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‘a way of life’:
Practising place in The Small Press

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of place in the practice and publications of three small presses: Moschatel Press, Coracle Press and Corbel Stone Press.

Practice is central to my approach, both in situating place as something practised, unfinished and ongoing, and in the repetitive everyday acts that make running a press ‘a way of life’.

I examine the ways in which small press practice shapes and responds to a variety of places. Beginning with the home, the thesis moves gradually outwards to larger-scale spaces: the local area, public spaces, the wider landscape.

The thesis is founded upon the press model as one of collaboration, both between artists, and with the places they inhabit.

Chapter One establishes the domestic space as central to the activities and publications of the press. The home is a site of production enmeshed with the everyday, and is the intended habitat of many small press pieces. I trace the influence of domestic intimacy and tactility across small press poetics, and the importance of ‘the domestic scale’ is foregrounded throughout the thesis.

Chapter Two is an exploration of small press localness. I build upon the domestic chapter to examine how the local is shaped by its relationship to the home. I frame small press localness as distinctly embodied, examining the charting of local places on foot and the gathering of texts and objects by hand.

Chapter Three examines site-specific work, exploring the presence of small press pieces in public, communal spaces. I focus particularly upon the hospital-based works of Thomas A Clark, and how they provoke questions around attention, contemplation and care. The chapter closes by reflecting upon how these pieces facilitate thinking about the more-than-human.

Chapter Four sustains a focus upon the more-than-human to explore the small press relationship with the wider landscape. The chapter scrutinises an ambivalent attitude towards books as a means of relating to and recording landscapes. I consider work across deep timescales and study the embodied landscape-based practices of Corbel Stone Press, such as burial and the leaving of offerings.
Lay summary

This thesis explores the importance of place in the practice and publications of three small presses (Moschatel Press, Coracle Press and Corbel Stone Press).

The Small Press, as I define it, is a small publishing operation producing printed paper items (usually in a limited print run) as well as a range of work in different media including, but not limited to, sculpture, exhibitions, music, films and gardens.

I examine the roles that four different categories of place play in the work of the small press: the domestic space, the local, public sites and the landscape.

I begin with the domestic space, led by the fact that each of these presses is based at the home of the artists, and run as a partnership. Each of these presses produces a large amount of work in the home, and explores the implications of bringing homely ideals (warmth, familiarity and care) into gallery spaces.

My second chapter explores the role of localness in small press practice, as a place that I argue begins at the threshold of the domestic. The way that small press practitioners engage with their local areas is mediated through the body, and I study a series of practices carried out on foot, including finding material for their work, keeping journals that chart experiences during regular local walks, and alternative forms of mapping an area that are led by touch.

My third chapter considers the role of public spaces in the work of the small press. I look at Moschatel Press pieces commissioned for the New Stobhill hospital in Glasgow, and explore how the small-scale miniature pieces of the small press are illuminated in new ways by being shown on a larger scale, to a mixed audience of readers. I also reflect briefly upon the garden as a semi-public space in which more sculptural or larger-scale work is displayed.

My final chapter focuses on the unresolved in Corbel Stone Press’s work, particularly Richard Skelton’s experimental poetry. I think about how sites of canonical knowledge like books, archives and museums shape our relationship with landscape. I explore burial practices, experimental poetic forms and the curation of found items, and conclude by reflecting on the importance of gifts in the world of the small press.


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All photographs taken by the thesis author, except figure 4, which is taken from *English Cottage Interiors* by Hugh Lander (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989) and figures 7 and 8, which were provided by Thomas A Clark

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a blessing on the host
a blessing on the guest
may there be trust between them

- Thomas A Clark¹

INTRODUCTION

In a letter of 1995, the poet-publisher Thomas A Clark writes that:

> Hopefully, self publishing can constitute not a vanity, but a freedom. Instead of being dependent on some weighty external agency, an industry, the poet can take the whole thing into his own hands. The means can become creative. Everything can be exact but also light since production is a way of life, an activity rather than an occasion.²

This thesis explores those freedoms, and the capacious and generative possibilities of approaching small press production as an activity – or indeed a series of activities. Clark evokes a small press sensibility that is foundational to the practice of the presses in this study, each of which embraces the means and modes of production. These productive activities are inextricably enmeshed in place, and to examine the small press necessitates attending to the places of production and display, the habitats in which publications usually reside, and those sites that are the subject of the work. In this thesis, the practice and publications of three small presses – Moschatel Press (1973-present), Coracle Press (1975-present) and Corbel Stone Press (2009-present) – are told through four interwoven categories of place: the home or domestic space, the local, public spaces, and the wider landscape.

