

'Off path, counter path': contemporary walking collaborations in landscape, art and poetry

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Harriet Tarlo and Judith Tucker

‘Off path, counter path’: contemporary walking collaborations in landscape, art and poetry

Our title reflects our tendency as walkers and collaborators to wander off the established path through a series of negotiations and diversions. In this jointly-authored essay by a poet and an artist, we ask whether and how this companionable and artistic process might also be counter-cultural, as many anecdotal and theoretical enframings of walking practice throughout the centuries have suggested. If so, what culture are we walking and working against? A capitalist, resource-greedy one perhaps which takes little account of the immediate environmental crisis in which we find ourselves. Might walking and producing art together be more ‘counter’ to the culture than walking alone? Might we also be able to walk away from the idea that one art form is privileged to ‘speak’ above another, even to work across binaries within disciplines such as abstraction versus representation? Jeffrey Robinson in his suggestive, sometimes provocative, book, *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image* argues that: ‘Fundamentally, I believe the walker is against dualism and divisions, Discrete steps exist on the walk.’ⁱ We shall test that idea here.

We consider our walking inheritance from the Romantics, via Thoreau to mid-century painters and poets alongside a nexus of theories around walking and eco-criticism from the twentieth century thinker Michel de Certeau onwards What might we as twenty-first century walkers, artists and researchers wish to reject or take from these sources? We also consider what we might learn from our contemporaries, having discussed walking and collaboration with other artists and poets who work together including the poet Frances Presley working with the artist Irma Irsara and with fellow-poet Tilla Brading and the long-established walking poet Thomas A. Clark, working alongside artist, Laurie Clark.ⁱⁱ We touch on their work here.

As practice-based researchers, we use our own work as a catalyst and research tool, referring to two of our place-based projects based in Northern England.



gaping peat place
 ungreened, faint-scented
 overlapping, crusted
 edge over
 edge
 drips down
 when land trips you up
 pulls you in, to fall, so

Figure 1. *Excerpt from Tributaries*: open-form poem by Harriet Tarlo and monochrome drawing by Judith Tucker Charcoal and pigment 61 x 76 cm.

These are *Tributaries* (ongoing since 2011), based close to home on Black Hill, near Holmfirth in the South Pennines, and *Excavations and Estuaries* (ongoing since 2013), located a little further away, on the estuarial coastline, and Fitties Plotland, near Cleethorpes.



bench sunk back in sand does not see high rook-chimney
NO THROUGH ROAD] hips hung red in sparse november yellow
 apples holding to low branches **[PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO BEACH ONLY**
 rusting swing angle trampoline calor gas out back in every shade and fade of blue

Figure 2. *No Through Road* open-form poem by Harriet Tarlo and oil on canvas by Judith Tucker 61 cm x 183 cm.

Both these places remind us that every exploration of a small ‘local’ area is of course steeped with wider-reaching aspects. Black Hill is now regarded as recreational semi-wilderness, but is a place haunted by industrial and farming history. Only traces remain of prior farms, mills and quarries. There are lanes and paths, now only used by walkers, which would have once been busy thoroughfares, and others which are faint tracks just discernible through the bracken. The coast between Cleethorpes and Tetney is a low, drained landscape where marsh, beach and farmland border on each other and, again, we find traces of past industry in the form of the remnants of the glory days of the Tetney-Louth canal. Like all

Romantic-Modern origins

Nonetheless Romanticism and Modernism form the crucible that shapes us in a process of shifting attachment, reassessment and resistance. British landscape poetry cannot help but define itself in relation to the Romantic poets, particularly in recent years when poets such as William Wordsworth and John Clare have been re-evaluated in ecocritical terms. It is no small thanks to Jonathan Bate, arguably the first British eco-critic, that the Romantics serve for us as Thoreau does for American ecocriticism.^{iv} Bate returns us to Ruskin's Wordsworth, the wandering poet of nature, but we learn even more perhaps from the "new" Clare. While Clare's 'Journey out of Essex' proves a tragic walking pattern, his earlier, close-to-the-ground poetry, with its biocentric approach to local birds and places and fierce opposition to enclosure, inspires many contemporary landscape poets.

However one sticking point with 'Romanticism' (admittedly, the movement which most unravels when you try to grasp it) remains. This is the tenet identified by Hazlitt (the first Romantic critic) and many others subsequently, that walking is all about being in search of the inner self, of projecting what Wordsworth calls the 'natural' self onto the outer world so that it becomes a work of the Romantics' own enormous transforming imaginations. Hazlitt himself, in 'On Going on a Journey', speaks of how walking outside stimulates his memory: I plunge into my past being, and revel there ... and I begin to feel, think and be myself again.^v It is internal, not external, stimulus that works for Hazlitt here and, crucially, he must be alone to achieve this. This is the main thrust of 'On Going on a Journey', and he later fondly but firmly berates Coleridge for his companionable chatty walking.^{vi} Fundamentally, 'in taking a solitary ramble ... [t]he mind is its own place'.^{vii} This is about as far as one can imagine from the collaborative walking out of and away from the self that we discourse upon here.

Mid-century practices in art and poetry, walking and collaboration provide us with important diversions from Hazlitt's journey and Wordsworth's ego. In the interwar years modernism, walking, landscape and the open air were closely interlinked and rambling became increasingly popular. The geographer David Matless^{viii} and the English scholar Alexandra Harris^{ix} share an interest in examining the mid-century phenomenon of trying to bring together the romantic and the modern in relation to locale. In *Romantic Moderns* Harris argues against Christopher Wilk's assertion that Englishness and modernism were antithetical, arguing rather, that British artists were differently modern. Whilst in recent years, devotees of the neo-romantics may well have been conservative and backward looking, the artists themselves were neither. She draws on John Piper in particular to show that landscape was not the antithesis but the ally of abstraction. Recent reconsiderations of the neo-romantics by contemporary artists support this view. When George Shaw curated *Graham Sutherland: An Unfinished World* he presented his work as open-ended and questioning.^x Sutherland used

walking as source inspiration: 'It became my habit to walk through and soak myself in the country. I never forced myself here, or consciously looked for subjects'.^{xi} Clare Woods' recent show *The Unquiet Head* demonstrates her formal, colourist and conceptual reappraisal of Sutherland and Paul Nash. Her large paintings of Brimham Rocks and Ilkey Moor were made after forays into the landscape; her sensitivity to architectural space and the grand scale of her work meant that the spectator had to walk in order to view.

