and, therefore, throughout the accumulation of action the poem could be read as implicitly reaching to reterritorialize the 'we', and whoever it encompasses, into the poem, and thus, within the context of this thesis, into an oceanic topology.

Within the flow of seemingly incessant clauses and sentences comes a claim of determination:

There is form and it knows the difference. Go
alone. Hold back. Transfigure. Promise. Go alone. Transfigure. Keep promise. All this
is what the wind knows.

(*Fast*, p.14)

This form acknowledges the differences between matter. These short declaratory commands seem to attempt a navigation of finding that difference, while 'transfigure' suggests a morphing, transformation between things within this collective. There is, perhaps, a contested identity between essence and appearance here. The wind, moving around different bodies can also erode and bend bodies. The streaming of wind, coming as it does so soon after the mention of ocean in the poem, adds a new force to the rhythm of the poem. Eight lines on and the deterritorialized collective voice of poem claims 'I did not do that—it could not have been me'. There follows one line with three 'I's clustered along it before being enfolded back the poem and not emerging until five lines before the end. It feels there is, in this poem, no truly singular voice, but a constant movement between bodies and form. This moment of distinct singularity stands out because of its rarity.

Alongside the lack of a sustained or defined protagonist, comes the lack of a sense of place. The poem rushes through history, a global tempo-spatiality, looking

⁷⁰ In conversation (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90xZr_7Nz3M> [accessed 18 January 2019].

for every intersection. Time and fiction. Asked if it can be true? Time and history. Asked can it really be true? This is happening. But is not what the real feels like. The past? Is senseless. Collapse the *it-has-been*

(*Fast*, p.14)

To inhabit the unknown as this poem does, unfixed to a clear protagonist and unanchored to a place, accepts the relinquishing of control. It understands the on-goingness of events, and reaches beyond the individual, nationality and terrestrial plane. The circulatory system of our imaginations, a process of unfolding experiences, of poet, poem and reader, enfolds them into an occasion that has the capacity to transform what has previously been felt or thought. What has-been is collapsed, so collapsing the what-has-yet-to-be in this deterritorialized reading. Deleuze's commitment to experiencing both the virtual and actual on 'one plane of immanent life' enables a consideration of how the poet's imagination, the lyric itself and its reader interact as various vibrations within a plane that cross-hatches and branches in its unfolding.⁷¹ The deterritorialization of the co-worlding into the poem as oceanic forces continues this lack of distinction between internal and external forces. The poem itself claims 'there is no real world to which you can refer' and 'there never was metaphor'.⁷² In this sense we are being invited, or compelled, to consider ourselves part of this poetic, collective 'we' of the imagination that reaches across time and space.⁷³

Poetry as a fold of the collective imagination can activate a currency of experience to provide connections between ways of perceiving, of thinking, of experiencing between poet, poem and reader, and bring the remote pleats into intimate phenomena.⁷⁴ To follow the process: the smallest fold is the syllable, folding out of or into its neighbour into a

⁷¹ Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, p.70.

⁷² *Fast*, p.15.

⁷³ Kristina Pulejkova's film performance, *Where We all Meet*, on eel migration, overlays digitally enhanced silhouettes of humans talking - one in English one in Macedonian with subtitles - with footage of eels at sea, and of four humans dancing underwater. The live manipulation levels of different footage she has, choosing which to play and at what speed, makes for a new performance/ screening each time, as if constantly trying to discover what the eel dance means [seen 19 February 2019, at Miranda, Ace Hotel, London]. More information < <http://kristinapulejkova.com/where-we-all-meet-rd-2018/>>.

⁷⁴ Judith Butler speaks of this relational assemblage of 'we' being not just the bodies but also 'a set of relations of interdependency and passion' in 'Speaking of Rage and Loss' (2014), Leigha Cohen Video Production <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxyabzopQi8>> [accessed 27 May 2018].

word. Each line unfolds into the next; and so too each stanza.⁷⁵ Until the whole poem has unfolded to be enfolded when read. If the poem takes for its plane of immanence an allegiance to a deterritorialised marine sensibility, it could be said that the marine lyric, as a becoming-ocean, could be seen as manifesto for marine citizenship. The marine lyric offers an imaginative immersion into the global commons that recognises our expression to be united, affective and unique.⁷⁶

‘We’ doesn’t offer answers, but its engaged awareness of suffering enables a sharper perspective of where I, as reader, might locate myself within it, or the ocean’s dynamic cycle in which we are inextricably entangled.

→just as long as we keep doing this→I write you read→a
with-time-ness→an unexpected nobility→above and below flow by, cold as they
are→the universals keep→solar ghosts flare→turn to cash→on this small fire the
earth keep reading→I say to myself keep on→it will not be the end→not yet→my
children sleep→not yet→a friend who’s dead said this to me→it is not dead→
(*Fast*, p.16)

⁷⁵ Charles Olson, in his essay ‘Projective Verse’ (1951), takes this atomisation further, by reducing the stanza to the syllable, describing them as ‘particles of sound’, *Poetry Foundation* <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69406/projective-verse>> [accessed 21 February 2019] (para. 11 of 50).

⁷⁶ This call follows Sam Solnick’s proposal that instead of reading poetry for how we might dwell in the world, we read it for how we might ‘change (with) it.’ *Poetry and the Anthropocene: Ecology, biology and technology in contemporary British and Irish poetry*. (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p.211.

Fog is thick enough to conceal the bow of a fifty metre boat. Crew disappear into the damp blur once they pass the mast. All that can be seen are shadows, a diffused light. Water licks the hull and I am taut for what could be out there. Mercurial water rolls in soft folds out from the bow to glimmer briefly before flattening. An offshore passage means shifts of three hours on, six hours off – three of which are spent on-call, ready to support the watch if necessary. Lack of sleep; lack of reference points; and, here, in the far northern summer, a lack of darkness. 2600km north of home, at the far edge of Europe, the Arctic Circle is as unfamiliar and uninhabitable to me as the subaquatic realm. It is where our futures are playing out: in glacial retreat; sea ice melt; plans for newly viable oil wells; beaches littered with nonlocal waste; the arrival of species migrating with warming temperatures. Under a grey sky we motor slowly into a small lagoon formed by a sandbar separating it from the fjord. Our hull pushes plates of the last of the winter sea ice to wrinkle and overlap in a slushy thickness. Cloudy water and slurried crystals seal, break and reseal in a slur of neutrality. This enmeshed jigsaw is thick enough to bear the kittiwakes watching our approach. Overhead an ivory gull cuts in and out of sight against the snowy hills encircling the water. My eyes are pulled inland along lines of stripped driftwood. Siberian trunks score the pebbled beach where bright green fishing nets and frayed tongues of orange rope puncture the monochrome of this ossified light.

‘—if / this is prophecy it’s underwater’ | *The Unseen Sea*

i. An Oceanic Field of Presence

Ninety percent of the ocean is deeper than 200m, unknown to most humans. Yet the current destabilisation of the planet’s climate has increased its proximity (both geographically and psychically) to our daily lives.¹ With the cycle of increasing global temperatures and ice melt the ocean is growing in volume and size, eroding coastal habitats; more water evaporates, leading to an increase of hurricanes, storms and rainfall.² The chemical composition of ocean is changing faster than its inhabitants can evolve, effecting biodiversity and species abundance which in turn has repercussions on the marine constitution. Ocean health, intertwined with the pressures of climate chaos, chemical pollutants such as marineplastics, fertilizer run-off, oil spills, and industrialised fishing practices, is at the frontline of the global disruption many human activities are causing.³ Through its phenomenological posthumanist perspective the marine lyric offers an occasion in which to correlate an embodied engagement with that which is distant and the unfolding of possible futures the ocean might influence.

‘Imagining the unimaginable’ is how Graham describes, in interview, her poetic act of conveying ‘where we’re headed’, to enable ‘people [to] actually *feel* what they think’.⁴ By speaking of the ‘unimaginable’ Graham is operating within the frame of what is imaginable. It might be considered unimaginable but, as she points out in the same interview, she is not bringing any new news on the ‘climate peril front’. For Graham I think the imagining turns a known possibility into a felt-sensation, even though it has yet to happen. It seems to me that we humans need our bodies to assimilate the potential of

¹ John Copley, University of Southampton, 2014, <<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/exploring-our-ocean/3/steps/36487>> [accessed 27 February 2016].

² Lijing Cheng et al, ‘How fast are the oceans warming?’ in *Science* 363/ 6423 (2019,), pp.128-129.

³ A dive in May 2019 into the deepest region of the ocean, 10000m to the bottom of the Mariana Trench in the Pacific, revealed what has been described as ‘litter’. ‘Man makes deepest-ever dive in Mariana Trench and discovers ... litter’, *The Guardian* (14 May 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/13/man-makes-deepest-ever-dive-in-mariana-trench-and-discovers-trash>> [accessed 20 May 2019].

⁴ Interview with Deirdre Wengen, ‘Imagining the Unimaginable: Jorie Graham in Conversation’ 2014 <<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/imagining-unimaginable-jorie-graham-conversation>> [accessed 21 February 2019] (para. 9 of 38).

climate disruption before we will respond to it. Embodied experience has a more powerful impact on our thought and actions than an intellectual understanding. On the islands of the UK 2019's unseasonably warm February and 2018's extended dry summer have been met with delight. Our bodies take pleasure in unfamiliar warmth rather than the more usual maritime climate of predominantly wet and windy weather, even though we might understand such seasonal disturbances are potentially devastating. Just as I know of the growing climate chaos and marine pollution I haven't fully assimilated it yet. I do not feel directly imperilled by it, even though I live a metre or so from the bay's highest tides of the year. In the nine years I've lived here, I have witnessed a breach of the seawall once, and yet I know the bird populations are down, mussel beds are unfarmed and fish populations have diminished.

Graham includes herself in this proposed act of awakening through her writing to create a 'sensation of an "unimaginably" far off horizon'.⁵ This sensation, as embodied through the occasion of the poem, arises from what can be imagined. In his introduction to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes, '[w]e write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other'.⁶ Writing begins with what is known, in the case of Graham's marine lyrics with the science of climate change. In unfolding the chiasm between language and the felt experience that responds to words to provoke new ones, the emergent body of a marine lyric arises. The phenomenological study of imagination of this thesis so far leads me to believe imagination as part of a synaesthetic perception ensures any imagining has the potential of felt-sense. Here the unknown becomes embodied and realized in the process of writing the poem, rather than simply a recognised possibility. An example: sailing the mid Atlantic incurs the chance of being struck within fifteen minutes of a tanker coming over the horizon.⁷ To write of the unseen tanker and of how I feel when considering its impact conflates the two events of possible future and present imaginary. Timothy Morton expands this idea, describing poetry as the art of the future, arguing that at the point of writing the emergent poem has yet to reveal its meaning to its writer and is yet to be

⁵ Interview with Deirdre Wengen (para. 29 of 38).

⁶ Trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.xxi.

⁷ It feels far easier to summarize this situation over considering the implications of sea level rise on my home.

understood by a reader.⁸ This transposes the sense of an incomprehensible future onto an active present, where language deterritorializes the sense of place and time.

Graham has described how she plays in the poems of *Never* with a ‘desire for closure, desire for suspension of closure, desire for simultaneity in a stream of temporal action that defies simultaneity.’⁹ The conflict and complexity of an experience becomes manifest within the extended sentences. Streams of images and ideas charge each poem beyond its particular collection, to merge space with duration, foreshadowing the destabilizing temporal horizons of later poems. Graham’s experience of time, in poems from *Sea Change*, incorporates a sense of duration where temporal planes unfold and cross-hatch across multiple subjects. Titles, such as ‘Futures’ and ‘Later in Life’, allude to this unfolding; and in ‘Summer Solstice’ the protagonist writes of ‘trying to feel / the / future’.¹⁰

In the marine lyrics of *Sea Change* Graham intertwines the protagonist’s imagination into future scenarios, drawing on the multilayered temporality that’s manifest in the global circulation of ocean where future runs alongside present and past. Merleau-Ponty calls this a ‘field of presence’ where ‘what is past or future for me is present in the world’.¹¹ We can see this at the shoreline, watching the tide flood as its waters slide ‘into the present and on into the past’ as they ebb.¹² The waters of one high tide recede into the middle of Morecambe Bay, mixing with waters that will return as the next. My present moment, on the shore, is at the hinge of future and past movements of the tide.¹³ This cycle, shorter, and more superficial, than the deeper currents that travel across the globe, responds to the moon’s monthly cycle in relation to the earth. The field of presence offers a way of stepping out of one particular temporal plane to see more. The zone of indiscernibility

⁸ ‘Why we need to rethink climate change’, a *Guardian* podcast, 13 February 2018 <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2018/feb/13/why-we-need-to-rethink-climate-change-with-timothy-morton-books-podcast>> [accessed 30 July 2018].

⁹ Interview with Thomas Gardner, 2003, *Paris Review* (para. 137 of 174).

¹⁰ *Sea Change*, p.28.

¹¹ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.412.

¹² *Ibid*, p.416.

¹³ Thinking about this field of presence in relation to the sea evokes Derek Walcott’s lines of ‘The Sea is History’: ‘here was the sound / like a rumour without any echo // of History, really beginning.’ *Selected Poems*, ed. by Edward Baugh (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.125.

invites an immanent position where temporal planes are felt to enfold into each other. I'm interested in how the two theories can be incorporated into a marine lyric.

The tidal movement enables a marine lyric to bring, what Monika Langer describes as 'something [that] is no longer or not yet clearly visible' to mind, and so 'to invoke temporal horizons of past and future.'¹⁴ I have already touched upon the concertina'd line lengths unfolding zones of indiscernibility into each other, added to that is the visual effect of the poems in *Sea Change* of waters carried by the tide, whether on the flood or ebb as they move across the page's shoreline.¹⁵

Through modes of revelation and concealment 'Full Fathom' from *Sea Change* draws us into, and out of, a precarious future with a similar sense of immediacy that comes from watching the tide rise and fall across a day at the beach. In this poem historic waters slide in tandem with the present horizon, unfolding the Shakespearean reference from the collection's title into this poem's title and through its lines:

& sea swell, hiss of incomprehensible flat: distance: blue long-fingered ocean and its
nothing else: nothing in the above visible except
water: water and
always the white self-destroying bloom of wavebreak &, upclose
roil, &
here, on what's left of land,
ticking of stays against empty flagpoles, low tide, free day, nothing
being
memorialized here today — memories float, yes,
over the place but not memories any of us now among the living
possess...

(*Sea Change*, p.30)

The poem's rhythm is set by the first line (of this extract, which is the first of the poem), a long insistent meter, of ten stresses or more, that, through its colons, does not allow the reader to alight on a fixed subject. It could be the swell, its hiss or breaking waves, or all three giving over to the flagpoles. Beginning with the ampersand adds the sense of something having already happened, which we have missed and may never catch up on, and the unfolding of hissing water that runs from the 'long-fingered ocean'

¹⁴ Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception: A Guide and Commentary*, p.85.

¹⁵ Sarah Howe describes the white space in the poems of *Sea Change* as gaps 'in time—across which the imagination strains to leap', 'To Image the Future: Jorie Graham's *Sea Change*', *PN Review* 185, 35.3 (2009), 22-25, p.22. But if the reading is continued those leaps are made, however uncomfortable they feel.

(and line) to the crash of ‘wavebreak’. Graham describes the destabilizing of these line-lengths as creating a

feeling of falling forward, or “down” in the hyper-short lines at the same time as one feels suspended, as long as possible, in the “here and now” of the long line—so that the pull of the “future” is constrained by the desire to stay in the “now,” which is itself broken again, as a spell is, by the presence of the oncoming future.¹⁶

This visible intertwining of temporalities enables the sense of a future occurring as the present moment already steps into it, unfolding the moment as the poem turns on its spindle. The rhythm of reading these alternating lines, leaning into the gaps occurring between them, ensures the variable rhythm inhabit us, or we inhabit it as we attempt to follow the breath of each line. There is a corporeal pushing and release of breath as the lines are read. Also there is a struggle to release meaning from this extended breath so the sense is held in a more visceral communication as we articulate it.

Within the movement of past and futures within a tidal field of presence the water constitution changes - in chemistry, temperature, salinity etc. For a marine lyric to capture such forces of temporal and material braiding it might use repetitions inherent in language while exploring how these repetitions invoke difference in meaning. The repetition of ‘nothing’, ‘water’ and ‘memories’ punctuates and disassembles the poem’s trajectory. The sentences have their forward flight but enfolded within them are these recurrences. All three elements are transparent, if tangible at all; nothing isn’t, water is essentially ungraspable and memories generally upwell unbidden and transitory. Saying the lines aloud reveals the enforced different stress on each repeated word, despite it being the same. It changes in the shape of lips, tongue, push of vowel in its second audible rendition. The repetition of ‘water: water and’ on that short line highlights its transformation unfolding between the swelling water and the breaking waters. The line echoes the Ancient Mariner’s declaration of ‘water, water everywhere ...’ One of these waters could be bringing in distant memories and the other the present of a ‘self-destroying bloom’, about to withdraw from the shoreline for the future, to rush back out in the white space following the ‘&’. All the while, the stays are ticking as a clock.

¹⁶ Wengen (para. 20 of 38).

This conflation highlights the paradox that despite the human life is so short in relation to the oceanic duration, we have managed to become a geological force in our own right.¹⁷ And appears near the centre of the poem:

in your admittedly short
life you
were permitted to believe that this lasted
forever—

(*Sea Change*, p.30)

The poem is populated with daily activities such as baking bread, contractual agreements, mistakes, judgements and collecting wildflowers, which are set against ocean (as carbon sink) and the plundering of earth through deforestation, coal mining, ‘the festering wounds’ we also inflict. The shortness of the line, ‘life you’ jolts almost as an imperative. The sense of a command is made more explicit with ‘remove your hands/ from your pockets’. The reader is being woken from the illusion of a long-lived stability to mortality. Memories, floating on the surface of the water, are not necessarily from those who live now. Lives of those we might not have known, or of those we ignored for our ease, all swirl in the creases and vibrations of the waters that permeate those of us who act ‘as if free’.

The poem’s title, rising from Ariel’s song, reinforces the collection’s title and builds on the sense of what is irretrievable. There is, however, a contemporary inversion to the reference within the poem when a litany of blame erupts into ‘those were houses that are his eyes’. The houses go on to become lives, families, privacies, details, all vulnerable to unseen forces. Shakespeare’s pearls (once housed within the oyster shell) are as fragile as the bricks and mortar, the homes that create feelings of safety, love, the solace of freshly baked bread. The allusion unfolds to the drowned Phoenician sailor of Eliot’s ‘Wasteland’ who also has pearls for eyes. Looking back to the past exercises the muscle that enables a futuring, making it a useful first step in stretching the poem’s temporal consciousness. Here past is shelled within past, like the long-banned persistent organic pollutants, remaining in circulation despite disappearing from sight. These POPs have been found in the microscopic scavengers at the bottom of the Mariana Trench

¹⁷ Hannes Bergthaller expands upon this, describing how ecologies are ‘poised between entropy and negentropy; it is everywhere in flux, but at such varying speeds that, depending on your angle of vision, what you see is either stable balance or random fluctuations’ in ‘No More Eternal than the Hills of the Poets’: On Rachel Carson, Environmentalism, and the Paradox of Nature’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (December, 2015), p.21.

who will be trophically transferred back up the food chain. In this way past lives are carried on the currents to converge towards a future.¹⁸

It is through recognizing our own human duration that, Deleuze claims, enables us to recognise the existence of other durations, such as the ocean and its ecosystem, and thus our place in relation to them.¹⁹ There is no discrete separation between the durations of a human and that of ocean. Rather they intersect as different planes, or folds, that are on-going simultaneously. Considering the differing streams of ocean current helps to see there is no singular starting point, but a continuous loop of duration that we can join at any point, depending where we are situated in the world. Understanding this situatedness enables us to recognise the potential restriction of our perspective. In this way Merleau-Ponty's shore-bound field of presence is limited and where a posthumanist perspective of time and unfolding temporal planes might be more useful.

The tide is only one cycle at work within the giant flux of ocean. The ocean also moves on a longer durational scale in its less visible global currents. These currents, co-constituent with our planet's climate, may take, according to NOAA, a thousand years to complete a circuit.²⁰ A thousand years, well beyond the usual temporal scale our daily events encompass, could contain up to thirty generations of people. The 'unimaginable' unfolding of scale between the short tidal ranges we watch at the coast and the large slow conveyor circulation of a thousand year duration becomes palpable as an energetic conflict of uncertainty and destabilisation in Graham's poems. The sea as continuous, flowing throughout Graham's collections, enables a sense of temporal situatedness as much as a being-in-the-world, unsettling these poems from a single temporality.²¹

It is the slower and longer-lasting changes of temperature (and salinity) that affect the Gulf Stream and so the UK's island climate. The Gulf Stream forms part of the North Atlantic cycle of the global currents moving water across the globe. It crosses the surface of the

¹⁸ Alan Jamieson, et al. "Bioaccumulation of persistent organic pollutants in the deepest ocean fauna." *Nature ecology & evolution* 1.3 (2017): 0051.

¹⁹ *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p.33.

²⁰ <<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/kits/currents/06conveyor2.html>> [accessed 2 April 2017]

²¹ Timothy Clark's describes Heidegger's claim of how the Greeks saw the world as 'a continual happening', *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p.57.

Atlantic in a northwesterly direction towards the Arctic Ocean. There it cools, becomes heavier, and sinks, returning south, as a deep ocean current, to the equatorial regions. As it travels south it slowly warms to upwell mid Atlantic from where it is pulled north, by the sinking of distant polar water. In this way it joins the Gulf Stream. Sail across the North Atlantic and, at any point, the water column beneath you contains water that (as the surface layer) will become and (as the deeper layer) will have been the Arctic.²² Being at sea, out of sight of land, cannot offer the ‘fixed and identifiable point’ Meleau-Ponty might reach for in his thinking around present and future moments.²³ At sea there is no fixed point. However, loosened from a humanly historical scale and activated by intrasubjective unfoldings the poetic imagination can engage with these northerly and southerly currents simultaneously, encompassing the warm and cold temperatures in a dislocation of time and space that potentially untethers us from an individual momentary perspective.²⁴ Braidotti describes this as a ‘nomadology’ ... ‘instil[ling] movement and mobility at the heart of thinking’.²⁵ It is not necessarily a comfortable position, and is made more challenging when taking into consideration Arctic ice melt, locally diluting seawater and affecting the region’s habitual downwelling. This weakens the Gulf Stream and slows the wider North Atlantic current.²⁶ What might be understood in movement now has the potential threat of an unknown disruption. Scientists model the changes with a range of plausible future climate scenarios, each assigned a different confidence or likelihood, adding increasing uncertainty into the ‘unimaginable’ world the marine lyric attempts to inhabit. The flux of the ocean is no longer experienced as a superficial motion. If the marine lyric is capturing forces then a further deterritorialization needs to occur as the ocean itself is becoming deterritorialized by changing temperature and chemistry.

Just as the ocean is not contained within a single poem, nor bound by one collection, *Sea Change*’s ‘desire to imagine / the future’ is developed in Graham’s twelfth, collection, *Fast* (2017) with its new modes of lineation.²⁷ *Fast*’s title conjures speed, and in the

²² It is worth pointing out that the divide between the two is a slow transition, occurring in the thermocline layer that can be several hundred metres deep.

²³ *The Phenomenology of Perception*, p.80.

²⁴ Christian Marclay’s ‘The Clock’ is a wonderful example of the multiple streams of duration (albeit in human terms), and how they both slip into and out synchronisation with each other <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8svkK7d7sY>> [accessed 11 March 2019].

²⁵ *Nomadic Theory*, p.1.

²⁶ Summer K. Praetorius, ‘North Atlantic Circulation Slows Down’, *Nature* Vol 558 (2018), 180-1 (p.180).

²⁷ ‘Root End’, *Sea Change*, p.48.

context of our current climate crisis this refers to the acceleration of carbon dioxide levels challenging the planet's capacity to self-regulate, alongside a sense of being attached, firmly fixed, holding fast.²⁸ While these ideas vibrate particularly in the marine poems that feature in the first section of the collection, the whole collection continues to explore the intersection of memory and self, of language and thought, of self and selves, and the human and nonhuman.

In the earlier, shorter marine lyrics of the collection line lengths press to the page's edge in dense blocks of text, described by Graham in interview as 'coming up against one kind of ending'.²⁹ Stanzas, which can also be read as paragraphs, question boundaries between prose and poetry, and keep the surrounding white space to a minimum with a tumult of language. They offer an immersion into the multi-layered intertwinement of marine and terrestrial living, artificial, human and more-than-human intelligence. The pitfalls of classification are evident throughout the study of marine natural history. From Aristotle claiming dolphins were fish, rather than air-breathing mammals, or naming anemones after the terrestrial plants they resembled before they were discovered to be creatures, our attempts to identify oceanic life forms have proved problematic.³⁰ Why cephalopods can and do change colour, both in company and solitude, still eludes explanation. That the marine does not accommodate terrestrial regularities offers the marine lyric an opportunity to embrace an uncontained notion of form, evolving with its subject.

The first person 'I' often speaks with an intimate informality while also slipping into a more amorphous, unanchored tone that could be ocean, or a larger consciousness. Phrases fold and unfold as currents of what has gone and what is yet to come. In the poem 'Self Portrait at Three Degrees' fleeting sensations of recognisable images are set within a complex grammatical construction. The poem rejects presenting visual images for a more deeply felt experience, embedded within fragments of speech, fractured clauses, and pieces of action and reflection that are sensed but not fully ascertained. Form, language and

²⁸ It questions the identities created through the advanced capitalist project of consumption and growth, as the title poem opens: 'or starve', p.17.

²⁹ Martine Erin Lyndal, 'The Possible Absence of a Future: Talking with Jorie Graham' (14 August, 2017) *The Rumpus*, <<https://therumpus.net/2017/08/the-rumpus-interview-with-jorie-graham/>> [accessed 28 January 2019] (para. 6 of 29).

³⁰ Annalisa Berta, James L. Sumich and Kit M. Kovacs. *Marine mammals: evolutionary biology*. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005), p.3.

imagery layer the intangible alongside tangible experiences to reach towards the ‘unimaginable’ horizon. This creates a tension that both holds and overflows itself, allowing reading to progress through the poem, internalising the precarious and increasingly inhospitable more-than-human world we face. Returning to a preoccupation with self-portraiture which began in 1987 in *The End of Beauty*, Graham here imaginatively inhabits and conveys the force of changing and unstable ocean currents. Three degrees of global temperature warming is the projected temperature rise if we do not curb carbon emissions. It is argued that even if humans could instantly turn off all our emissions of greenhouse gases, the Earth would exceed the agreed target of a 1.5°C rise above pre-industrial levels.³¹

Graham situates the poem at a very specific time, claiming ‘I am writing this in 2015’, two years before the publication of the collection.³² Already at least two years will have passed by the time it is read within the collection, which could serve as an anchor or a disruption of the present moment by tugging the reader back to the past and to consider how fast past it is. The urgency of the voice is undiminished, and in fact potentially increased because of the passage of time. Just before this date is stated there is the announcement: ‘within 50 years if we are lucky’. What it refers to is not made clear, it could be the three degree rise; the prevailing sense is ominous.

The scarcity of visual images in the poem actualizes Graham’s ambition is ‘not to make the invisible visible, but to peruse and multiply the channels of its invisibility’.³³ After all, the subtle changes of durational flux are considerably less visible than the spatial relationships between things. An earlier poem ‘Mist’, from *Erosion*, speaks of wanting ‘another, thicker, kind of sight’, having experienced the permeating, porous qualities of mist, where ‘geography /[is] much quicker than / its history’.³⁴ A sense of time is engulfed by the indistinguishable nature of mist, it blurs what is past and what lies ahead. While the future is beyond the horizon, unseen, its ripples are already being carried through waterways and felt, with the thicker sight of embodied perception.

³¹ Thorsten Mauritsen and Robert Pincus, ‘Committed warming inferred from observations’ in *Nature Climate Change* 7.9 (2017), 652-655 (p.652). This figure was agreed in Paris, 2015

³² *Fast*, p.8. All references from *Fast* will be bracketed without the title in the rest of this chapter.

³³ Earthlines interview, p.36.

³⁴ *Erosion*, p.4.

Multiple channels of invisibility, drawn in 'Full Fathom' as memories of an unknown community and the rippling actions of a wider culture, resurface in this self-portrait. Here Braidotti's concept of a nomadic 'social imaginary', that proposes changing the structure of centralised subjectivity, can be reframed as a biological imaginary.³⁵ This transforms the sense of 'individual' to encompass all the organisms that support any one body of life. Braidotti, who continues to unfold Deleuze's thinking in the face of contemporary challenges, offers a nomadic cartography to escape the fixed parameters of subjectivity responding to this time of contemporary political upheaval and climate migrations. Her vision of being aware of multiple temporalities while knowingly tethered to a particular historical position enough to accept responsibility for it can be read in Graham's self-portrait.

'Self Portrait at Three Degrees' presents a future that is pulled into and out of this self's unity. There is a splintering of perspective and enlarged subjectivity that envelops the unseen from microscopic organisms to rising global temperatures, recognising how they circulate into and out of the self in relation to what is happening to the world's ocean. The poem's protagonist shifts from first person to second in the first line of the blocked text of this portrait. This creates a seemingly solid, unified body (of the poem, its protagonist, and the multiple selves within and outwith), where the future, which isn't ours directly, lies within our multiple selves:³⁶

Teasing out the possible linkages I—no you—who noticed—if the world—no—
the world if—take plankton—I feel I cannot love anymore—take plankton—that
love is reserved for an other kind of existence—take plankton— that such an
existence is a form of porn now—no—what I am saying—take plankton—it
is the most important plant on earth—think love—composes at least half
the biosphere's entire primary production—love this—love what—I am saying
you have no choice—that's more than all the land plants on the whole planet put
together—blooms so large they can be photographed from space—everything
living—

(p.8)

³⁵ *Nomadic Theory*, p.245.

³⁶ Jenkins Chadwick writes of the book being haunted by ghosts of experiences we barely registered while they were occurring and haunted even more by those we always recognized were important' in 'Pulitzer Prize Winner Jorie Graham's Collection of Poetry, 'Fast', Will Haunt You, Beautifully, 25 July 2017 <<https://www.popmatters.com/fast-jorie-graham-will-haunt-you-beautifully-2495386689.html>> [accessed 28 January 2019] (para. 1 of 16). This self-portrait could be read as being of the ghost of the woman-yet-to-come.