But, what of this all-engrossing engaging but restrictive self? In the Anglo-American modernist poetry tradition, from Pound's and H.D.'s Imagism through Zukofsky's and Niedecker's Objectivism onwards, the resistance to the Lyric 'I' was profound. The mid-century poet Charles Olson joins this tradition of the rejection of 'subjectivism' in its 'stance toward reality outside a poem'.^{xii} He proposes a new 'objectism', that is 'getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the 'subject' and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature ... and those other creations of nature'.^{xiii} This has served almost as a manifesto for the poets and theorists who are aligned with the term 'ecopoetics' in recent years.^{xiv} Through critical interventions from such as Rosemarie Waldrop, Matthew Cooperman, Joshua Corey and Craig Stormont a new green Olson has emerged. Although this tradition is most commonly seen as an American one, Tarlo and others have identified a British trajectory of poetry in the Objectivist/Objectist tradition, from Basil Bunting, the neglected Northumbrian Modernist poet, through to more recent British poets such as Richard Caddel, Colin Simms and the poets included in Tarlo's anthology *The Ground Aslant*.^{xv} Through the mid-century and its inheritors then, we have both found important antecedents and contemporaries for painting and writing away from the self and into the field.

Painting, walking, poetry as fieldwork

We work together by walking together, by 'fieldwork', a term shared by geographers and artists, one which bears interrogation here. Moving from map to land, we begin by rambling or 'sauntering', to use Thoreau's term from his famous 1863 essay, 'Walking'.^{xvi} We walk,

look, and listen, with notebooks, pencils and cameras to hand.



Figure 4. Working on location at the Humberston Fitties.

We recognise that the scale of working needs to be small in order for us to attempt to respond to place at all. We hone in on a smaller and smaller geographical space, in part so that we can visit and re-visit the same places. In this sense, we are not epic walkers, but slow, repetitive walkers. The projects discussed here began as two-year commissions but, five years later, we continue to work in both places on extended private and public projects.^{xvii} We know we cannot close place down.

How does this practice sit in relation to former and current work in the field by artists and poets? Since the 1960s and the advent of notion of the dematerialisation of the art object 'walking as art', championed in the UK by Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, has become ever more prevalent. One only has to look at the bulletins on the Walking Artists Network website, intended for 'all those who are interested in walking as a critical spatial practice'.^{xviii} Many of these practices present the act of walking *as* art and what is shown in the gallery is the documentation of that process. Arguably, though we learn from such activities, this is not fieldwork as such, and later in the essay we consider how our collaborative practice operates in the gallery and how our collaborations complicates the binary of representation and performance of landscape, place and environment.

Contemporary painters and poets like ourselves still persist in walking, writing and drawing *en plein air*. In his catalogue essay accompanying the recent exhibition, *WALK ON From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff – 40 years of Art Walking*, Mike Collier considers the

relationship of walking to art in the modern and post-modern 'landscape'.^{xix} Amongst the plethora of conceptual artists he includes the category, 'Walking and Painting'. Here he notes that, whilst the two painters included in the *Walk On* exhibition, James Hugonin and Brendon Stuart Burns, might not be described as "walking artists" they *are* artists who walk and whose embodied practice I would describe as phenomenological ... the paintings in the exhibition could not have been created without the artist having walked extensively through the landscape'.^{xx} Their practice, like ours, was predicated on *having been* outside, even if walking outside was a means to an end. John Jones reminds us that both walking and painting share a concern with the relation of bodies and landscape:

Walking makes you aware of your own pulse, your own place in the landscape, and the meaning it takes from your presence. It is the most respectful and intimate relationship you can have with a landscape short of painting it.^{xxi}

This phenomenological approach to motion, painting and landscape brings to mind Alison Rowley's extended analysis of Helen Frankenthaler's 'Mountains and Sea'. Frankenthaler wrote:

In 1952 on a trip to Nova Scotia I did landscapes with folding easel and equipment. I came back and did the "Mountains and Sea" painting and I know the landscapes were in my arms as I did it.^{xxii}

Whilst walking artists might add that the landscapes were in their legs too, many might concur with Rowley when she suggests that we think of painting as a material extension of the world 'a trace of body/consciousness/world in a continual process.'^{xxiii}

We would argue that walking and painting as fieldwork can be considered afresh, not only in the context of contemporary critical walking practices, but also within the context of the ecocritical turn, via the phenomenological as outlined above, towards New Materialist thinking. Malcolm Andrews reminds us that "A landscape then, is what the viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a 'good view'"^{xxiv} Now, however, rather than this more romantic, anthropocentric approach to a consideration of landscape painting, with an implied distantation between viewer and view and privileging of the human, we might offer a more entangled interpretation of this activity, moving through landscape, the interaction between the physical materiality of the body of the artists, the material of making and the material of place. We might reimagine the practice in terms of the material of the place being in collaboration with the materiality of mark-making in words and lines and of paint via that material constellation which is a body.

While poetry which is grounded in going out into, and engaging with, the material reality of a particular place has always been written, the term fieldwork has been less commonly used here. However, this is changing. In 2013, Lytle Shaw published his monumental work, *Fieldworks: From Place to Site in Postwar Poetics*, in which he explores American site-specific poetry from Olson and Williams, via Creeley and Snyder, to contemporaries such as Lisa Robertson.^{xxv} He argues convincingly that such poets draw on and indeed verge on historiographic and ethnographic methods in their investigations of place. As such, his anthropological approach emphasizes the cultural and human myths and histories of place. Nonetheless, he claims the term ‘fieldwork’ for poetry, draws suggestively on many associations of the term, explores the meaning of words such as ‘place’ and ‘site’ for poets, and lays important emphasis on the interdisciplinary and on process.

In her own hybrid critical-creative essay, ‘Open Field: Reading Field as Place and Poetics’, Tarlo traces a similar trajectory of poets, emphasizing in particular the ‘open field’ tradition developed in American Black Mountain poetics but also inherited by British poets.^{xxvi} She focuses in particular on the intimate connections between form and land (the field) out of which she evolved her own practice of fieldwork. This ‘writing outside’ is a process-led form of working simultaneously in place, language and page space, exploring the connections between each element. Her notebook entries in the field were compiled whilst actually walking, not composing while she walked as Wordsworth and Coleridge famously did, but recording everything seen and sensed with as little selection as possible. After a lengthy process of selection and editing, these became place-based poems such as ‘Nab’ and ‘Particles’, which attempted to embody the sense of moving through place within their forms.^{xxvii}

In environmental terms, as the critic Richard Kerridge has argued, the use of open form such as Tarlo’s responds to Tim Clark’s recent suggestion that we need to shift our scale and frame perception, including changing emphasis from the assumption that the human being is a private and atomistic being.^{xxviii} It is also hospitable to ideas associated with current New Materialist thinking because it opens up a new relational space in which there is no protagonist, speaker or focaliser. Whilst we would acknowledge that one can never entirely erase the (romantic) self, yet there is surely truth in the idea that open form comes closest to this than other more realist and narrative forms of writing. In its formal embodying of an extended, repeated walk of discrete steps and its presentation of image and text together, the collaboration continually shifts scale and perspective thus demonstrating the counter-consciousness that Clark, Kerridge and others call for.



slow thin
 snow fell fall
 speckling, flecking
 amid starwort
 still spring pool
 then gone
 and again, gone
 into reflection
 as no thing

Figure 5. Tetney Blow Wells: open-form poem by Harriet Tarlo and monochrome drawing by Judith Tucker. Charcoal and pigment on watercolour paper. 30.5 x 122 cm.

Pause and repetition

We move on now to consider how this practice of moving and pausing relates to sense of place. Our joint fieldwork in place begins with an acceptance that we cannot of course *know* place. The feminist geographer Doreen Massey proposes an open, unstable, fluid, provisional and contested approach to ‘place’ and aims ‘to evoke place as meeting place rather than as always already coherent, as open rather than bounded, as an ongoing production rather than pre-given’.^{xxxii} Drawing and writing in place, responding in an immediate fashion to particulars, keeps open that fluidity. Emma Dexter writes of drawing in relation to what we perceive:

A drawing enjoys a direct link with thought and with an idea itself. Its very nature is unstable, balanced equally between pure abstraction and representation; its virtue is its fluidity. A drawing can be highly controlled and delicate, an act of homage, redolent of personal memory, or it can be automatic, responding to irrational elements or chance encounters of materials.^{xxxiii}

In line with these ideas, our own immediate notes and drawings resist binaristic conceptions of the abstract versus the representational and that familiar western dualism, body versus mind, when we work in place.

But can we really speak of walking and working ‘in place’? Arguably walking, as de Certeau claimed, is not to be in one place, but to be out of place or between places.^{xxxiv} De

Certeau conceived of the enunciative functions of walking as a 'spatial acting-out of place' hence a questioning or, a circling around place, a placing that is always in process.^{xxxv} Thomas A. Clark writes in his pamphlet, *In Praise of Walking*, that 'Walking is a mobile form of waiting'.^{xxxvi} In the interview 'Standing Still and Walking in Strath Nethy', he lays emphasis on the stopping, standing still, pausing element of fieldwork.^{xxxvii} It is at these moments that place comes into focus as much as it might ever do. Yi-Fu Tan's writes in his book *Space and Place* that 'if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place'.^{xxxviii} Place then might be conceived as pause, rest, stasis in tension with movement, as it is in Allen Fisher's long poem entitled simply *PLACE*.^{xxxix} It is impossible to do justice here to the fluxus of this four-hundred page, open form poem in which the mapping of place includes ley lines, walks, causeways, geographical lines, boundaries, rivers, tributaries, magnetic lines, sewers, roads, hidden historical or mythical lines of connection. Throughout it, however, Fisher returns to the idea that 'movement and rest/ beget each other', that 'here' is at moments 'held' as Frankenthaler held landscape in her arms, a word evoking the stopping of time and the intimacy of engagement.^{xl}

We integrate this process of "movement and rest" into our walking methodology. For many years, Tucker had made working notebooks for herself akin to Japanese accordion notebooks. When we began working together, we extended this process into a collaborative one. We both take these zigzag notebooks into the field and pause intermittently in order to fill one small surface each with drawing and writing from the same location.



fig 6. Notebooks made on location

Our work at these stopping points is quick and immediate but very focused; the presence of the other working alongside enhances the sense of concentration and attentiveness to the particular. For Tarlo, this method brought her closer to composing actual poem pages on the spot – some of these pieces change little afterwards, either being rejected or presented on the wall as short open-form texts. So, whilst she still wrote longer walking poems from notes compiled in process, she now also composed short poems from the still perspective of a single point, collaboration bringing her closer to the methods of the artist.