The fractured phrases, butting the ‘I’ with plankton and love and another (or same but different) self, linked and disrupted by em dashes makes reading awkward, sense difficult, the reader uncertain what meaning lies within these seemingly disparate things of love, plankton and porn in a breathless tirade. Breathlessness, a symptom of anxiety, becomes here a trigger for our anxiety as we read it. We feel the anxiety, realize it, as if the oxygen is already depleted. In healthy quantities, plankton provide the ‘linkages’, oxygen, between ‘I’ and ‘you’. Four times in the first four lines the reader is asked to ‘take plankton’ – building to a point where the plankton has scaled up to a bloom, becoming visible as illustration of what happens with increasing ocean temperature and nitrogen run-off from the weed-killers we’ve already discussed.

This bloom causes release of more carbon in the ocean, depleting oxygen to turn areas of ocean into hypoxic areas, ‘dead zones’ that as reader we are forced to physically experience in our unstoppable, breathless reading. Yet we are presented, too, with love: love as connector, a joyful, self-realising creative emotion. Even if we do not know the material experience of plankton or the consequences of their blooming, we are familiar with the capacities and reach of love, its own vagaries and how we place so much on its longevity, intertwining the two as imaginable and unimaginable. Is this world an empty shell, a sea without plankton, sex without love, what Braidotti describes as a ‘titillation without providing fulfilment’?³⁷ If so, perhaps the breathlessness also alludes to an existential emptiness however much we try to consume.

Graham seems to be grappling with what was held briefly in ‘Day Off’ from *Sea Change*:

The future without
days. Without days of it?
in it? I try to – just for a second – feel

that shape.

(*Sea Change*, p.40)

This attempt to hold the vastness of a future in a second conjures the clairvoyant with crystal ball gazing into what can’t seen, yet wanting to feel it and bring it into the poem. ‘Without days’ blurs the temporal markers that have attempted to anchor the progression through *Sea Change*’s poems. Now, almost ten years on, the desire is loaded, as if held for so long. The density of ‘Self Portrait at Three Degrees’ gives a physical weight to this

³⁷ *Transpositions* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p.153.

image from the earlier collection. The protagonist goes on to energize herself, or reach out to another, through the proffering of the plankton:

take it—here you take it, I can't hold it anymore—you don't want it—I
don't care—you carry it for now—I need to catch my breath—I want to lie here

(p.8)

The reader is being asked to not just see it but grasp this responsibility. How can you 'take' plankton that would slip through fingers with the water they live in? This adds another angle of disorientation by switching between information on plankton and a command to another.³⁸ The need to grasp the changing situation, to become active participants in it, is urgent, whether it's seen or not. There is no choice.

Throughout *Fast* poems examine the porosity of borders between individual death alongside the larger threat of extinction occurring across the planet: juxtaposing grief for a parent alongside grief for the planet. By relating intimate instances of experience – here, grasping water and the plankton in it – the poem draws the personal, immediate alongside an understanding of the larger scale affect of species extinction. We are asked to magnify our understanding of love from an interpersonal dynamic to a seemingly impersonal crisis. This brings about an emotional entanglement with unfamiliar others.³⁹

The poem, however, is not necessarily affixed to grief. Certainly the piling up of images alludes to a multi-stranded emotional encounter. The intimacy, mooring love to the larger unseen cycle beyond our daily relationships, becomes drawn into another personal realm:

one morning I woke up and I was born—I
realised I was born—

...

I stood for the first time on my own→unimaginable strength in these feet, these

³⁸ Kylan Rice suggests the self of this portrait could be of 'artificial intelligence. A new intelligence on the basis of aggregation, feedback, elaborate reciprocation.' And certainly the static of the poem could be heard to give that impression, but I sense too much adherence to emotional familiarity - the poem's revolving around love - to be so sure. However when other poems bring in the AI used in hospital treatments, the implication is that no-one is completely free of 'alien' presence in their body. 'The Lateral Radical' in *West Branch* 87 (2018), 88-104, p.92.

³⁹ Joey Connolly writes of Graham's technique, specifically in 'Honeycomb' but I think it holds for the collection, that 'understanding comes as much from excluding material deemed irrelevant as it does from dwelling on what is relevant'. We are not focusing on the plankton in the sea in this exchange, but their significance for us. 'Honeycomb, Essay', *Pracrit* (January 2017) (<http://www.pracrit.com/essays/honeycomb-essay-by-joey-connolly/>) [accessed 26 February 2017] (para. 6 of 23).

The clarity of this image, its domesticity, a child's first steps and determination to walk, is striking for its visual nature. It conflates an inherent need to interact with the world, to learn independence, with the innate care I feel for such vulnerability. Yes 'unimaginable strength', yet can I grasp what I need to? How unaware I am, as a child, of my strength. So too as adult I can be unaware of the destructive power I can exert. There is something implicitly wobbly in those first steps. Perhaps the protagonist has to learn how to take steps, to feel the impact of her body in this world which has become new, like the one unfamiliar to the infant. There is an impetus to emphasize the linkages that bind us to the world. There is a responsibility within that binding, one that potentially could create a sense of breathlessness. This image pulls me into a tender, if short-lived, moment, extended by the line break, an interval of memory, which is generally nonverbal. Here the intimacy reveals the shadow of vulnerability.

We are all vulnerable as infants. We are all small in relation to the biosphere's primary production.⁴⁰ This interplay between personal and the extensive spread of space alludes to the massive leaps of scale we need to undertake if we're to attempt to engage with the impact of climate change upon us, especially if it has yet to persistently manifest in local ways. Although, of course, wherever drought, flood or other consequence of temperature rise occurs, we are as enmeshed to them as the protagonist of this self-portrait is enmeshed with all the other elements that co-create it.

These spatial extensions are temporal. Already Graham's self-portrait has moved from healthy unseen plankton to their blooming, to a child's first steps, and it goes on fifty years to a '→shapeless unspendable future→', questioning as to whether this future is 'worth waiting around for'. The future of this future does not have a shape, despite the strength of the child's grip, despite the 'dream→shape of certainty'. The dream, it appears, is not the same as the manifest future, which is amorphous, intangible. This future weaves in and out of the past and present to create a rhythm that does not settle or form an easily coherent pattern. This sense of shapelessness evokes allusions to the 'rise of slime', where our

⁴⁰ It could be seen here as the pyramidal structure of the food chain being upturned so the apex predators of humankind spin alongside the microscopic drifters.

present day ocean is characterised by an increase of life forms such as bacteria, algae and jellyfish, charting a new, less defined marine ecology, that not only is reverting to previous oceanic states but ultimately co-worlds an environment hostile to humans.⁴¹ The arrows (and em-dashes) throughout the poem ensure there is no present moment of the extended sentence structure. The syntax resists distinct sentence structure and a straightforward accumulation of sense. Graham has spoken of her being overtaken by the technology of the keyboard - of how

a dash was followed by chance by that 'greater than' arrowhead ... the whole sentence just got sucked forward. I thought only the 'sense of an ending' towards which one moves—and syntax—could do that. But this was sadder, more indifferent, more sinister in some ways'.⁴²

Technology has overwhelmed the act of writing and the poet has surrendered herself to it. This outrunning of technology beyond its original intention adds another layer to the cycle of dismantling of human mastery, and the uncertainty of the future. Her exploration opens up more potential porosities as the protagonist envelops past within the present moment. What it means to be human is continually questioned in this latest collection as poems engage with AI, the post-human and the marine environment.

As reader I am as surprised as the writer by the appearance and imperative of the poem's syntax. Technology is not explicitly engaged with in this poem, as it is in others in *Fast*, but it makes an interesting tension that the arrows begin in a pastoral section of the poem where wind, sunlight and trees are drawn, where the 'field of rules not visible, but suddenness its own rule→'. Technology does not need to be made manifest, visible as in the encounter with the bot in 'Honeycomb', to permeate everywhere.

As with her brush with keyboard technology, Graham maintains a future embedded in the present. She does not attempt to conjure the future beyond what she *can* imagine.⁴³ Employing what is already in existence, she layers fragments from one time alongside another to disrupt our sense of continuum. This future is one where:

⁴¹ Jeremy B.C. Jackson, 'Ecological extinction and evolution in the brave new ocean', *PNAS* 105:1 (2008), 11458-11465, p.11461.

⁴² 'Interview with Sarah Howe', *Praccrit* <<http://www.praccrit.com/interviews/cryo-interview-by-sarah-howe/>> [viewed 4 July 2017] (para. 77 of 85).

⁴³ Like Atwood, in her *Madd Adam* trilogy, Graham does not invent anything she is not already familiar with, that does not already occur.

We are all tired. We need the tools to make the tools. Also the headdress. Are we ahead of time or too late? No one is noticing us the whistle blows the birds don't do any damage. Dwell.

(p.9)

The simple sentence construction of 'We are all tired' arrests the billowing layers of temporality while uniting the poem's protagonist with unknown and future readers to the present moment of the poem. It is a waymarker, a fleeting sense of intimacy within the otherwise fluctuating scales of perspective. 'Are we ahead of time or too late?' unpins us again, to the slipperiness of our agency, the headlong rush of our civilisation. Does no one notice us, because as a civilisation we have diminished, heading towards extinction, or because what is happening has gathered its own momentum (as with Graham's keyboard), no matter what we do now? The headdress and need for tools reference past civilisations, Graham's colonial ancestry, and the decimation of First Nation peoples. One future has already played out. The poem's questioning, coming as it does at the end of the poem, echoes Morton's assertion that the world has already ended; and we need to realise we are not facing an apocalyptic future but that the disaster has already happened.⁴⁴ We are living in an age of trauma with the consequence of our actions.

This cross-hatching of time is embodied through memory and anticipation, continual as the opposing directions of surface and deep ocean currents. The counterflow of images and ideas from past and future fields, of love, wind and birds gathering as 'wide forces ... bursting', where 'rules' are not of visibility but 'suddenness', sends us back to the poem's opening: the blooming reproductive scale of phytoplankton. Coccolithophore, in existence over 500 million years, divide and multiply so quickly their populations can explode into those blooms seen from space.⁴⁵ The poem's huge variance in modes of duration - phytoplanktonic reproduction, that can double, quadruple, or even in some cases split into eight cells per mother cell per day; the centurian cycle of global currents, and the ocean acidification of many centuries - appears irrational or chaotic, symptoms of, Morton might

⁴⁴ *Hyperobjects : Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p.7. His two 'endings' are at the invention of the steam engine and the first testing of the atomic bomb, rather than including the colonisation of North America or the trans Atlantic slave trade.

⁴⁵ Mark Ohman, 'Introduction' to Christian Sardet's *Plankton* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.5.

argue, the trauma he claims we're experiencing.⁴⁶ Yet the poem declares: 'Not chaos. If I listen.' Precarity calls for acute attention. The poem embraces its capacity to expand to the intricate mesh of many temporal horizons, acting out non-linear time. If we listen we can discern the different durational planes occurring at any one moment, tease out the strands, of personal memory, cultural memory, biological events we are party to; or geological movement that reduces our stature, while not dismissing our presence. In fact such a listening activates a sense of potential perhaps, as the child's first steps. At any one time, the poem suggests, we can reach out, up and down, back and forward, as the sea on its scale does. The poem offers a site that expands a sense of temporal situatedness that incorporates what is beyond perception, flowing into possibility, into imagination and the intangible that we can somehow sense within the encounter of the poem. There is an alternative strand to this future - rather than trauma, it could be felt as immanence.

ii. Hope, Wonder and Faith in Plankton

The creative 'zig-zagging' of time enveloping a range of distinct temporal scales that converge in the self-portrait offers what Braidotti describes as 'an active reinvention of the self that is joyfully discontinuous'.⁴⁷ Could this self-portrait, with its multi-stranded complexity and sense of uncertainty, be felt as delight or exultation? There is potential joy in the image of the child. The invitation at the end of the poem, first to 'Dwell there' then finishing with 'Dwell', is picked up again in the collection's title poem, 'Fast', where 'To dwell is to leave a trace' (p.19). To 'dwell' suggests a temporal occupation as much as spatial, and such lingering might induce a sense of wonder, just as the annunciation of the word asks the speaker to open their mouth in a slightly slack-jawed manner, invoking a gawp perhaps? A trace is an impression rather than defacement, or a course of action, a pathway to be followed. Graham has said the present tense – in which this poem is written – is the 'moment in which joy must exist and can be reached', where there is 'a slowing of fate — and a widening of presence'.⁴⁸ Perhaps the poem's trace is the wonder of a non-uniform world, one that hasn't yet been reduced to what Stephen Meyer describes as a

⁴⁶ Ulrich Sommer, 'Population Dynamics of Phytoplankton', *Marine Ecology*, ed. by Carlos M. Duarte, Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems Publications (2009).

⁴⁷ *Nomadic Theory*, p.229.

⁴⁸ O'Malley Interview (para. 8 of 16).

‘peculiarly homogenized assemblage of organisms naturally and unnaturally selected for their compatibility with one fundamental force: us’.⁴⁹ Graham is not reaching for compatibility within a singular, linear duration. The haphazardous nature of temporality and the different existences within it are being recognized, and made evident within the immersion of the poem. This, and other marine lyrics in the collection, could be celebrating the non-homogenized sea, bringing its diversity and complexity into felt sensation, before it is lost, modified to a human behavioural mode of oppression, before, perhaps, it is actually even seen.

It is a complicated form of celebration, one that recognises the complexity revealed by such slowing and widening of the poem’s present moment, one that gives everything a degree of significance if we realise the interdependence of species. The ‘linkages’ stated on the first line are upheld, even strengthened, through the energetic exchanges between things, their differences that cohere as ecologies. In healthy marine ecologies, the speed of phytoplankton reproduction, which as well as producing blooms, enables them potentially to adapt to the incremental changes in ocean chemistry. It has been seen in some laboratory experiments the calcite scales of coccolithophore thicken as their environment acidifies, protecting them from the corrosive aspects of increased acidification. The future as implicated by climate change is wide open, still in the slow widening present tense, ever-widening to encompass the future.⁵⁰

Shrewy’s *Hope at Sea* presents hope as a mode of uncertainty. The literatures she studies celebrate diversity and the entanglements of human and nonhuman while engaging with examples of durations exceeding the human. Her argument, that hope is ecological, expands the sense of hope as a future-based optimism so it unfolds into present and past timeframes and the understandings gained from them. If there is hope in Graham’s poem, it is cautious. For hope to pervade a reading of this poem, it needs to be considered as an act of engagement with despair at the realities facing us. If we feel our despair we can also

⁴⁹ As quoted by Jonathan Skinner in ‘Thoughts on Things: poetics of the Third Landscape’, in *The Eco Language Reader*, pp9-51, p.17. I shall focus on the ocean as assemblage in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

⁵⁰ William Nichols writes similarly that ‘acts of imagination can help to heal existing landscapes and communities in spite of grave problems’, in ‘Environmentalism and the Legitimacy of Hope’ from *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 3/4 (1996), 206-213, (p.207). It is through the expansion of subjectivity that I believe the marine lyric can do this.

feel hope.⁵¹ This self-portrait does not want to forget, does not want the slippage into homogeneity to happen without people feeling the impact of change.⁵² This poem's multilayered complexity offers a guarded hope, one that reorientates its protagonist's being-in-time to incorporate the ontology of species beyond the human. Could this then make this self-portrait a becoming-in-time? If we extend our horizons beyond a single, human reference point, we can consider the planet's geological sweep that, despite the naming of our current epoch as the Anthropocene, does not hold humans at its centre.⁵³

Braidotti, too, challenges what we might consider creates our forward momentum. She argues death is not behind us, suggesting that in our 'awareness of finitude, of the interrupted flow of [our] being-there, death has already taken place.'⁵⁴ Death, in this sense, is 'ever-present' because what we experience, as in the self-portrait here, is not our individual subjectivity, but a collective, impersonal time-spanning experience. Death is an inevitable part of life: the composting of one life leads to another.⁵⁵ If death is ever-present, we are already living it; it heralds our transient existence. A marine lyric endeavours to capture the suffering and endurance of life that knows it is both mortal, so making it precious, and on-going in the endless recycling of energy that makes up our atomic life forces. We are, materially, the bone and water of earth and ocean. Environmental philosopher Deborah Bird Rose writes persuasively of 'ethical time' as acknowledging the connections between different folds of temporal durations that different species inhabit.⁵⁶ What she highlights is the multispecies 'murder of ethical time' and how the attunement to the multiplitudinous nature of time goes some way to re-establishing an ethical understanding of how all species are intertwined. The view that each death is a

⁵¹ Deleuze describes the way one emotion can follow another as seeing them being dispersed in each other already: 'How could a pain follow a pleasure if a thousand tiny pains or, rather, half-pains were not already dispersed in pleasure, which will then be united in conscious pain?' *The Fold*, p.99.

⁵² Graham speaking in 'America's Understanding of the Planet', *Big Think* (2008) <<http://bigthink.com/videos/americas-understanding-of-the-planet>> [viewed 3 November 2017]

⁵³ Donna Haraway has, amongst others, suggested alternative names for our geological epoch, to counter the implicit human-centredness of the anthropogenic activity within the term. In *Staying with the Trouble*, well as 'Capitalocene', she suggests the 'Chthulucene', alluding to subterranean, mythic 'chthonic ones' (p.55) whose 'tentacular thinking' might better illuminate the intertwined co-creation of our blue planet.

⁵⁴ *Nomadic Theory*, p.343.

⁵⁵ Donna Haraway is fond of composting as an image she returns to in *Staying with the Trouble*.

⁵⁶ 'Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time', *Environmental Philosophy* 9 (I), 2012, pp.127-140. In this paper she draws attention to how the use of death narratives act as a gift to the survivors, invoking a response. In this way this self-portrait could be seen as a gift to the reader deserving a response. What survives of us is our response-ability. The ethics of this gift places the reader is entangled with the portrait.

necessity for the continuation of life can only be a constructively inclusive mode of hope if it is not imbalanced towards certain species or vulnerable groups.

This self-portrait and other marine lyrics offer pathways through not knowing exactly what we experience, how we live, or perhaps even who we are at any given moment, while encouraging an acute attention to all that make us so in that moment. According to philosopher Gabriel Marcel the inability to explain everything opens us up to a space of wonderment. So whether or not the thickening of the coccolithophore's scales is a permanent response to acidification is not a problem a marine lyric can solve, but a mystery it can document with wonder. Marcel's distinction between mystery and problem is clarified by how we are situated within them. A mystery, he writes, 'is a problem in which I am involved, and in respect to which I cannot take an outsider's point of view.'⁵⁷ How can we, as inhabitants of the planet, take an outsider's point of view to the various responses to changes in ocean chemistry? Avoiding a naïve wonder requires the kind of active awareness I experience in the marine lyrics of Graham. In them, my attention situates me between an experienced embodied perception that recognises it will inevitably change and the imagining of what cannot yet be perceived. In this mode of perception becoming an 'informed consumer' is not enough. As this self-portrait says, 'we are going through the forms of worship, we call it the news, we will make ourselves customers' (p.8).

When a marine lyric floats offshore it resists the easy consumption a terrestrial existence can be inundated by through advertising billboards, window displays, the proliferation of eateries and such like. Offshore forces resist linear narratives, an individual perspective, and ultimately any straightforward, easy to consume comprehension given the immersion in sensation.⁵⁸ A marine lyric is a provocation that will not settle for an easy solution or simple witnessing. The disruption of timeframes lends itself to a wider disruption of what might be expected as our trajectory. Offshore, there are too many forces to consider to

⁵⁷ As quoted by Rosa Slegers in 'Reflections on a Broken World: Gabriel Marcel and William James on Despair, Hope and Desire' from *Hope Against Hope. Philosophies, Cultures and Politics of Possibility and Doubt* ed. by J. Horrigan & E. Wiltse, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2010), p.63.

⁵⁸ Matthew Bevis underscores a similar sense of wonder, writing, 'when experiencing wonder, it feels as though we know something without quite being sure of what we know' in 'Unknowing Lyric' from *Poetry Magazine* 2017 <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/detail/92372>> [accessed 5 March 2019] (para. 25 of 47).

ensure a certainty of how they will play out, too many possible outcomes. If we can accept our not-knowing or not understanding how things, or a poem, will unfold, it places us elementally within it, not necessarily able to solve it as if it were a problem external to us. Just as the complexity of climate change and its intertwinement with the sea cannot be solved straightforwardly, the marine lyric requires an acknowledgement of our being one of many species on the planet affected. Wonder allows an alternative to mourning for what we could consider lost, to honour the on-going fragmentary nature of the ocean created within the marine lyric. Its protagonist has already died and will continue to die; a self who recognises their extension through the more-than-human; a self who attempts to mediate and endure what remains.

The willingness to remain open to encounters with the unknown and unpredictable requires a sense of faith. This need not be a theological faith, but, as Graham writes in her first collection, an embodiment of ‘where we are / less filled / with ourselves’.⁵⁹ Faith suggests a practice requiring attention and discipline, a larger scale of thinking that moves beyond the social entrenchment of hopefulness and reaches to that which is more-than-human. Faith has a similar uncertainty, doubt and sense of endurance, as hope, and could also be seen as making these qualities more diffuse through its practical application. This faith is an engagement with the planetary sphere in which we dwell that is so much bigger than us. Here we understand our selves as being beyond the individual.⁶⁰ God, as Graham writes in ‘The Philosopher’s Stone’ in *Never*, need not be a singular divinity, but another term for the force that flows through life:

—as the self fills in on itself—a
collectivity—a

god making of himself many
creatures

(*Never*, p.8)

Faith, within the context of the marine lyric, is an acknowledgement of an immersion within our environment and the immanence of co-existence arising from it.⁶¹ Plankton, for

⁵⁹ ‘Strangers’ from *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts* (New Jersey: Princetown University Press, 1980), p.12.

⁶⁰ Bill McKibben writes how ‘if anything, our sense of community weakens more each year. Our politics is ever more firmly in the hands of those who exalt the private, those who write off whole swaths of people and places’. The need to reconnect beyond our restricted, and politically weakened, individuality is crucial and elemental within a marine lyric and its faith that this is possible. *Hope, human and wild: True stories of living lightly on the earth*. (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2007), p.60.

⁶¹ Audre Lorde writes ‘poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.’ This underpins the idea of non-theological faith as fundamental to a marine lyric. Faith, as upheld within a marine

example, invisible to us humans, pervade our lives as primary producers of oxygen. I could refer to the ‘breath’ of plankton as analogous to the breath of god. The wind arriving on shore is a wind that has been growing in its passage across the Atlantic to replace the rising air heated by land. The same wind churns surface waves to disperse the plankton into the deeper waters as food for more creatures to reach. Knowing these small fragments of this cycle, does not remove the wonder from the cycle, but firmly places us within the cycle, as we breathe in and out, in the face of the ocean’s continuing carbon-saturation, challenging its occupants.⁶²

‘The Medium’ is a more recent example of Graham illustrating faith as an embodied experience, bridging us with the more-than-human. The title reminds us of the orientation of futuring as often being the domain of wise women, whose skills are heard and accepted outside the containment of a domestic environment. This chapter’s title quote comes from the poem in *Fast*’s second section. While not located offshore, the poem opens with the Lethe, the river of unmindfulness, and courses through the protagonist watching the River Charles, in Cambridge, and its inexorable ‘drift into drift’. Its swirl of ectoplasmic mist morphs into a reflection of sky, signatures of trees and allusions of a colonial past before it becomes a memory of her father, his voice absorbed into the voice of a medium on a phone line.

Illness, death and bereavement move with the water that will flood into the sea, where ‘there is / no more—no more crooked intervention of the singular’.⁶³ In recognising I am part of the mystery of life and death there is no walking away from death as a problem, not just personal death, but the global death of the mass extinctions our planet is experiencing. Endurance is not simply a matter of sustaining a sense of hopefulness, but holding it in balance with a more deeply held faith. Faith offers a complexity of experience that does not necessarily default to optimism. Kierkegaard writes of faith holding ‘the equilibrium of doubt’, giving faith the counterweight of continually rebalancing itself alongside

lyric, is a guiding principle for compassion and understanding of life beyond the individual. ‘Poetry is not a luxury’ in *On Being* <<https://onbeing.org/blog/poetry-is-not-a-luxury-by-audre-lorde/>> [accessed 22 November 2018] (para. 10 of 16).

⁶² Yadigar Sekerci and Sergei Petrovskii consider a model of diminishing oceanic oxygen production due to increased water temperature in ‘Mathematical modelling of plankton–oxygen dynamics under the climate change.’ *Bulletin of mathematical biology* 77.12 (2015): pp.2325-2353. Given this, it might be worth considering expanding how we regard the current ecological crisis as an existential one too.

⁶³ *Fast*, p.29.

uncertainty, doubt, and anxiety.⁶⁴ This brings to mind Graham's search within a poem for its 're-equilibrium' of being-in-the-world explored in chapter one.⁶⁵ The paradox held within a marine lyric comes with opening oneself up to a world-bounded faith that tests endurance and doubt in oneself and others. Anxiety and doubt are both entangled with the deep-seated trust, or love, in that which is larger than the individual, that requires adhesion, through the forces of physics, biology and chemistry.

The first 'Prayer' in *Never*, already discussed, touches on faith as an instrument of change:

This is the force of faith. Nobody gets
what they want. Never again are you the same. The longing
is to be pure. What you get is to be changed. (*Never*, p.3)

The force is the movement of minnows swimming below the protagonist, threading between themselves and separately, as the words of a poem. They make manifest the force of the water that rolls on, thirteen years later, in 'The Medium', to the sea. Faith, opening and widening a moment to encompass the unfolding sense of becoming-in-time, enables us to inhabit that zone of indiscernibility between ourselves and the more-than-human.

Kierkegaard blurs the distinction between the man and his god, suggesting that faith in what is larger than you is also faith in yourself. Your practice and discipline require faith in the giving up of personal desire, or the holding onto the fixed sense of ourselves as a clearly defined individual, unfolding us to the wider, collective concern of the world we inhabit. The lower case 'god' of a marine lyric could be regarded as Merleau-Ponty's flesh that is the circuitry between bodies that connects them in relational responsibility. The real risk is of the failure to do anything. Acceptance of change is enough, to be open hearted enough to not expect a tangible outcome, but to absorb the 'glistening minutes' that Graham expands into the streams of 'Prayer' and sensing the aftershocks of that change. Here intimacy is found in faith of that which is bigger, or beyond, the immediate desire, the interconnectivity 'through which infinity threads itself, / also oblivion'. The surrendering that comes with faith then is the surrendering to the uncertainty of any outcome. The marine lyric, in its manifestation of on-going uncertainty, couples the

⁶⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear & Trembling* (1843), p.6.

⁶⁵ Val Plumwood, discussing spirituality, claims that it is not so much 'contemporary non indigenous culture lacks a concept of the sacred, as that it has mostly located the sacred in the wrong place, above and beyond a fallen earth.' Putting our faith in plankton goes some way to rectify this misplaced faith, and might also aid a recognition of our planetary indigeneity. *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.220.

internal and external changes that occur within us - changes that are felt within the poem and the reader being folded into and out of each other at the time of reading.

The expansion of consciousness the marine lyric engenders, through its engagement with faith in the more-than-human that is simultaneously faith in the protean self, goes back to the ethico-political positioning of it as a manifesto for marine citizenship. This form of citizenship is an act of embodied imagination that makes an allegiance to ecosystem rather than nationality. Geography is felt rather than appearing symbolically. It recognises Iris Young's critique of universal citizenship and bases its notion of citizenship of ecological niche rather than economics.⁶⁶ The subtle matter of imagination, what Deleuze calls 'spirit-in-matter', participates in the vibratory creases of the electromagnetic field alongside us that draw us into and out of the marine lyric.⁶⁷ This reality, created by each reading of the marine lyric, becomes a felt sensation carried beyond the immediate experience of the poem and not necessarily intellectually recognised or stored.

Graham's writing, which often resists being remembered, offers an alternative reality precisely because of this resistance.⁶⁸ Memories, after all, are retained more often than not as sensations. Her work takes us with it in an unfamiliar trajectory, offering a new allegiance to multiple communities, even those we might not know beyond the realm of the poem. As such marine citizenship offers the potential for care of that which is not in our locale, understanding or easy remembering.⁶⁹ The memory that lives within a marine lyric is collective, illusive and perhaps yet to have been experienced by the protagonist or reader. Such memories occurring as 'microperceptions of the world' act as waves, carried

⁶⁶ 'Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship' *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (The University of Chicago Press, Jan., 1989), pp. 250-274, p251. In this is essay she writes of 'differentiated citizenship' being at the heart of healthy ecologies. Indeed, Oxfam's 2015 report on carbon inequality claims 'The average footprint of someone in the richest 1% could be 175 times that of someone in the poorest 10%', found at <https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/mb-extreme-carbon-inequality-021215-en.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2019].

⁶⁷ *The Fold*, p7.

⁶⁸ Jill Magi points out 'ecopoetics potentially operates in an oppositional mode [and]... may result in writings that resist commodification, defying traditional measures of effective communication' in 'Ecopoetics and the Adversarial Consciousness: Challenges to nature Writing Environmentalism and Notions of Individual Agency' from *The EcoLanguage Reader*, p.238. This takes me back round to my thinking on gaps in language, the poem's white space and the deterritorialization of forces.

⁶⁹ This recognition of intersectional difference includes human as well as more-than-human differences. A recent poem, by Graham, 'My Skin is', does write of her 'brutal no-colour colour,' a reference perhaps to the wilful blindness of white people to their race and the perpetration of societal and institutional racism. *London Review of Books*, 40.13, 7 May 2018, p.22.

on the long swell from a distant storm, a reverberation of hundreds of miles that eventually break at the shore.⁷⁰ This on-going opening of life from afar into the creative imagination of protagonist, poet and reader is what carries the marine lyric's capacity for engendering the transformation needed in how we experience, and thus care for, the life around us.⁷¹

iii. Marine Assemblage

As multiple temporalities are enfolded into narratives that run alongside tides and currents, other unseen elements exist and interact in the ocean. Chemicals, plastic debris, lost cargo, oil and other pollutants fuse with the currents, coming, in the main, from human activities.⁷² The May 2019 UN Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems claims 'two-thirds of the marine environment has ... been changed by fish farms, shipping routes, subsea mines and other projects'; as such 'only 3% of marine areas are free from human pressure.'⁷³ The dynamic liveliness of ocean currents and temperature extends or transforms the life of such elements beyond their seemingly inanimate nature. Pesticides and herbicides run off targeted crops into soil into water courses and ultimately into the sea, where, extended by darkness, their toxicity persists to kill both zoo- and phytoplankton.⁷⁴ While the detrimental affect of microplastics on marine plants and creatures is now mainstream news, thousands of millions gallons of oil have entered the ocean since humans began drilling it from and transporting it across the water.⁷⁵ A capsized cargo of plastic ducks, still washing up on shores after fifteen years at sea, does provide oceanographers with a chance to model the movement of currents based on their

⁷⁰ *The Fold*, p.98.