The form of the notebooks, the folded pages allowing for unexpected juxtapositions and the transformations that occur when they unfurl into strips, encourages resistance to a detached or fixed viewpoint of landscape. The individual sketches are made from direct observation, employing some sense of linear perspective as well as creating pictorial space through mark-making. However, the act of unfolding and re-folding reveals unexpected continuous strips of images and shifting juxtapositions which subvert this illusion. What happens when these written and drawn field-notes are considered together? Sometimes what is problematic to achieve in one discipline might be relatively straightforward in another: it is difficult to draw birds circling in the distance without resorting to cliché, whilst the single word 'gulls' located high on the page encapsulates all. On the other hand, an artist can draw from one place looking back at the route just come but this is a convoluted process in poetry. Worked up, the sounds, colours, and animal and bird movement in the poems complicates and enlivens the distant structures, proximate configurations and spaces created by the drawings. As Clark says of his work with Laurie Clark:

We tried to avoid this notion of illustration, we thought more of their being places side by side ... a drawing is part of the mood or feel of the poem, it adds something that you couldn't do yourself or see yourself.^{xii}

In juxtaposition then, we can play with the paradox of focussing on the haptic, what might be reached or touched, whilst simultaneously acknowledging the distant.

Visiting and re-visiting place, walking, talking and making work about that place immediately involves us in a process of repetition and variation. We appear to engage in the entirely repetitive act of placing one foot in front of the other, of walking but the pattern of our footsteps as we take a familiar walk is never entirely the same and we choose to pause or turn at different places. Each individual walk is a slow way of being in place, and the process of re-visiting is slow. We cannot see the Autumn again until it is Autumn again.. For the Tributaries project, living locally made it easier for us to visit regularly through the seasons but we made efforts to do this on the East Coast also. The process of re-visitation, repetition and variation is reflected in the sequences of work we produce. For the first time, Tucker is making series of drawings and paintings about re-visiting certain points at different times, returning to a place that she is the midst of making one drawing about in the studio, and making further notes that both affect that drawing and also generate another.

Repetition can be found within the poems at every level, particularly in terms of sound patterns, but also the words themselves. In our artists' book, *Sound Unseen*, it occurs right across the concertina folds, reflecting the repetitive and sequential nature of seasonality.^{xiii} Certain plants, objects, colours and effects are seen and felt at each visit to a place and the

poems bears witness to this with neo-objectivist sincerity, rather than attempting to find new images for the sake of it. Heather; bracken; bilberry; grass; stone; wind; water; ice; light; gold; green; white and black all repeat on the moor and in the work.



over grasslands, pale in sun
 boggy rifts in and between ice shadows
 stone enclosing disclosing land
 up to white-held tops
 down to civil space, caught water
 lived-in place

Fig 7 pages from the artists' book *sound unseen*, (Leeds, Wild Pansy Press 2012)

Thomas A. Clark has again been an influence in this with his scrupulous and particular use of language, never hesitating to repeat colour and landscape words. In the green-covered book, *Of woods and water*, he allows green its full expression:

green above you
 below and behind you
 green with you
 green around you ^{xliii}

Even in his most minimalist, tiny artist's books such as 'To Scalascaig', he repeats 'blue', 'green' and 'grey', 'sky', 'island' and 'sea' in shifting and delicate patterns on each turning page. ^{xliv}

Clarks's poetry is written in the present tense, as Tarlo's is. Being in the present moment in place does not necessarily imply a meditative mysticism, but it is resistant to the conditions of modern life with its opportunities for international travel; purchasing produce from across the world and temperature control. For walkers past and present this slow inhabitation of the present tense has always been a valued part of walking. As Clark writes:

You walk out of your usual context, into a more open relation with things. Hopefully, you arrive at a clarity, an immediacy of perception, and you lend attention to that, stay with whatever is happening, internally as well as externally, instead of being displaced into the past or future, instead of being caught up in an attitude. ^{xlv}

Thoreau wrote that through walking he would 'fain return to my senses'. ^{xlvi} We read this in two ways – senses as sanity in an ever-complex world and senses in phenomenological terms. Walking and pausing, writing and drawing, collaborating itself, all multiply these effects.

Collaborative Companions

Although in this essay we have focused on the interplay between two, it is important to acknowledge that there is a wider spectrum of collaborators around us and many other artists who walk. In both our projects, we have walked with the diverse characters who attended our peripatetic readings and workshops. Particularly when we began to work on the east coast, we walked and talked with people who had local or artistic relationships with the area, from wildlife trust volunteers, film makers and fellow-artists to people we simply met on the way. The public path, delighted in by Wordsworth, opens up these possibilities for chance encounter.^{xlvii} Presley and Brading, too, have undertaken many group walks including with the Exmoor Society to celebrate the work of the neglected Exmoor archaeologist Hazel Eardley Wilmot. Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner write about ‘walking with’ as a convivial or communal activity.^{xlviii} They consider that ‘willingness to acknowledge and exploit entanglement in community and coalition often locates the artist as mediator for communication between people and places.’^{xlix} Heddon has collaborated with Misha Myers to make ‘the walking library,’ an ongoing art project that is precisely a conduit between people and places, between ecology and culture.¹

Places are peopled not only by the present inhabitants, workers and visitors, but by past ones going back into prehistory. There is a strong sense of this in Brading’s and Presley’s *Stone Settings*’ with their fragmentary references to fragmentary stones and the fragmentary mythic and human stories behind them. Through her thinking on spectral traces, Karen Till considers how we may come into ‘contact with past lives through objects, natures, and remnants that haunt the contemporary landscape’^{li} Till’s work is shaped by Avery Gordon’s extended analysis of haunting.^{lii} Gordon discusses a willingness to follow ghosts: ‘it is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look’.^{liii} So we walk in a past cultural context, conscious of the industrial and rural ghosts of both areas we walk in, but also a present one which is reflected in walks with others.^{liv}