⁷¹ Nothing calls for the urgency of this transformation more than to read only forty MPs (out of 650) debated climate change for the first time in two years after the hottest February on record. <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/04/climate-change-emergency-westminster>> [accessed 4 March 2019].

⁷² Benjamin S. Halpern et al, 'A Global Map of Human Impact on Marine Ecosystems', *Science* 319.5865 (2008), pp. 948-952.

⁷³ Jonathan Watts, 'Human society under urgent threat from loss of Earth's natural life', *The Guardian* (May 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/06/human-society-under-urgent-threat-loss-earth-natural-life-un-report>> [accessed 8 May 2019] (para. 11 & 14 of 27).

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Grossman, 'What do we really know about Round Up' in *National Geographic* (April 2003) <<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150422-glyphosate-roundup-herbicide-weeds/>> [accessed 7 February 2018].

⁷⁵ Laura Moss, 'The 13 Largest Oil Spills in History, MNN.com (16 July 2010) <<https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/the-13-largest-oil-spills-in-history>> [accessed 7 February 2018].

journeys.⁷⁶ Transatlantic telecommunication cables connected Europe with the Americas from the 1850s. Whatever value we place on these incursions, in the light of such developments it seems more applicable to view the ocean's body of water as an assemblage.⁷⁷ One consisting of the relational forces of nitrogen-rich dead-zones, plastic-dwelling octopus, rubber tyre-based reefs and more, colluding to change its chemistry, biology and motility into, in the words of Jane Bennett, 'lively and potentially dangerous matter'.⁷⁸

Bennett describes a vibrant materialism with unseen causalities in her project to make assemblages out of our intertwinement with all things, whether seen or not, to promote the ethics of 'distribut[ing] value more generously.'⁷⁹ By 'generously' I understand the need to acknowledge the potential power of each thing within the assemblage. Such recognition provokes a rethinking of our relationships, interests and affectivity within and around the ocean. There is a role for the marine lyric to recast the sea as dynamic, not just in oceanographic terms but as a technological and toxic hybrid of an epochs-old ecosystem that continues to absorb and assimilate all we throw at it.⁸⁰ And if the sea is an assemblage, then so too is the marine lyric could be seen as one, where poet, protagonist and reader are also navigators, requiring, what Braidotti describes as, 'mutual actualization and temporary synchronization', in their traversing of its oceanic forces.⁸¹

The diverse assemblage that is ocean is, to use Haraway's term, 'natureculture', continually mutating, unfolding, as its multiple elements interact.⁸² Its pathways are unknown and uncontrollable. A marine lyric, such as 'Deep Water Trawling', from *Fast*,

⁷⁶ Hugh Morris, 'Lost cargo and rubber ducks: Inside the curious world of container shipping' in *The Telegraph* (21 November 2017) <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/travel-truths/lost-container-ships-bizarre-world-of-global-shipping/>> [accessed 29 November 2017].

⁷⁷ As Deleuze views the human body as 'an assemblage of genetic material, ideas, powers of acting and a relation to other bodies', Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, p.xx.

⁷⁸ *Vibrant Matter* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. viii. Bennett makes clear in her introduction how she, like Neimanis, has been influenced by both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁸⁰ Ben Leubner writes of how Graham 'wonders at the manifestations and breakdowns of what surrounds her, often leading her to break things down herself and, when this fails, to break herself down'. While he touches on how language can make new, I think this age of understanding of marine plastics and toxic collaboration stretches the breaking (and remaking) characteristics of a marine lyric to the plasticity of the poems that occur in *Fast*. 'Bedrock, Erosion, and Form: Jorie Graham and Wittgenstein', *Twentieth Century Literature* 55.1 (2009), 36-57, p.40.

⁸¹ *Nomadic Theory*, p.214.

⁸² *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

can be read as unfolding within such an assemblage, without becoming pinned down to any particular aspect of it. It declares itself by turns and simultaneously, implicitly and fleetingly, as trawler, sea bed, nets, by-catch, human as well as ocean itself, operating at depth, seeking ‘to close the third dimension— to get something which is all—becomes all’. The natureculture hybrid of ocean is made evident in the poem’s form, which like others in *Fast*, permeates boundaries between prose and poetry.

The blades like irises turning very fast to see you completely—steel-blue then red
where the cut occurs—the cut of you—they don’t want to know you they want to
own you—no—not own—we all mean to live to the end—am I human we don’t
know that—just because I have this way of transmitting—call it a voice—a threat—
communal actually—

(p.6)

The line ends of ‘red’, ‘to’, ‘don’t’ and ‘threat’ read more like the arbitrary ends of prose, and yet the compressed language of the short clauses ring with an iambic rhythm: ‘the cut of you’, ‘am I human we don’t know that’, ‘call it a voice’. The natureculture assemblage of ocean in this marine lyric has the capacity to ‘transmit’ in a form that appears prose-like while carrying poetic rhythms. This marine lyric’s transmission could be said to draw on the characteristic of poem as the lyric ‘pertains to the characteristic of song’, giving it an authority that was once ascribed to human language.⁸³

This marine lyric, as well as carrying a ‘voice’, embodies the threat of a techno-cultural object that has absorbed our activities to become something beyond us. The ‘I’ in this opening section refuses to privilege human over seabed.⁸⁴ It validates the agency of the sea, while refusing to fix itself as ocean. ‘We don’t know’ if the speaker is human. The blades turning in the water implicate a human presence. The voice, like the oceanic assemblage, is ‘communal actually’. In these first four lines the pronouns suggest this assemblage is where ‘you’, ‘they’, ‘we’ and ‘I’ connect and interact, through immediate and remote, direct and tangential affects of action and consequence. In such an assemblage there is no clear hierarchy unfolding, rather a new intelligence transmits its force. Temperature rise, depletion of fish and chemical changes of ocean are generally

⁸³ OED online [accessed 6 April 2019].

⁸⁴ This resonates with giving rights to nonhuman entities, such as the Whanganui river in New Zealand <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being>> [accessed 7 December 2017]. This is one of many geological features gaining protection in this way, see more here: <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/apr/01/its-only-natural-the-push-to-give-rivers-mountains-and-forests-legal-rights>> [accessed 5 March 2019].

communicated in ways we, as terrestrial dwellers, are slow to read, and only recently as climate chaos gathers pace.⁸⁵ The transmission occurring in this marine lyric blurs the divide between traditionally speaking subjects and mute objects, so it could be heard as ocean entering the human realm through language—as the human infiltrates the oceanic realm through the use of trawlers.

Graham has previously alluded to a transmission of the oceanic assemblage. In ‘High Tide’ the protagonist finds

a beachlong
scripting
of debris: seaweeds of various thicknesses and drynesses, all
intertwined, some wrappers, shiny, bleached—
strips of mylar, flimsier [translucent] plastic blues—yarn, twine—spines of
strange bits of
fish.

(*Never*, p.102)

These ‘scriptings’ that suggest the process of writing are also, in the same poem, conveyed in the hair of a homeless woman. That these now discarded things appear to be speaking for, or alongside, polluted waters and a socially-excluded woman intertwines an articulation of social and environmental injustices. The abuse of power that gives rise to pollution and ignores those who disproportionately suffer from it is inseparable. The assemblage here incorporates a wider social fabric into Graham’s environmental concerns. The language of this transmission and that of ‘Deep Water Trawling’ challenges David Abram’s questioning of whether the disembodied language of the written word makes it permanent and thus autonomous from the original co-worlding that produced it.⁸⁶ The non-alphabetical scripting of debris presents human and ocean as communicating from within an enmeshed assemblage with equal capacity to broadcast their state of being-in-the-world. However, in ‘High Tide’, there is a perceiver and perceived as within many of phenomenologically driven poems of *Never*. Sixteen years later and oceanic contamination is far more pervasive than lines of plastic on the shore. The spread of our toxic

⁸⁵ It is interesting to note that *the Guardian* recently announced a change in its terminology around climate chaos in Damian Carrington’s article ‘Why the Guardian is Changing the Language it Uses about the environment’ (17 May 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/17/why-the-guardian-is-changing-the-language-it-uses-about-the-environment>> [accessed 22 May 2019].

⁸⁶ *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Random House, 1999), p.110. This, I hope I have argued, is what gives the marine lyric in particular, and poetry more widely, the sense of both being in the world and a part from it, creating a new creaturely form of imagination that then dismantles boundaries between other bodies. I think this is what Graham is exploring in this particular transmission.

transmission goes beyond the shoreline and is made evident in the clauses of ‘Deep Water Trawling’, as well as the self-portrait from *Fast*.

Hans Peter Duerr writes ‘people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them.’⁸⁷ This marine lyric as transmission invites me as reader to enter its unknown sphere and negotiate the claustrophobic, on-going affects of trawling deep waters:

—the pelagic midwater nets like walls closing around us—staring
in the far distance where they just look to us like distance—distance coming
closer—hear it—eliminating background—is all foreground—you in it—the only
ground—not even punishment—trawling nets bycatch poison ghostfishing—
the coil of the listening at the very bottom—the nets weighed down with
ballast—raking the bottom looking for nothing—indiscriminate

(p.6)

As temporalities are compressed - the fishing nets have become ghosts, still fishing - so too is spatiality. There is no background or foreground in this world, rather an encompassing force that draws everything into the transmitting mechanism. The Atlantic seabed hosts data cables wired between the US and UK, ‘the coil of the listening’ which here has turned its environment into a broadcasting body as well as one that conveys data to be overheard: ‘the net of your listening and my speaking’. Graham has spoken of writing the poems in *Fast* in the understanding of ‘writing for the random overhearing forces’.⁸⁸ By accepting the not-knowing of who is speaking - the ocean as ‘us’, referring to fish and other life, marine and nonmarine - the listening absorbs the many potential voices that make up the forces of ocean. Anna Tsing refers to this ‘collaboration of contamination’ as polyphonic, a transmission of dissonance and harmony.⁸⁹ Recognising all the active forces at play in any co-worlding does not assume a conformity of beings. As engaged reader of this marine lyric, navigating what is occurring offshore, learning to ‘read’ or ‘hear’ it I also become participant within the oceanic assemblage. Trawling is a

⁸⁷ Quoted by Christopher Manes in ‘Nature and Silence’ in *The Ecocriticism Reader*, ed. by Cheryl Glorfelty & Harold Fromm (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.16.

⁸⁸ Peter Mishler, ‘In Conversation with Jorie Graham’, in *Literary Hub* <<https://lithub.com/in-conversation-with-jorie-graham/>> [accessed 1 October 2018] (para. 11 of 35). It is also relevant that *Fast* was written at the time of the Edward Snowden revelations.

⁸⁹ *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015). In it, Tsing writes of this polyphony as an element in the ‘collaboration of contamination’, p.24.

trans-species issue not just limited to ‘mammals, fish, shellfish’, but spreading to those who create the ‘market’ that doesn’t want, what is described as, ‘the wrong target’.⁹⁰

The bladed, ribboned phrases of this marine lyric allude to an indisposability of matter. There is no ‘away’ for things to be thrown to. While discarded fishing pots continue to trap creatures, despite not being managed by fishermen, phrases and images are not removed but contradicted, or layered upon. Haraway claims the struggle in language is inevitable, especially when in the context of intertwined subjectivities: ‘Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication against one code that translates all meaning perfectly.’⁹¹ There is no perfect meaning, just as there is no one code in an assemblage of ocean. The ‘I’ here was first offered as being a voice then a threat. Later the process of writing is similarly tracked so thoughts are not discarded, but continue to impact upon other phrases in the poem.

the atmosphere between us is turbid—no place to hide—no place to rest—you
need to rest—there is nature it is the rest—

(p.6)

The slippage of the meaning of ‘rest’, from ‘relax’ to ‘all else’, creates a kind of static in the transmission, a switching between what is, what could be, and how what is benign becomes less so.⁹² The plastic waste that arrives on the beach near my home has lost words by the bleaching effect of seawater, split cartons only have half their brand name remaining and smaller fragments offer up odd letters from whatever they once declared. Their transmission is far removed from the original intention to entice a purchase. They carry new significance in this altered communication, just as when they are ingested, the

⁹⁰ Neimanis describes toxic breast milk as a ‘multispecies issue’, as the contaminated Arctic waters simultaneously effects the Inuit women feeding their children and the whales feeding their offspring. *Bodies of Water*, p.35.

⁹¹ ‘A Cyborg Manifesto’, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), p.175.

⁹² Alexander Duncan’s ‘Cove’ illustrates this deterritorialization of ‘inert’ objects towards things that are active agents in the world. A mound of seeming sea-worn brown and white stones, which when observed carefully can be seen to be a pile of collected polyurethane and polystyrene foam. Sea currents have turned the various forms of foam into the soft-edged appearance of rocks and pebbles we associate with the shore. What we first recognise is revealed as its shadow, unsightly, toxic waste. The erosion of the foam is slow work, bringing these pieces a long way, spatially and temporally, from their provenance. There is an emotional force at work in the revelation of what these pieces are – one that carries from Duncan’s first discovery to the viewer’s dawning realisation. The cove of the artwork is an assemblage of housing insulation, boat floatation, life buoys, car parts and other functional elements of our daily lives, turned to molecules thrown from the sea. There is an aesthetic unity to the work that belies its non-homogeneous reality. *Sounding the Sea*, Ferens Gallery, Hull, 2017.

microplastic travels up the food chain, its toxicity increasing at each trophic transfer.⁹³ Detached from the trawler, the nets have become part of the ecosystem eating itself, to continue through centuries. Where 'we die of exhaustion of suffocation', the 'synthetic materials last forever'. There is no gift of death here.

The transformation, instead, comes through the body of the marine lyric, which at this point shifts into shorter, double spaced lines, bringing a sense of release with them.

As us anything. How deep is the sea. You couldn't go down
there. Pressure would crush you [...] Ask
another question: Can you hear me? No. Who are you. I am.

(p.6)

Despite there being more white space, the litany of questions and their often evasive answers continue to disorientate. There seems to be two speakers, but their identity is withheld, while interspersed is a visceral image of a hammer killing fish, its eyes popping. The inconsistent use of question marks suggests answers are not necessarily expected, or perhaps these are not questions, or there is no definitive answer, just as there is no definitive 'I' in this marine lyric.

Did you ever kill a fish. I was once but now I am
human.

(p.7)

This 'I' traverses the marine lyric nomadically, navigating the forces of ocean as poet - writer/editor - and intra-subjective protagonist in an on-going unfolding through the occasion of this encounter. Braidotti describes nomadic philosophy as being 'physical, material, and yet speculative and ethereal'.⁹⁴ The nomadic 'I' embodies this philosophy, as sea nomads such as the Puluwat embody their world. These nomads have only an approximate sense of where they're going. John Mack describes such navigational skill as 'an embodied faculty ... It is his sentience that makes it happen'.⁹⁵ As well as using star compasses, they attend to the character of ocean swells, currents and flotsam, signs of changing water colour, and the sensation of waves against their canoes to determine where

⁹³ Sarah E. Nelms, et al. 'Investigating microplastic trophic transfer in marine top predators.' *Environmental Pollution* 238 (2018), 999-1007.