In the light of current reconsiderations of what is, perhaps rather divisively, called the ‘non-human’, we attempt to extend our engagement beyond the purely human perspective, however polyphonic. Moving through landscape is shared not only with people: ‘[M]otion is the natural mode of human and animal vision: “We must perceive in order to move but we must also move in order to perceive”’, writes Pierre Joris in his *Nomad Poetics*.^{lv} This is a matter of perception in which we shift from dwelling on our *difference* from animals (which Solnit locates in our bipedal relationship to walking as much as to our consciousness), but on our *sameness*.^{lvi} Thus our conceptions of walking and placing change. As Massey argues in her book, *For Space*, ‘if everything is moving, where is here?’.^{lvii} She notes that, when we walk, we join in the mobile processes of the non-human world in which continents, seas, animals, birds and plants are all migrating, moving in small and big scale ways. We begin to see space and place differently when moving through it as visitor. We don’t want to take the

god-like view of the climber reaching a peak (or the figure at the top of the World Trade Centre to use de Certeau's image) when we climb Black Hill. We want to see the kestrel above us and the lapwing below and wonder about their perspectives. As we walk under the enormous skies of the East coast, we see crowds of migrating birds coming and going through the seasons, changing the sky-scape radically from month to month. Merely being by tidal waters is a continual reminder of non-human mobility.

Aside from the 'wild' creatures we encountered, we were in fact almost never two when we walked. There was a third walker, Esther the standard poodle. What happens when we engage, even empathise, with the perspective of a companion species, to use Donna Haraway's term? Haraway notes the significance of dogs as companions considering what is involved in

...touching [the dog] all the important ecological and political histories and struggles of ordinary small cities that have asked, Who should eat whom, and who should cohabit? The rich naturalcultural contact zones multiply with each tactile look.^{lviii}

Bred but not at all trained as a gun dog, a sight dog, Esther reminds us not only of the lack of other predators left on these moors, but also of its current uses. She makes us aware of the exact location of the released black grouse, of the line a wild hare takes. We notice immediately whether the sheep are out or in for the winter. Through her we know the depth of the heather and the colour of the bogs. Her errant ways have brought us into contact with national park rangers, keepers of the grouse shoot and the huntsman and their beagles swarming over the hillside engaged in what they themselves describe in promotional literature as 'a healthy, social and egalitarian activity'. Here are other walkers with very different purposes.

The counter-cultural walk

We begin to see here some of the ways our mode of walking might be perceived as counter-cultural. This is not a new perception of walking of course. From John Thelwall's *Peripatetic* of the 1790s onwards, the Romantic walkers took epic walks from which, Robinson states, they returned to the civilized world with 'patterns of life re-drawn', wanting to shift complacency and obsession with continuity in the social order.^{lix} However that world has changed radically and to walk now has many different connotations in the newly christened Age of the Anthropocene, a convenient if controversial shorthand. The emphasis on materiality and the shift in scale and frame for instance speak more to our age perhaps than to others. Nonetheless our predecessors still speak to us and ecological recycling should extend to past thinkers as well as materials, allowing us to hone our own ideas. For Thoreau, to saunter itself was a practice of resistance. In 'Walking' he cites the derivation of sauntering as vagabondage outside of civilized pursuits and activities and/or as walkers 'sans terre' ie

without land or home.^{lx} Although we draw and write in the landscape we walk in, we identify with Thoreau's emphasis on the importance of walking without a defined goal:

Roads are made for horses and men of business. I do not travel in them much comparatively, because I am not in a hurry to get to any tavern, or grocery, or livery stable, or depot to which they lead.^{lxi}

Destinations here imply engagement in capitalist enterprise, enterprise that sometimes seems to have encompassed all areas of life in our time. Nonetheless, however many new fabrics and varieties of outdoor wear may be invented, part of the radicalism of walking is that it is still largely free and thus partially resistant to capitalism, not least because the walker on the moors or the coast is not at the shopping centre or even shopping online, the real or cyber places we are meant to be at weekends. Rebecca Solnit's hugely successful *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001) caught a millennial moment of interest in what might be seen as a rapidly disappearing practice in need of revaluation. She portrays walking as an act of resistance to the mainstream out of keeping with the time. The slowness of walking mentioned above also contributes to this sense, as Solnit argues in interview, and has a special meaning for our age: 'Ultimately, I believe that slowness is an act of resistance, not because slowness is a good in itself but because of all that it makes room for, the things that don't get measured and can't be bought'.^{lxii}

However, when Thoreau, and many of the walkers we look back to, walked out of civilization, they also walked out of the village, the 'home' and domestic constraints most commonly associated with women. Phil Smith reflects on the proliferation of slow and 'radical walking' practices, many informed by the growing interest in psychogeography and its offshoots; he observes a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory practices, including the growth in the number, visibility and influence of women walking which in its turn exposes other and continuing absences.^{lxiii} As women artists walking away from the domestic home, we have at times considered the places we are walking as an alternative home. Arguably of course if we were to take seriously the derivation of 'eco' as home, and perceive the world as home, we could make one of these radical shifts in thinking the ecological crisis demands.

Heddon and Turner, drawing on their research project, *Walking Women* (in which they interviewed thirteen women walking artists), reflect on the gender politics of this.^{lxiv} Treading carefully lest they be accused of essentialism, they develop their observations through Tim Cresswell's remark that 'Ways of moving have quite specific characteristics depending on who is moving and the social and cultural space that is being moved through'.^{lxv} The walking some of their women artist-subjects undertake has particular relevance to ourselves and others such as the Clarks in that they set store by everyday, local walks and re-walking. In contrast, Heddon and Turner offer a nuanced critique of heroic walking from

Thoreau, via Breton, up to present day nomadism, psychogeography and situationist internationalists. They note that, many of these explorations of space are monumental, static and detached from the culturally formed bodies that walk in it. They proffer Doreen Massey's conception of space as 'a sphere of relations' as a way of redressing the detachment implicit in these various practices.^{lxvi}