⁹⁴ *Nomadic Theory*, p.3.

⁹⁵ *The Sea* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p.115.

they go.⁹⁶ These nomads respond to an unfolding of ocean for their routes rather than imposing a direct route to a specific point. The stick charts of other seafarers are described by Mack as being ‘less representations of space as representations of the *experience* of space... navigation as the ‘feel’ of the combined conditions of sea, sky and wind.’⁹⁷ Merleau-Ponty describes something similar happening to the blind man’s stick becoming an extension of his body, ‘an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch’.⁹⁸ These navigators experience the ocean as an unfolding of their synaesthetic perception.

The nomadic ‘I’ of a marine lyric, engaging with the other bodies within the assemblage to continue their passage through it, is as much the discarded waste as the fish that is caught by it; as the human describing the size of a dead zone ‘bigger than the Sahara’; as the questioner asking ‘→who is this speaking to me→’. This is not to say there is conformity between the different bodies of the assemblage, but they are relational, active. In an 2018 interview Graham refers to her process of writing *Fast* as an attempt of gauging the truth through an ‘illusory rudder in the swell, [in the] need to steady the craft in order to attempt the journey at all’ and possessing a needleless compass.⁹⁹

These images reveal the sense of an embodied being-in-the-world where reference points are navigational tools for a world that has, in some senses, already ended. Existentially speaking for the hammered fish the world has ended and so, in part, it has for the nomadic ‘I’ who exists in alliance with the fish. Yet of course it isn’t that simple. Habitat loss and species depletion incurred by climate chaos and industrialised fishing practices is cumulative and geographically disparate. To speak of an ‘end’ would be to ascribe a linear narrative, and as the earlier section explores, a marine lyric by its nature is open to alternative understandings of temporal flows.

It is in a special sense
the world ends. You have to keep living. You have to make it not become
waiting. Nothing is disturbingly visible. Only the outside continues but it

⁹⁶ Edward Casey, *Getting back into place: Towards a renewed understanding of the place-world* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp.27-28.

⁹⁷ Mack, J., p.118.

⁹⁸ *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.165.

⁹⁹ *Literary Hub* (para. 4-6 of 35).

continues. So you have to find the way to make the inside
continue.

(p.7)

The nomadic 'I' that traverses the marine lyric is also navigating its manifested body of imagination, travelling towards an unspecified destination. As much as it might be referencing other subjectivities within the marine assemblage, the 'you' also enfold the reader into it. There is potential in the creative act of this co-worlding. Imagination activates a sense of 'living' as opposed to 'waiting'. Just as a body doing nothing is disturbingly visible, it is not necessarily visible what is occurring beneath the ocean surface. This use of 'nothing' conflates the agency of 'you' as human with ghost fishing net and with ocean. There is no separation. The poem continues, as the ocean continues. To continue reading the poem requires an engagement with oceanic loss. Graham has described the question of how to face what she calls this 'nightmare' of climate chaos, mass extinctions and migrations as 'our communal predicament—our communal creation... There is no place to step out of it'.¹⁰⁰ In such a communal creation, both writer and reader of a marine lyric are implicated within the nomadic 'I'.¹⁰¹ Its co-worlding will continue in some sense, even if it not a familiar one. Questions of ownership reoccur through the poem, echoing earlier poems.¹⁰² This time the cables and the use of the internet for communication raises difficult questions around the privatisation of our communal space. Who owns the fibre optic cables we use, who owns the sea bed being used for these cables, the same seabed being scraped of habitat and life? The responsibility of the nomadic 'I' of the marine lyric is to endure these on-going developments, imaginatively at least, and to question what is or isn't inevitable from this creation.

As with many of the poems in *Fast* the ending of 'Deep Water Trawling' is unfastened, unresolved. The transmission cuts out on a phone call waiting to be answered: 'hold on—just a minute please—hold on—there is a call for you'. The call evokes the earlier 'coil of listening'. The white space at the end of the poem, possibly the as yet un-trawled ocean, reverberates with the experience of the transmission, the nomadic 'I' of

¹⁰⁰ In interview with Sarah Howe, (para. 14 of 85).

¹⁰¹ This is not to homogenize all readers but to invite the questioning of where 'I' fit within the larger assemblage of the marine lyric.

¹⁰² Taking me back to 'Futures' from *Sea Change*, and the ownership of perception.

'organisms→alive→no→no life→so it's *just us*→dead zones→' and the nomadic 'I' holding on for the transmission. Through this exchange the ocean, unfolding as marine lyric, enfolding as imagination, is as evident as it is elusive:

→I am the upwelling→I am the
disappearing→

I write daily, outside, alongside glacier, bergs, moraine, on a beach or on deck. It is a process of unfolding thinking, writing spontaneous connections. I write up lines from the journal onto blank postcards I've arranged to send to a colleague back home. Writing on the postcard each night in my cabin is an enfolding of an aspect of the day into a small postcard-sized piece of text. I also work with paper, scrunching, folding, tearing bits in response to the world I find myself in, making tactile the sculptural proximity of ice and snow. Audio recordings of bitty bergs fizzing, calving glaciers, and the overleaving of sea ice plates fill my phone's mp3 app. I cannot document the whole trip, nor represent the Arctic, but these audio files release memories, re-synthesizing imagination as perception as I re-enter a space of high bouncing light when I'm far from it. Photographs and videos provide footnotes to my journaling, details I might have missed in the moment, geometric relations or light and shade I discover when I'm out of the place. Other artists borrow my GoPro giving me witness to perspectives other than mine. Post-trip emails and skypes with some of the other artists allow new pathways to run, alongside the original ones, in multiple trajectories. These processes of documentation, communication, of representation and re-creation are unfoldings and enfoldings from seventeen days in the Arctic. They allow me a more objective understanding of what I experienced and open an ongoing orientation in relation to the Arctic now.

A Marine Cartography | Methodologies

i. The Fold and Other Mechanisms

In the year before my PhD I was commissioned to write two short audio walks, *Lune Rising* and *Colne Rising*, each situated in an unidentified future. Both pieces played on the possibility that current oceanographic models are not able to simulate the full range of futures. In them sea levels had risen to the point of submerging, in the first instance, the city of Lancaster from the Lune river, and, in the second, the valleys of the Pennines. These dystopian visions explored how we can simultaneously perceive where we are while imagining alternative processes at work. As I continued researching the impact of climate change and other forms of man-made pollution on the ocean I became less interested in the affect of sea level rise on humans, it seemed plenty of people were talking about its impact on us. Instead I grew more engaged with the implications for the more-than-human inhabitants of the ocean, and how I might articulate my growing interest in our intertwinement.

I understand, to a point, the impact on the ocean's ecosystem from acidification, pollution and temperature rise, and how that also affects circulation and planetary climate systems. My question at the start of the PhD research was how to employ this knowledge in new ways that stimulates my imagination and that of others. How could I encourage new thinking and feeling that could lead to an altered being-in-the-world? It seems to me we need to be prepared for the changes that need to be made in the face of mass extinctions, migrations and habitat loss, and a more flexible, expansive sense of how we humans are sited in the world. Anthropologist Stefan Helmreich writes of the importance of activating the sea in our imaginations so it is not simply a remote space.¹ I wanted to activate it as part of a complex embodied imagining of the linkages between terrestrial and marine life. Dystopia feels to be a simplified version of futuring; as does utopia. I wanted to explore the potential of poetry written at this time of global change for communicating an affirmative mode of perceiving our co-worlding. This poetic co-worlding aims to capture the difficulties of facing an unstable present and its future with a sense of endurance and

¹ 'Nature/Culture/Seawater', *American Anthropologist*, 113.1 (2010), 132-144, p.137.

receptivity. I wanted to invite an enriching experience of expanding terrestrial consciousness.

This chapter charts how my PhD critical research has fed into my creative process and vice versa. It explains why the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze's concept of the fold were ideal routes into developing my writing, making and thinking. I will illustrate how my making of artistbooks enabled me to embed their philosophies into my critical thinking and creative portfolio. While the poetic focus of my research was on Jorie Graham's marine lyrics, I read many other poets who influenced my thinking. These include Layli Long Soldier's *Whereas* (2017) for its adventures in form while situating its personal concerns within a wider political framework. *Void Studies* (2016) by Rachael Boast was the catalyst for thinking how the poetic line unfolds across different planes of immanence. Juliana Spahr's collection *That Winter the Wolf Came* (2015) and her collaboration *Misanthropocene* (2014) offered hybridized forms of writing that were powerful, precise and responsive to the behaviours of culture. *Swims* (2017) by Elizabeth-Jane Burnett demonstrated a long poem's fluid sustaining of embodied posthumanist thinking. Rachel Carson's sea trilogy (1941, 1951, 1955) was fundamental in motivating a desire to envelop lyrical scientific writing within a more-than-human framework. I include the writings of Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze, as well as other philosophers, in my primary bibliography to reflect how my engagement with these source materials has been as rich and immediate as it has been with the poetic and creative prose of other writers. I wanted to acknowledge the wide-ranging influence their thinking, and its articulation, has had upon my critical and creative work.

Outside of my theoretical and creative research I spent many hours (and still do) collecting the plastic flotsam from the shore by my house. It is a depressing, somewhat absurd, activity in the face of the global river systems that carry 90% of the ocean's plastic.² Through this litter-picking, however, I feel I'm enacting Teresa Shrewy's mode of hope as 'facing rather than of mollifying or forgetting environmental loss'.³ The grimy job was part of a writing process that bears witness to the ocean as central to daily life, bringing out my subtle and not so subtle relationship with the ocean and how it conveys so much of

² <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/90-of-plastic-polluting-our-oceans-comes-from-just-10-rivers/>> [accessed 11 March 2019].

³ *Hope at Sea*, p.4. There is a similar phenomenological engagement in making an 'eco-brick' from the soft plastic waste of food and hygiene products that I would otherwise throw away.

human life. Grubbing amongst the rocks and saltmarsh, collecting the detritus of human life, trying to untangle plastic from weed and shells, avoiding dead seabirds, bits of fish and decaying porpoise, ensured a perspective of the enveloping and unavoidable unity of ocean. I wanted to convey this multi-species entanglement that living alongside oceanic forces has ensured for most of my adult life. When I asked Graham, at her reading in Manchester November 2017, how hopeful she felt *Fast* was, she replied: ‘an act of hope is when ... [one] manages to make contact with many forms of consciousness including the multiple ones that one has within one’s self’.⁴ It’s this intrasubjective mode of hope I wanted for my creative portfolio. In her 2019 speech at Brunel University, the chair of the Environment Agency spoke against perpetuating notions of defence and wanting to ‘win a war against water’.⁵ To adapt my thinking to consider myself part of an unknown world is the foundation to my creative explorations. Rather than attempting to defend my home from invasion by either sea or plastic debris, I’m wanting to find, through an intra-activated being-in-the-world and writing that out, my ecological niche.

My attempts to write of the ocean were most successful when I set poems within artistbooks. Johanna Drucker describes an artistbook as ‘a zone of activity’, a place of ‘intersection of a number of different disciplines, fields and ideas – rather than at their limits’.⁶ This intersection of active elements, specifically space and poetic text, gave the text a context, a spatial extension that allowed the text to acknowledge its unwieldy, on-going process.⁷ My making of poetic artistbooks has deeply informed my writing and the final structuring of the creative portfolio. To illustrate this process I will spend this section detailing the four artistbooks made during my PhD research. They form the appendix as photographs. In the hard copies of the thesis I have included the three smaller artistbooks, in a pocket in the back cover, for the examiners’ interest.

Irma Boom, the Dutch graphic artist who has made over 300 books in a range of form and experimentation, describes the book as ‘architecture’; I like this term, as it ties in with the

⁴ per comms, John Rylands Library, Manchester, 23 November 2017.

⁵ Emma Howard Boyd, ‘A different philosophy: why our thinking on flooding needs to change faster than the climate’ (9 May 2019) <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-different-philosophy-why-our-thinking-on-flooding-needs-to-change-faster-than-the-climate>> [accessed 9 May 2019].

⁶ *The Century of Artists’ Books* (New York City: Granary Books, 2004), p.11.

⁷ This is why I use the compound word ‘artistbook’ for the form. Other ways of describing them are artist’s books, book as possessed by the artist, or artist book, separating the art from the book. It seems to me that the visual artistry of the textual book is intertwined in the form and certainly in my making.

translation of a poem's stanza as 'room'.⁸ The artistbook of the ocean intends to break down the contained walls of the traditional books, to open up the rooms of the poem to allow the embodied inhabitation of reader as well as writer. There is a physical subsuming of the reading experience that could be described as wading out of one's depth, initially, until the reader has learn how to swim in the book. Such a constructed aesthetic of the artistbook offers a striking phenomenological engagement with text, from the lyric's self-reflexivity to the reader's spatial negotiation with the text, and so relocates the reader. At least, it is a remaking of their sensibility beyond the linguistic fold of a poem so they perhaps unfold from the constraints of familiarity. As Isabel Armstrong writes, it is 'not the training but the breaking of habit [that] is art's praxis.'⁹ This reorientation comes with both making and reading the artistbook, and is at the heart of how it has enabled me to think about the phenomenological posthumanism of the marine lyric.

Wave Motion (2016) is an A6 landscape book, described by Leaf Arbuthnot as the size of a passport.¹⁰ When closed it is bound by a belly band adorned with the plastic blue shaft of a cotton bud, one of the most ubiquitous plastic finds on the beach. The book has a concertina spine, printed with an extract from a tide table, which holds two extended concertina folds that function as pages on either side of the booklet. On each concertina is printed a sonnet, part i and part ii of the poem. When the book is opened these concertina pages spill, overreaching the boundaries of the covers, text falls as waves beyond our grasp. An immediate response is to the gather the pages back into their right folds, while holding the book. The poem and book came out of my early research into ocean plastics and waves as agents in the production of microplastics.

The pages, expanding into the space between book and reader, make tangible the sense of momentum allowed by the poem. The physical quality is of material flux, making palpable the intersection of the act of mind with its poetic form and its wider physical inhabiting of space. Merleau-Ponty's 'double horizon' is at work here, where the interior horizon of the poem's voice is set physically within the outer horizon of the paper's edge. The two horizons, interior and exterior edges, are co-existent within the artistbook, and is a fundamental part of its activity. Boundaries between reading the poem and operating the

⁸ 'Manifesto for the Book', 2011 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVstIKKiYqo>> [accessed 12 March 2019].

⁹ *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2000), p.10.

¹⁰ 'The Unpoliced Playground', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 December 2017, p.1.

book, between inner and outer worlds, blur. The reader cannot help but extend their consciousness of the poem into its physical presence which slips into a future moment.

One reader said of her experience ‘The first poem made me feel a little dizzy, and the second like I was tangled.’ The reader here has fused in sensibility with the protagonist of the poem, creating what Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins describe as a ‘convergence between the aesthetic and the social, and between perception and cognition.’¹¹ This feels like an actualization of the nomadic ‘I’ of the marine lyric, slipping from protagonist to reader experience. The discoveries William Carlos Williams, in his 1948 lecture, hoped ‘listen[ing] to the language’ would allow, are carried into the physical world of the reader.¹² The poem’s field of action now, phenomenologically speaking, incorporates the reader. Its measure, its reality, has expanded to the bodily experience of the reader, as her mind, enacted through her fingers, is expanded through this reanimation of the forces of the sea. She is being asked to react in a way that waves ask of a body. There is an inherent sense of unpredictability in the book and how the waves of its pages might be handled.¹³ The reversibility of wave action and human action explored in Graham’s ‘The Constant Mechanism of the Break’ occurs here. As the sea’s force is deterritorialized in the text it is reterritorialized in the artistbook and reader as a dynamic reading that does not settle until the pamphlet is closed and bound, and even then the memory must linger.