This sphere of power relations includes the management of land by its many stakeholders and its presentation to us as walkers. De Certeau's argument in *The Practice Of Everyday Life* that the act of walking narrates interests and desires, dictated by highly developed spatial practices is as relevant to the walker in semi-rural areas such as ours as in a city. Kim Taplin, defender of public rights of way and author of *The English Path*, writes of the footpath as one of the last causes of celebration and bastions of resistance for poets as diverse as Iain Sinclair, Barry MacSweeney and John Welch.^{lxvii} In MacSweeney's *Ranter* the poet uses the persona of Ranter, a figure 'armed with centuries of anger' to rail against a country 'reduced and reduced'.^{lxviii} Like John Clare in the face of enclosure before him, MacSweeney laments lost land:

Broken stiles
littering the pryncedom
neglected ditches
clogged with clarts
...
sheepwire stapling
her fells and fields

wild Northumberland
hemmed in, stitched up^{lxix}

The areas we walk in are just as circumscribed as those within a city and our paths of transgressive desire just as frequently asserted as we walk 'off path, counter path' crossing barbed wire, diverting from the Pennine Way, scrambling along reservoir walls attempting to elude the wires, strictures and structures of landowners, water companies and local authorities. Yet the pathways must be there in order for us to engage with them and to contemplate the cultures that shaped them, be they the tracks of farmers, animals, mill-workers or the water itself.

Walking in the gallery

When it comes to working out how to exhibit the work from these projects, we attempt to integrate our sense of walking outside into the gallery. In recent showings from the east coast project, we carefully placed images and texts into the structure of walking and pausing in relation to the specificity of the architecture of the gallery.^{lxx}



Figure 8. Excavations and Estuaries, Bank Street Arts, Sheffield.

Here viewers took their own indoor walk. This involved elements of surprise; the viewer did not know which season he/she was going to encounter at the next stopping point. The texts flew around the painted images, suggestive of the birds which are so important to the area,. Freed from their frames, the words encouraged our viewers to join us on our collaborative walking process and partake of all we are in the process of learning together. While we are not suggesting that the conceit of walking through an exhibition is in any way a new notion, we worked here to remind audiences, through the movement of their own bodies that both viewing, reading and listening, as much as walking in landscape, are embodied practices, and that what we encounter in the gallery are both images and objects. Thomas A. Clark draws a parallel between the space made through exhibitions to the notion of a glade insofar as the glade could not come into being without trees and yet is not itself a tree.^{lxxi} Later in the same essay he places artwork and gallery space into bodily perception:

The movement from one work to another, the dialogue between them, the extent of wall or floor they are able to hold, the light that falls upon them, all these factors begin to be felt as the exhibition takes shape.^{lxxii}

Movement between works is key for our collaboration. In this instance the viewing experience is more than just a process of traversing across the marks on a painted surface, although this process itself can be considered as an embodied experience, an entwining of vision and touch.^{lxxiii} The spaces between the paintings and the placing of the words involve the viewer's whole body moving as they walk between them. This way of experiencing poetry and paintings together can be thought of as *records* of our sensory experiences, out there, in

the landscape but also holds the potential to become places themselves and an invitation to explore the actual places.^{lxxiv} In recent years, there has been a shift from representations of landscape to practices or performances of and in landscape, with walking practices being key in the latter. The way our collaboration operates problematises this distinction. The combination of walking and looking in the words and images for and then viewing painted and drawn surfaces remind viewers of the works' materiality as they consider the image and where it takes them, for what is always at stake in representational painting is paint as material and as signifier. For a moment, before conscious thought, both the materiality of the paint and the materiality of the form of words operate pre-linguistically and in this instance operate together.

Of course many artists and poets engage with difference between perception and interpretation. The artist Avis Newman sees drawing as mark-making as a privileged site for this: 'In the inscriptive act of drawing there exists the shadow of our ambivalent relation to making marks, before the time when "image" and "text" are differentiated to go their separate ways'.^{lxxv} Making a parallel point about the materiality of poetry, Thomas A. Clark remarks that 'some sounds and rhythm, some shapes that language can make, all prior to signification ... survive signification ... in the slightest moment before sense ... the corporeality [of the text] has some kind of impact'.^{lxxvi} So keeping in mind this reminder of the corporeality of both poetry, painting, drawing and walking we might consider that the binarist distinction between an aesthetic and conceptual approach becomes redundant. Using Kandinsky's parody of walking through an exhibition and particularly the composer Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' as exemplars, Tim Ingold develops this theme in his essay 'Ways of mind-walking: reading, writing, painting', remarking that the viewer is moved precisely because what he sees are not paintings of things, or images in the modern sense, but things that are painted. And he inhabits these things as he inhabits the world, by moving through and among them, and by participating with his entire being in the generative movement of their formation.^{lxxvii}

This is very much viewing in the present tense, much in the way that drawing or writing in landscape enables attentiveness. We consider that walking through an exhibition of landscape paintings and poetry might offer a more complex temporality, one that is comparable to Lucy Lippard's view of maps. We wanted to take our viewers on a walk, one that might be familiar to the inhabitants of the place, but that would also introduce new places to the visitor. The curator, Linda Ingham, joined in our collaboration by providing an annotated map of where our work had originated and in that tiny squiggly line, the path we had wandered on and off, counter and with.



Figure 9 Linda Ingham's map.