The physically unfolding artistbook makes tangible the complexity of our current environmental crisis, the ‘brain-world-body entanglement’, where we are not able to impose domination over a homogenous meaning or solution. The reader, initially, does not know exactly how to read the book.¹⁴

Recovery (2017) is a long, narrow publication, 42cmx11cm closed, opening to 126cm in width. It extends those long lines of Graham’s *Sea Change* poems further, pressing them to

¹¹ Introduction to ‘The Phenomenologies of Lyric Reading’ in *The Lyric Theory Reader A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Jackson and Prins (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p.382.

¹² < <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69393/the-poem-as-a-field-of-action> > [accessed 12 March 2019].

¹³ Val Plumwood makes the distinction between weak and strong panpsychism by suggesting the weak strand holds the [concept of] mind in more ‘diverse, continuous and graduated ways’, *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.178. The mind of the wave then, could be, manifested in its force.

¹⁴ Lisa Blackman uses this phrase in *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation* (London: Sage, 2012), p.1.

explore alternative durational realms beyond that of the human, and interleave events at the tidal shore with unseen ocean currents. Drawing on what Ulises Carrión writes in ‘The New Art of Making Books’, it demonstrates that ‘the sequential laws of language ... are not the sequential laws of books’, and celebrates the intersection of scientific fact with the ontological nature of time.¹⁵ The elongated book runs two voices simultaneously. In the main body of the book is the story of plastic’s duration in the sea. Some pages have extensions that unfold to reveal intervals of tidal recession and the gathering of plastic. Both strands of the poem sit within a time continuum, tucking the protagonist’s daily beachcombing within the far wider span of geological time.

The oceanic durational narrative runs in ticker-tape at the bottom edge of the page, emphasising the space above it, the white space, the ocean. The exaggerated width of each page seems to extend with the single line of text at the baseline. This encourages a recognition of sea as durational time. It also plays into Ulises’s claim that text ‘isn’t necessarily the most essential or important part of that book.’¹⁶ As the book opens out beyond its traditional territory the opening of various temporal durations between text and artistbook operates as the ‘mingling element’ of W.S. Graham’s sea, where ‘the eye reads forwards as the memory reads back’.¹⁷ There is a constant push / pull between the momentum of the text, the complimentary and/or distracting aesthetic of the bound pages and the inserted pages that unfold beyond the frame of the book, and the reader’s movement between both.

The unfolding pages, enfolded into the ticker tape, are blank at first sight, with a line of punched holes allowing for fragments of letters and words to be seen through, as if thrown up by the sea. These holes could be oxygen or the size of the microplastic debris described. We are in a world that is not immediately readable. It is sea-able if not completely see-able. The fold-out pages in ‘Recovery’ allow for a partial extension of the main page, and for a pause, an interval, in the tickertape commentary of plastic’s slow and never-ending breakdown. At its open page, any book holds the read past and unread future extending from its spine, making the oceanic enfolding of past, present and future more apparent.

¹⁵ ‘The New Art of Making Books’ (New York: Kontexts no. 6-7, 1975) unpagged.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Section 5, ‘The Nightfishing’, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.117.

This physicality of this artistbook ‘modifies this communication’ between the two temporalities and brings them into a simultaneous experience.¹⁸

Feeling that which is unseen, accepting its intangibility within an immersive phenomenological experience, is made manifest here: between the page and the reader. The force of what constitutes the relationship between two things, the attachment of body to world, occurs from reader to book *and* inherently book to reader. Such a relation between two things triggers an interaction between the sensible and, its interiority, sense. This was my first physical engagement with the potential of Deleuze’s fold as a tool within the marine lyric and artistbook. I realized how the fold acts as an extendable boundary between interior and exterior. Language-as-material, as evidenced in the form of this artistbook, asks the reader to consider how *they* might accommodate the poem, as opposed to how *it* can accommodate *them*. How much is the language necessary to understand the poem. How much does language join or separate us from the forces of sea? The reader is aware of working to the book’s terms before attempting to coerce its poem into their understanding. She is relocated in her negotiation with what might be seen, initially, as an object, that comes to be seen as felt extension of pre-linguistic self. Engagement with this poem releases us from intellectual understanding of poetry as art made from language; the materials of this poem - text, paper and space - are as much physically read as intellectually understood.¹⁹ This is something that became core to my work regarding proximity, processes and subjectivity.

The artistbook, unlike a flat-page marine lyric, needs to be handled with care. The oversized nature of the book reinforces the awkwardness of handling such a temporal perspective, and the residue of its unwieldy nature lives on in our musculature after setting it down. With continued handling there is the potential of the book becoming increasingly grimy. Our engagement with these paper currents of conveyor belt and tides will affect them. Our impact will grow more marked over time. How this then manifests in us could range from anxiety, disgust, shame. Whatever these emergent emotions or thoughts might be, they will become apparent in our interaction with the book, how we attempt to handle

¹⁸ ‘The New Art of Making Books’.

¹⁹ Petra Lange-Berndt in her ‘Introduction / How to be complicit with Materials’ in *Materiality: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London. Whitechapel Gallery & Cambridge MIT Press 2015) cites Karen Barad as stating: ‘to engage with materials means to formulate a critique of logocentrism and the predominance of the written language as a tool to generate and communicate meaning’, p.13.

or avoid it. However intellectually conscious we are of our responses, more significant to the marine lyric is how we hold them in our body.

How to be more than human (2017), is an octobook. Folded, it measures 70cm square, and unfolds in eight pages, each splaying in a different direction. Various parts of a papercut of an octopus is printed across each page, with the whole creature revealed when the book is opened to its maximum spread. With minimal text the reader is invited into the zone of indiscernibility between human and octopus by their corporeal navigation. There are multiple options for the sequence of opening pages. There is no right way to read it, although the more fumbling of fingers as pages are unfolded and refolded the more the reader may gain a tangible sense of the ‘embrainment of the body.’²⁰ This, I have observed, provokes anxiety in readers wanting to ‘get it right’, not to rip or wrong-fold it. The redistribution of the sensations activated in reading, in Maggie Nelson’s words, ‘celebrate[s] the bounty of representational and perceptual possibilities available to us.’²¹

By removing the emphasis on the linguistic poem the reader’s rational sensibility becomes unanchored from the linear narrative of words within sentences. One reader told me she found the book very useful in helping her to think, as she opened and closed the pages, letting the illustrations of tentacles appear and disappear. This book can’t mindlessly be consumed and set down. Once all the pages have been opened they need to be refolded so the book will close. Over time the book will become different from its original so booklets will vary depending on how they are used, opened and closed. The reader and the book determine its realignment. This, what Jane Bennett calls ‘thing-power’, acknowledges the vitality of things, and their agency, which we might otherwise overlook.²² The physical exploration of this new materialist thinking, through the making of artistbooks, has worked its way into how I structure my flat-page poetry. It has pulled my thinking of political art closer to Rancière’s definition, where ‘a political act not only disrupts, it disrupts in such a way as to change radically what people can see.’²³ The interleaving of sequences and the tickertape in the creative portfolio adds to the sense of oceanic forces of penetration and duration throughout the work.

²⁰ *Nomadic Theory*, p.2.

²¹ *The Art of Cruelty* (New York: WW Norton, 2011), p.28.

²² *Vibrant Matter*, p.3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.107.

The poem within the octobook does not exist without the book. It is the only artistbook that does not use a nomadic 'I', attempting to embody it within the acting of folding and unfolding. It functions more as a set of instructions, in which the illustrated octopus and reader are bound together in what Julianna Spahr calls 'intimate pluralisms' that occur in lyrics that 'retreat from individualism'.²⁴ In opening, unfolding and reading the book the human body, its fingers specifically, becomes tentacular and, it is hoped, the mind follows them. This intimate encounter between octopus and human is intended to encourage a binding of the reader in a cross-species empathy. The reader feels as out of place with the book as much as an octopus might.

This re-orientation provoked by the artistbook also occurs for me the maker. I am not, what Sara Ahmed describes as being, 'in place' with the book.²⁵ It is complicated, fiddly and time-consuming to make. A print run of fifty - involving scalpel, needle and thread, and folding bone - does not allow the manufacture to become effortless. I think it is, in part, not erasing the history of the book's making that enfolds the reader into a similar experience of effort.

Sea of Whiteness, as Glacier (2018), like the octobook, is an awkward construction and read. It has no obvious beginning. Encased in a book-sized sleeve, when it is pulled free there is no indication as to which side is the front cover, the page at which to open the book. It is not even a book. There is no single spine. The pages do not lie flat. The text, set in thin blue triangles which could indicate a direction of reading, does not obviously begin in a particular point. The blue of the triangles and thread that ensure a resistance to folding flat allude to the blue folds in a glacier where the oldest ice is compressed. The poem, which I set in the creative portfolio as it lies (or doesn't lie) within the paper crevasses. The sense of disorientation I inhabited to make and write this artistbook rose out of a fieldwork trip to Svalbard, in the Arctic. I will describe the trip and the processes of bookmaking in the next section, as it underpins both the illustrations that thread through the creative portfolio and the theme of climate justice that informs the title sequence of the portfolio.

²⁴ 'Introduction to American Women Poets in the 21st century: Where Lyric Meets Language' (2002), *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, p.564.

²⁵ 'Orientations Matter', *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana H. Coole and Samantha Frost, (E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection, 2010), p.235.

ii. Re-Orientation of the Unseen

The seventeen day residency was on board a 50m tall ship that would sail the coastal waters of the Svalbard archipelago. I intended it as an investigation into how I might experience that which is unseen and apparently distant, and then write it as tangible and contemporaneous. As with the ocean, the Arctic is where our futures are playing out: in glacial retreat, sea ice melt; plans for newly viable oil wells; beaches littered with non local industrial and domestic waste; the arrival of species moving north in warming temperatures. It seemed the future of European climate disruptions and sea level rise was playing out in the Arctic's present. The Arctic, while under Norwegian sovereignty, is, like the high seas (any area of ocean that is beyond 200 miles of land), a place of contested ownership. Its potential oil reserves are of interest to many countries. What particularly interested me was how the polar region is as unfamiliar and uninhabitable to me as the sub-aquatic realm. Being there, albeit briefly, offered a chance to inhabit a radically changing environment and apply that to my writing of the ocean. I hoped the experience might provoke poems that inhabited the precarity of our marine world while enveloping it in a terrestrial experience.

The ease (and surprisingly cheap-to-me price) of flying there was undermined immediately by my carbon offsetting. My return flight, Manchester to Longyearbyen, was equal in its carbon emissions to one person's yearly output in India. That's one trip, within Europe - with a stopover. Taking off and landing are the most costly (environmentally speaking) elements of flight - when approximately 25% of flight emissions occur, emissions which take ten years to translate into atmospheric temperature rise.²⁶ That my flight for a research trip equalled one year of someone else's daily living brought me up short to the realities of climate injustice. The irony of how the disparities between the global north and global south became evident in travelling to the far north was not lost on me. Merleau-Ponty's 'sedimented history' was powerfully felt as I flew over the intermittent glaciers before landing.²⁷ What I had theoretically known about the colonial and industrialised origins of climate change became a felt sense of realization.

²⁶ Naomi Klein, *No is Not Enough* (London: Penguin, 2017), p.176.

²⁷ *The Visible and Invisible*, p.180.

On arrival I couldn't ignore the predominant whiteness of the crew and artists - oddly amplified by the snow and ice around us. It seemed the global north was made manifest in all these folds of whiteness, the calving glaciers, jigsaw sea ice, and us white tourists. I situated the Arctic as a place of climate injustice, given who can visit, the impact of their visiting, the visibility of that impact in the Arctic and its rippling out to the global south, where the consequence of ice-melt has the greatest affect on human lives.

Experiencing this usually remote place ensured another bringing forth of Deleuze's fold. The connections between our presence, the melting sea ice, a starving bear cub, and inherited white privilege unfolded from and folded back into my embodied imagination. It was as Claire Colebrook describes: the 'dynamic openness that constantly requires new thought and renewed confrontation', confronting my own complacency in particular.²⁸ My thinking around power structures took in the relationship between human and more-than-human. Here we humans were no longer the dominant species in this home of polar bears, walrus and orca. I was beholden to the decisions of skipper when underway and of expedition leader when on land, where we were both protected and encased by four armed guides. I was privileged to be here, yet had no decision-making capacity in what I could or couldn't do while here.

The sun did not set. The palette was, in the large-scale, mainly grey, white, blue, brown. Distances were impossible to calculate: what appeared tens of metres away was actually *kilometres*. Our horizon was often over fifty kilometres away. It was exhausting to be immersed in a place I could not read, yet was constantly scrutinising. The physical data I received included such variables as desert cold, deep mud and sun-bright snow fields. I felt vulnerable, as when at sea, aware of surrendering to larger elements of potentially dangerous weather, megafauna or geology. We were testing what Braidotti describes as the ability to 'go out into the world, among many others ... free of fear of not being in charge.'²⁹ What dictated our actions here, wasn't the guides, or the skipper, but the ocean, sea ice, glaciers, creatures and wind. The shape of my world had radically altered, and I could feel a strong sense of the western explorer as colonial interloper destroying habitat as we entered unfamiliar land.

²⁸ *Understanding Deleuze* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002), p.70.

²⁹ p.264.

In zodiac excursions we were kept the height of three palm widths away from the glacier front so in the event of it calving we would be far enough away from its ensuing waves. To measure a safe distance by something as personal and tangible as a hand presented a paradox of the material body measuring unseen consequences. It was the moment of when I felt the enfolding of myself unfolding from the glacier, which in turn unfolds from the global climate system. The fold, here, became an embodied measure for my proximity to any other thing, which I explain in detail in chapter two.

This field of the Arctic Ocean, in which both I and the glacier are folds, created a mode of proximity between us, in which I concertina'd in and out of. I turned this encounter into a map of a glacier, which became *Sea of Whiteness, as Glacier*. The white paper is scrunched to give a sense of disposability, a throwawayable mistake, despite a sheet of paper requiring anything between 1-10 litres of water in its production. Ironed out, the creases become vibrations, molecules I can still summon of that experience even at 3000km away. The map is a large square folded into four smaller squares, each are partially cut out and enfolding back into the main body of the map. Whether or not the reader knows the Arctic, they are presented it as something to navigate in both hands. This brings a dual sense of remembering (it works similarly to a traditional map) and of something forgotten, or never quite experienced. This results in disorientation, a lack of anchorage in place and time, that is intended to be supported by the puzzle of opening, folding, enfolding. In the creases and slits blue triangles of words may make sentences or may be dislocated phrases.

One of the artists suggested to leave the glacier of the prototype artistbook wordless, to imply the 'natural' condition of the glacier. However I wanted words because even though the glacier had the appearance of whiteness and thus radiated a pristine quality, our activities, as tourists and as advantaged participants within the capitalist system, have and continue to impact upon them. The nomadic 'I' of the poem functions as white westerner and as glacier in an unsettling cycle of cause and affect, where neither beginning nor end are clear. This is not made explicit in the words or the folded paper, attempting to adhere to Maggie Nelson's observation that 'when things are going well with art-making and art-viewing, art doesn't really say or teaching anything. The action is elsewhere.'³⁰ The

³⁰ *The Art of Cruelty*, p.130.

threads draw the eye through the depth of folds, like Hepworth's strings pull my eye into the space and hollows of her work. They also allude to lines of poetry, the unspoken, pre-linguistic poem that surges within and out of the folds, making material and ongoing the disorientation these glaciers bring forth not only to me but to the ocean and its inhabitants.

iii. The Enfolded Page

My creative portfolio, *melt*, builds on the phenomenological reading experience of the artistbooks and the posthuman engagement with what is distant and unseen in its attempt to create a poetic space of ocean. Within this space I wanted to present an ecological mutuality, a reorientation of that which appears distant or unseen into a poetic proximity, to enable what Rebecca Tamás describes as a 're-seeing of the world'.³¹ The form of the creative portfolio explores a shoreline existence evolving into surface and deep ocean currents. The contents page is at the back of the book, to encourage a reading to run front to back, to present a linear experience that is ultimately impossible when various narrative currents occur simultaneously. The poems seek an ecological niche for the 'I' which appears traditionally bounded as a singular individual in the first section to loosen into a nomadic 'I' as they incorporate a lived empathy with marine-others as the poems continue. In this way the narrative drive to the portfolio is a co-worlding of human, ocean and what lives in it; a process of exploring tomorrow, when tomorrow is occurring elsewhere the ocean, and each present moment repeats a different step at a time. The ocean that occurs in *melt* is an assemblage of animal, plant, plastic, mineral, technology, human and more.

melt begins with a prose sequence, 'this wall'. It is an attempt to counter the apparent line of a sea wall's trajectory by presenting it as an aggregation of path, stone, moss etc. Each component explores place as history, where as Robert MacFarlane writes of Barry Lopez's new book, 'place becomes the means of fathoming time', where time is a non chronological series of events that have both happened and have yet to happen.³² The durational development of the shoreline presents it as an assemblage of human and more-than-human agencies, and questions the state of vulnerability, security and potential in a

³¹ 'The Songs of Hecate: Poetry and the Language of the Occult', *The White Review* 24 (March 2019), p.19.

³² 'Horizon by Barry Lopez review – magnificent on the natural world, and furious too', *the Guardian* (14 March 2019) <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/14/horizon-by-barry-lopez-review>> [accessed 14 March 2019] (para. 4 of 13).

localised realm. The wall is a process of things, porous, with the possibility of not functioning as a sea wall. As such the prose fragments initially alternate with poems that explore the multiplicity of self: as memory, place or culture, as collaborator and scavenger, and, through technology, as hoarder. The final prose pieces are prised further apart by poems, indicating a seepage of time, self and ocean into what once was a clear boundary line. The protagonist, addressed in a second person pronoun, is situated in the framework of women lighthouse keepers, introducing the theme of woman as a fluid state of the feminine to resist fixity, endure change and unfold with it. This protagonist, as her forebears, exists beyond the domestic, is sea-aware, and part of a communal experience which requires witness, here made palpable in the centuries'-old beam of the lighthouse, the eyes of the wall-walker.

These prose pieces and their interleaving poems unpack how a reciprocal connection to place enables an extension of self into selves. They offer the capacity to reimagine how the nomadic 'I' of an embodied selfhood might occupy the world: what 'I' am in relationship with, and what it is to consciously live alongside others. This co-worlding lays the foundations for a theme of the body (of human and of ocean) as reservoir holding, and carrying, stories of past and future inhabitants. The 'hydrocommons' of this first section of the portfolio questions the 'wet relations' of human with more-than-human, human history within oceanic history and attempts to follow them in a cycle of sinking and resurfacing.³³

The portfolio's first section begins its end with an attempted saving of a lobster - a death-denying act - in 'Slow Rising'. From here the poems turn to test how the nomadic 'I' might reach towards a deeper engagement with the self's unknowability, and, through this unfathomable self, how she might enter the zone of indiscernibility with the more-than-human. Responding to Haraway's invitation to 'make kin not babies', a cluster of poems ask how ways of reproducing might not be not located within the boundaries of a personal / biological ecosystem; how possible might it be to see imaginative creativity as an alternative, unfolding reproductive system?³⁴ Through these poems I am seeking to extend a sense of self towards an unknowable otherness, acknowledging difference and points of commonality, which could be ocean or the shared planet. Imaginatively inhabiting the

³³ Both these terms are Astrida Neimanis's from her introduction to hydrofeminism, p.3.

³⁴ 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6 (2015), pp. 159-165.

ocean allows an actualization of ecological unfamiliarity, an immersion in flux and a relinquishing to feeling unlocated. This geographical unfamiliarity is evident in the later portfolio poems.

The tickertape I wrote for the artistbook *Recovery* appears as the seawall ends. It runs along the bottom edge of the double spreads, through the second half of the portfolio, attempting, in the breakdown and movement of plastic debris, to illustrate the circulation of ocean currents, specifically in the North Atlantic. In this way the Arctic can be felt as unfolding from the Irish Sea, and vice versa. It is the undercurrent, the ceaseless movement of ocean and what we humans have put in it that underpins the force of the book. The locating of the Arctic Ocean in the tickertape appears at the point the glacier as 'Sea of Whiteness', breaks across the page. This could be seen as where the multiple folds of the book, the planes of present and past in poems so far, widen out to allow the white space of the unknown to remake itself in possible future currents. This is also the point at which the illustrations of crumpled or folded paper come into visual alignment with the text.

The illustrations act as one of the many routes through the book. Their titles connect them to nearby text in poems or tickertape. From a screwed up ball that is entitled 'shell', and so life-containing, the photographs of folded paper pick up on images and themes in the poems to become 'wave', 'glacier', 'hinge', 'breath' and ultimately 'conveyor' - of words and of forces. The paper folds are actually the stages of production of the glacier artistbook. As such they imply the stages of ecological upheaval that ripple around the 'Sea of Whiteness, as Glacier' poem. Beyond this poem the photographs show the paper in stages of re-enfolding alongside the 'melt' sequence and its futuring. Here the ecological countdown of melting ice is carried in the tension of tightening paper folds, compressing into themselves.

The illustrations, having punctuated the wall sequence and the opening of the futuring section of the portfolio, continue to accentuate segments. Through the 'melt' sequence they appear after each cluster of three poems. Given the sequence has nine poems the illustrations separate it into trimesters. This final sequence is where the nomadic 'I' inhabits the global extreme north as a participant in the injustices of the climate crisis, tracking privilege and accountability. The subjectivity of this 'I' melts with the sea ice and glaciers in an attempt to dissolve the sense of individual in the uncertainty and complexity

of connection. ‘I’ endeavours to articulate its being-out-of-place and otherness through the movement of water circling through the hydrocycle. This enables an intimacy with proximity, drawing the Arctic into an intensely felt experience that simultaneously is ominous and threatening. The increase of illustrations amongst these poems could be read as expressing the inability of language to articulate what is needed to be articulated. Certainly, the compressed folds remind me of an iron lung, perhaps because of my simultaneous visit to William Kentridge’s *The Refusal of Time* at the Whitworth, Manchester, where the room was dominated by an enormous, and loud, compression unit that captured and released the sound of breath.³⁵

The ‘melt’ sequence, like ‘this wall’, is interleaved with other poems that deepen the engagement with the nomadic ‘I’ and offer up episodic exchanges that, while being zoomorphic encounters, might feel, more familiar than the Arctic setting of the sequence. I like Lisa Blackman’s term, ‘morphological imagination’ to theorise these poems within the affect of the zone of indiscernibility on both bodies.³⁶ To speak alongside the ocean allows a sharing, and bearing, of its vulnerability. The more I can upset the placement of things: me in the ocean, ocean in me, woman alongside octopus, future within the past, mud as ground, tree as fish, the more I might attempt to dismantle habits I have inherited, the habits of comfort. These habits, Sara Ahmed argues, come from what is behind me, what pushes me forward, and offer another reading of the past and future intertwining with the present moment of the poems in the text.

The contents, at the end of the portfolio, are contained within an enfolded paper sheet. This is intended to literally embody the previous illustrations into the portfolio’s poems. The contents are not given page numbers, but presented visually as a kind of chart. This chart operates on a spatio-temporal axis of past and future, with the central cross of four poems that are seen at the first unfolding, perhaps as compass points, certainly as excursions between the two lists at either side of the square. It is a navigational tool that reminds me more of the stick charts discussed in chapter three than a traditional contents page, while still offering an overview of the poems. On the closing of the portfolio, the contents need to be folded away, unseen, back into flat paper into the matter of imagination or the pulp of wood tissue.

³⁵ *Thick Time*, 21 September 2018 – 3 March 2019.

³⁶ *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*, p.9.

The contents actually end the book, before them is the index. It itemises the things, and some places, that make up the ocean and human bodies. The idea of using an index was introduced to me by one of the artists on board the Arctic residency as a way of cataloguing key words or themes from daily writings. I took on the method of indexing my journal while on board. It served to grow a clear list of preoccupations as I wrote, which must have informed what I went to write, and allowed me to return to my journal through different entry points once home. Indexing drew lines through haphazard preoccupations, thematic hooks and perceivings I had chosen to label, so the index of my Arctic journal extends a frame of reference across subjectivities and planes: 'glacier' sits next to 'grief', next to 'gull', next to 'goodbyes'. The index helps me to realize how the fold between internal and external can be manifested within a poem.

Indexing encourages a mapping of what Deleuze describes as 'the variable essence of things'³⁷. There is no one way to read the book, just as there is no one way to read the ocean, just as there is no one way to experience it. The index is the nomadic 'I's route through the ocean and the poems, not choosing to privilege batteries over brittlestar and setting ovaries and oxygen within the complexity that is our oceanic ecosystem. It enables the reader to experience the nomadic sensibility held within the portfolio, to re-enter the poems in this mode and possibly draw new folds between seemingly distant poems. It also ensures the detail of ocean and human body can be set within the broader perspective of the currents of the contents page. Between the two tools unfolds the philosophical, scientific and non-linguistic approaches that underpin my thinking of what a marine lyric can offer.

³⁷ *Bergonsim*, p.35.

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- Dion, Mark, *Theatre of the Natural World*, 14 February - 13 May 2018, Whitechapel Gallery, London
- Eardly, Joan, *A Sense of Place*, 15 December 2016 - 21 May 2017, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh
- Fraga, Hondartza, *The Sea Full Stop* 25 September 2015 –25 September 2016, Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester
- Illingworth, Shona, *Lesions in the Landscape* November 2015, FACT, Liverpool
- Jaar, Alfredo, *The Garden of Good and Evil*, 14 October 2017 – 8 April 2018, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield
- Jonas, Joan, *A pioneer of performance*, 14 March – 5 August 2018, Tate Modern, London
- Kentridge, William, *Thick Time*, 21 September 2018 – 3 March 2019, The Whitworth, Manchester

Kovats, Tania, *Evaporation*, 20 October 2015 –15 May 2016, Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester

Oceania, 29 September –10 December 2018, Royal Academy, London

Offshore: Artists Explore the Sea, 1 April – 28 August 2017, Ferens Art Gallery / Hull Maritime Museum, Hull

Self, 24 January – 10 May 2015, Turner Contemporary, Margate

Performance and Film

Aurora, Invisible Flock (Liverpool: FACT, Dingle 2000, Toxeth Reservoir, October 2018)

Heart of a Dog, Laurie Anderson (Nonesuch, 2015)

I Exist Only as a Reflection, Jelinek, Elfriede & Bachmann, Ingeborg, performed by Maxi Blaha and Simon Raab (Lancaster: Nuffield Theatre, 2 May 2017)

Where We all Meet, Kristina Pulejkova, part of ‘Sensing the Sea’, curated by Super//Collider (London: Miranda, Ace Hotel, 19 February 2019)

Online Broadcasts and Screenings

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Appendix | Illustrations of Artistbooks



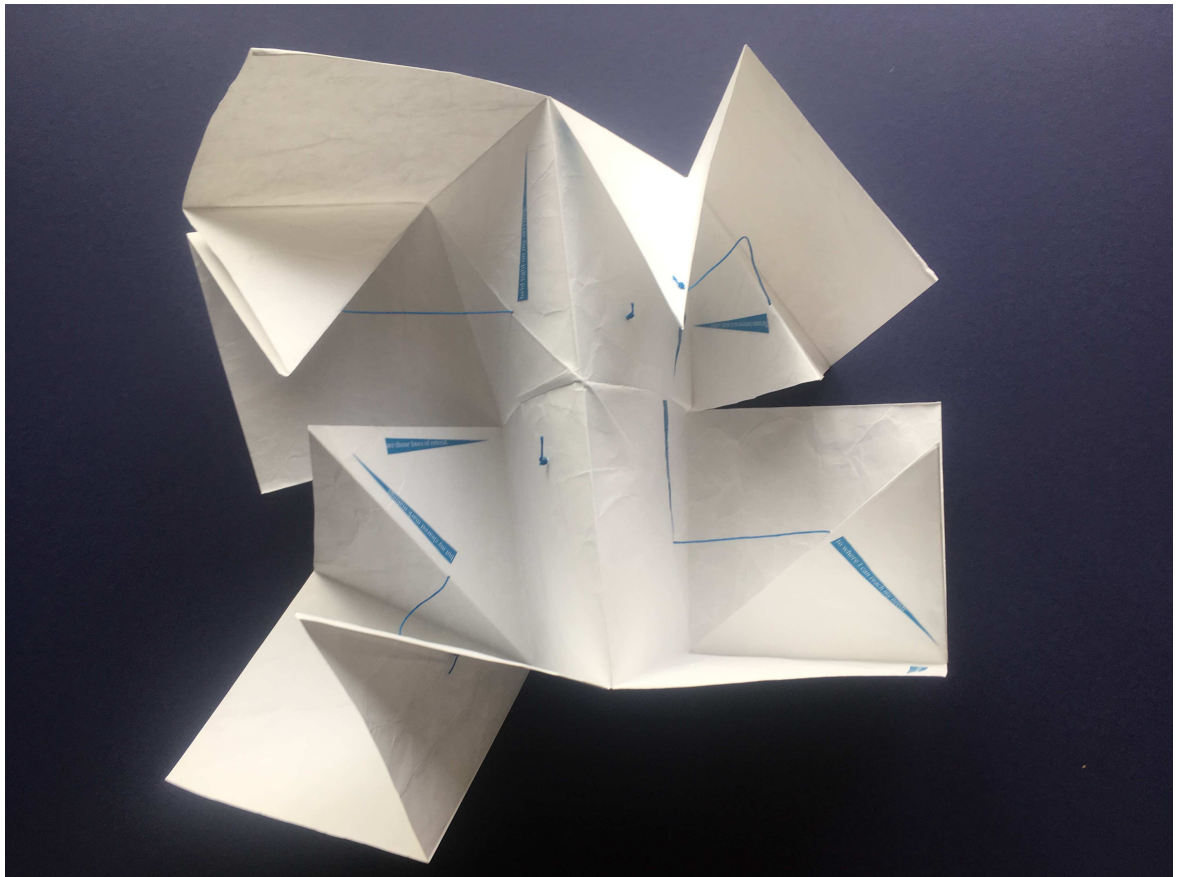
Wave Motion (2016)



Recovery (2017)



How to be more than human (2017)



Sea of Whiteness, as Glacier (2018)

Part Two | Creative

[Pages M1-M69 have been removed at author's request]