The hand drawn mark on the yellowing paper map teeters and wobbles in much the way we did, and for the viewer it is also interesting in terms of temporality. Let us consider this in contradistinction to the ubiquitous red lines that GPS 'mapmyruns' and Strava make. In the first place, it is notable that those who post their routes online tend to wish to show their prowess in distance and speed. In our case, we have covered this rather unimpressive distance in two years, slow walking indeed. The second notion concerns the temporal in relation to maps. The apps only show routes that have already been completed; they invite the viewer to look at what has happened, in the past. Paper maps are more complex acting both as an invitation to a future walk and a record of a past, as Lippard reminds us in *The Lure of the Local* (1997):

Even at their most abstract, maps (especially topographical maps) are catalysts, as much a titillating foretastes of future physical experience as they are records of others' (or our own) past experiences. For the map lover, maps are about visualising the places you've never been and recalling the ones you've been to. A map can be memory or anticipation in graphic code.^{lxxviii}

Much of what Lippard writes in terms of the combination of futurity and memory might apply to the way we read, view or walk through the exhibition. The paintings and poems are both record and evidence of the embodied movement through the landscape, of having been there and clearly relate to a specific place elsewhere. For some viewers they offer an opportunity to consider anew a familiar walk; for others they might be an invitation to go out and explore.

Let us conclude by a return to our title and our theme, the path, but this time overlaying that notion with the idea of the line as it appears in both the arts of drawing and poetry. Perhaps the way of working we have written about here can be seen as a contemporary

development of Paul Klee's well-known phrase 'taking a line for a walk.' As we have shown in our consideration of Robinson's discrete steps that make up a walk, and as Collier reminds us: 'Put simply, walking (even in a straight line) prevents us from thinking in straight lines.'^{lxxix} Steps, lines and walks, straight or meandering certainly imply a ground or surface upon which to walk. Walking, writing painting and drawing then are about exploring surfaces, but are also more than merely exploring a surface. Walking is usually a horizontal act, like that of writing and reading, but drawing and painting are vertical acts, or at least the process of applying paint it and viewing paintings are. There is something vertiginous, almost, exhilarating when the vertical paintings of such a flat landscape are surrounded by words, themselves liberated not only from the boundary of the page edge but also from horizontality.

either side

under
swallows'
wings

grassland verges grown into many movements
bending, singing each over other

vetch purples clover whites
threadings, tanglings

up from
salt-sandy
ground



Figure 10. *Either side*, open-form poem by Harriet Tarlo and oil on canvas by Judith Tucker 60.1 x 183 cm.

In 'Either side', as in many of Tucker's paintings, we see clear, well-trodden footpaths and invitations to wander off too, bent grasses, smaller fainter tracks, little indications of those determined to flout rules in order to make their ways. Looking at the depicted paths, the viewer is not sure whether they show the way ahead or those already trodden, so the question is are we looking backwards or forwards along our possible walk, or should we diverge from the more obvious routes? Robert Macfarlane writes:

The eye is enticed by a path, and the mind's eye also. The imagination cannot help but pursue a line in the land – onwards in space, but also backwards in time to the histories of a route and its previous followers'^{lxxx}

He expands here on the way that time operates in landscape and by extension in painting and poetry. On paths, and in images of paths, past, present and future coalesce. Paths provide spectral traces and present choices for the artist in the pause of composition, and, for the people who look at the drawn and written lines, they provide possible futures too, walks or lines or even shifts in perception that they may be yet to take, on path, off-path or counter-path, in the gallery and outside.

i

Jeffrey Robinson, *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) 7.

ii At the ASLE UKI conference in Cambridge in September 2015, we curated *In the Open*, an exhibition of such works.

iii

Frances Presley, *halse for hazel* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2014).

iv

Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991).

v

William Hazlitt, 'On Going a Journey', *Hazlitt Selected Essays*, ed. George Sampson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 141-150: 142.

vi

Hazlitt, 'On Going a Journey' 143-4. Hazlitt's critiquing of Coleridge's walking style is also a theme in 'My First Acquaintance with Poets': 'I accompanied him six miles on the road. It was a fine morning in the middle of winter, and he talked the whole way.... He seemed unable to keep on in a strait line (Hazlitt, *Selected Essays*, 8-9).

vii

Hazlitt, 'On Going a Journey' 149.

viii

David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998)

ix

Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns. English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010).

x

George Shaw, *Graham Sutherland: An Unfinished World* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 2012)

xi

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/paintings-and-drawings-graham-sutherland> accessed 19/05/2016.

xii

Charles Olson, 'Projective Verse' in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1997), 239-249: 247

xiii

Olson, 'Projective Verse', 247.

xiv

The Green Olson and eco-poetics are best first explored through Jonathan Skinner's journal of that name at <https://ecopoetics.wordpress.com/>.

xv

Harriet Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2011).

xvi

Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" (1863) in *Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings*, ed. William Rossi (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2008) 260-287. We shall return to Thoreau's notion of 'sauntering' later.

xvii

This paragraph and one or two other largely descriptive paragraphs presented here also appear in our complementary essay, "'Drawing closer': an ecocritical consideration of collaborative, cross-disciplinary practices of walking, writing, drawing and exhibiting" in William Welstead and Peter Barry, eds, *Extending Ecocriticism: crisis, collaboration and challenges in the environmental humanities* (forthcoming Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

xviii

<http://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/> accessed 19/05/2016

xix

Mike Collier et al, *WALK ON From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff - 40 years of Art Walking* (Sunderland: Art Editions North, 2013),

xx

Collier, *WALK ON*, 77.

xxi

John Jones, *The Guardian*

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2006/may/20/gowalk.guardianspecial40> John Jones accessed 19/05/2016.

xxii

Alison Rowley, *Helen Frankenthaler: Painting History, Writing Painting*. (London/New York: I.B. Tauris 2007) 45.

xxiii

Rowley, *Helen Frankenthaler*, 2007: 48.

xxiv

xxv

Lytel Shaw, *Fieldworks From Place to Site in Post war Poetics* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2013).

xxvi

Harriet Tarlo, 'Open Field: Reading Field as Place and Poetics' in *Placing Poetry*, eds. Ian Davidson and Zoe Skoulding (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013)

xxvii

Harriet Tarlo, 'Nab' in *Brancepeth Beck, Coast, Nab* (Etruscan Books, 2005) 41-72 and 'Particles' in *Poems 2004-2014* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2015) 61-76.

^{xxviii} Kerridge talk and Clark book

xxix

Malcolm Andrews *Landscape and Western Art*. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 2000) 4

Tilla Brading and Frances Presley, *Stone Settings* (Odyssey Books & Other Press, 2011).

xxx

Brading and Presley, *Stone Settings*, 16.

xxxi

Brading and Presley, *Stone Settings*, 16.

xxxii

Doreen Massey, 'Landscape as a Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains', *Journal of Material Culture* 11(1-2) 2006: 34.

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- xxxiii Emma Dexter, *Vitamin D, New Perspectives in Drawing* (London and New York: Phaidon, 2005) 10.
- xxxiv Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley University of California Press: 1984).
- xxxv de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 98.
- xxxvi Thomas A Clark, *In Praise of Walking* (Cairn Gallery, Nailsworth, UK, 1988)
- xxxvii Alec Finlay, 'Standing Still and Walking in Strath Nethy: An Interview with Thomas A. Clark', *Edinburgh Review* 94, Autumn 1995.
- xxxviii Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 6
- xxxix Allen Fisher, *PLACE* (Hastings: Reality Street Editions, 2005).
- xl Fisher, *PLACE*, 333.
- xli Verbatim from *Thomas A. Clark A Place Apart: Thomas A. Clark Symposium* interview with David Bellingham, Scottish Poetry Library 2016
- xlii Harriet Tarlo and Judith Tucker, *Sound Unseen: poems and drawings* (Leeds: Wild Pansy Press, 2013).
- xliii Thomas A. Clark, *Of Woods and Water* (Pittenweem: Moschatel Press, 2008).
- xliv Thomas A. Clark, "To Scalascaig", (Pittenweem: Moschatel Press, 2000).
- xlv Clark in Finlay, "Standing Still and Walking" 1995.
- xlvi Thoreau, "Walking", 264.
- xlvii Many have argued, Rebecca Solnit amongst them, that it was through these walking encounters, that Wordsworth became a more radical poet in terms of both language and material^{xlvi} Whilst his social attitudes may (justly in some cases) have been mocked by Marxist critics of the 'seventies, the poetry remains testimony to his attempts at least in his early life to reach beyond the lyrical self through others' experiences of rural life. Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000,) 110-113.
- xlviii Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner (2012) "Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility", *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22:2, 224-236.
- xlix Heddon and Turner, 'Walking Women', 235.
- l <https://walkinglibraryproject.wordpress.com/> accessed 14/07/2016
- li Karen E. Till, *Mapping Spectral Traces*, (Virginia: Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Studies, 2010) 2.
- lii Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* 2nd ed., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2008).
- liii Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 2008, 22.

liv

See Tarlo and Tucker, “Drawing closer”, forthcoming 2017) for more discussion of these industrial histories and the use of found text to incorporate this into texts.

lv

Pierre Joris, *A Nomad Poetics: Essays* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2003) 40. Joris is citing James J. Gibson’s, *The Ecological Approach to Vision Perception* here.

lvi

Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 2000, 32-33

lvii

Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications. 2005) 138.

lviii

Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 7.

lix

Robinson, *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image*, 56.

lx

Thoreau, “Walking”, 260

lxi

Thoreau, “Walking”, 265

lxii

Rebecca Solnit, “Finding Time” <https://orionmagazine.org/article/a-fistful-of-time/> 2007 [accessed?]

lxiii

Phil Smith, *Walking's New Movement* (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2015) 3.

lxiv

Heddon Turner “Walking Women”

lxv

Tim Cresswell in Heddon and Turner “Walking Women”, 225

lxvi

Heddon and Turner “Walking Women”, 227 -228

lxvii

Kim Taplin, *The English Path* (Sudbury, Suffolk: Perry Green Press, 2000).

lxviii

Barry MacSweeney, *Ranter in Wolf Tongue: Selected Poems 1965-2000* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2003) 144. I have written extensively about MacSweeney’s relationship with land in “Brother MacSweeney and the new-old English Poet”, *Reading Barry MacSweeney: Essays*, ed. Paul Batchelor (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books with Newcastle University, 2013).

lxix

Barry MacSweeney, *Ranter*, 165.

lxx

Behind Land. The Muriel Barker Gallery, Fishing Heritage Centre, Grimsby, 2014, culmination Arts Council funded commission curated by Linda Ingham .

lxxi

Thomas A Clark, *The Gallery and the Book*, first published in THE CORACLE: Coracle Press Gallery 1975-1987 (London, 1989)

<https://verysmallkitchen.com/2010/05/03/demotic-archive-of-art-writing-2-the-gallery-and-the-book-by-thomas-a-clark/>

lxxii

Thomas A Clark, *The Gallery and the Book*’ np.

lxxiii

For an extended analysis of notions of embodied viewing see David Maclagen (2001) Reframing Aesthetic Experience: iconographic and embodied responses to painting, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 1:1, 37-45

lxxiv

Elsewhere Tucker has considered painting as a place, using Edward Casey and Bridget Riley among others. See J Tucker ‘Painting Landscape: Mediating Dislocation,’ in *Culture, Creativity and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, F Becket and T

Gifford (eds), Rodopi Press, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 197–213, and J Tucker, ‘Painting Places: A Postmemorial ‘Landscape’,’ in *Migratory Aesthetics*, S Durrant and C Lord (eds), Rodopi Press, Amsterdam, 2007, pp 59 -79

lxxv

Avis Newman and Catherine De Zegher, “Conversation b/w Avis Newman/ Catherine de Zegher” in Catherine De Zegher, ed, *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003) 72-3.

lxxvi

Thomas A. Clark, verbatim interview with David Bellingham.

lxxvii

Tim Ingold *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. (London: Routledge 2011) 207

lxxviii

Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 77

lxxx

Robert Macfarlane *The Old Ways-A Journey on Foot* (London: Hamish Hamilton/Penguin 2012) 15