Describing Clark as a ‘poet-publisher’ is an attempt to acknowledge the multifaceted quality of his work.³ The label contributes to a litany of hyphenated titles applied to key figures of the small press: ‘poet-publisher’, ‘artist-publisher’, ‘poet-gardener’, ‘poet-

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Each of these tells us something about those who run small presses, and their resistance to residing comfortably within a fixed category. Simon Cutts, co-runner of Coracle Press, highlights the ‘hybrid’ quality of small-press practice, when listing the ‘many forms’ of work within his press’s remit, ‘from printed ephemera to bookshop and gallery work, the editing of physical spaces, and more hypothetical publishing’. Johanna Drucker foregrounds hybridity in her account of the artists’ book around the heyday of Conceptual art in the early 1960s: ‘in such an atmosphere hybrid forms or, to use Dick Higgins’ apt term, "intermedia," became the norm rather than the exception. Books were a form of intermedia par excellence since they could contain images, texts, marks, and materials in a format which was flexible, mutable, and variable in its potential’. Responding to this hybridity, I refer to small press runners primarily as ‘practitioners’, and examine their varied activities under the banner of ‘practice’. In part, this seeks to prevent the privileging of publications over the rest of the activities of the press. It also emphasises from the start that running a small press pivots upon practice, in the sense of ongoing and repetitive actions: the walking, gathering, cooking, letter writing, and cleaning amongst other things that inform the thematics of the work, but that also shape the genesis of pieces and their production. The use of this term allows a holistic appreciation of the

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5 Cutts, ‘Critical Publication’, p. 68.

labour, home making, place creation, embodied acts, field work and finding that together begin to comprise the working small press.

Cutts foregrounds the processual nature of the small press, incorporating Clark’s thoughts on the small press ‘way of life’ into a series of short essays about making books, collected under the suggestive title ‘Publishing as a Working Practice’ (2008). Elsewhere, Cutts writes of small press work as part of his own ‘general way of life’, even describing his practice as a ‘continuous activity, which is much like one’s daily life and breathing’ (SFA, p. 54).

Theories of everyday life reach out to these understandings of production as a way of life in this thesis. ‘The temporality of the everyday’, Rita Felski argues, ‘is that of repetition, the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home, and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit.’ The practices of the small press are repetitive, with places and ideas revisited and rehearsed. Felski’s emphasis upon ‘a sense of home’ is vital; the influence and practice of domesticity underpins this thesis. The small presses in this study are concerned with the commonplace, the small, the overlooked and the insignificant, aspects of mundane life that may go overlooked, but that gain significance when work is

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bound up in one’s ‘way of life’. Felski’s work addresses this innate tension, arguing that ‘the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to critical scrutiny.’ (IEL, p. 81).

**Defining The Small Press**

In writing of the small press, I refer to independent presses producing limited print editions, small set-ups which primarily self-publish. Luke Allan, interviewing small-press practitioners as part of a series of articles on micropublishing, suggests additional attributes, proposing a press that

> turns out fewer than fifteen books a year, and whose operation is relatively informal. Working by hand and attending closely to the qualities of typography and design: these are also likely traits. The term therefore touches on others like “fine press” and “artist publishing”.8

The ‘by hand’ sensibility to which Allan refers indicates a common perception that small-press publication is by definition a hands-on practice, with every stage of production carried out manually, perhaps arising from the metonymy of the word ‘press’ – the publisher epitomised by their haptic technology. The small presses of which I am writing conform to this to different degrees, with some printing pieces themselves using tabletop presses, and others sending most of their work away to be printed. Most commonly, the processes of writing, sewing and finishing are undertaken at home.

    Working by hand takes on several meanings in this thesis, referring not only to the handicraft of bookmaking; the ‘by hand’ ethos also embeds a sense of bodily scale and the limitations of what the body can do, what two people working together can carry and

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how many books they can fold and sew. Thinking of working ‘by hand’ also draws out a
focus upon what is close at hand, evoking the resourcefulness necessary to a shoestring,
self-run operation (‘the means can become creative’), and highlights the tactility of the
many hands that shape small press work. Erica Van Horn of Coracle Press also reaches
out to the hands of the perceived reader: ‘[w]e need to make things that we can touch
and that can be touched by others as they read and look at them.’ An awareness and
anticipation of the work’s reception is characteristic of small press publications, enabled
by their alternative networks of distribution and a tendency by practitioners to distribute
work themselves rather than through a third party – “Sent, given away, left on public
transport, sold,’ Cutts suggests, ‘it’s all the same thing, a form of distribution”’ (cited in AF,
p. 240). By hand also hints at the economics of the press – the simplicity of working
according to the limitations of the hands, but also, as Cutts has discussed repeatedly in
interviews, the realities of this way of life, of often living ‘hand-to-mouth’ (BL, 8 and 25).
Economic restrictions upon the work are part of the way in which ‘the means become
creative’. The small press is a ‘critical alternative to the commercial mainstream’, and
financial limitations are unavoidable; consequently ‘economic constraints are embraced
as creative conditions.’

Small press practice and the press’s distribution of paper publications is told
through the hands. As Drucker notes, ‘[t]he mobility of the book is one of its most unique
characteristics, as well as its capacity to be preserved through that mobility (imagine a

July 2022].
painting which had passed from hand to hand, been carried on the subway for two weeks, and then ended up in the pocket of an airline seat only to be rediscovered and enjoyed again).¹¹ The passing of small press pieces from hand to hand encompasses the processes by which the works circulate through the world – taking into account the labours of postal and distribution workers, part of the network described by Alec Finlay as a ‘great circulatory system’.¹² Thomas A Clark’s piece Poor Poetry from Moschatel Press captures the essence of this informal system of distribution, recapitulating Drucker in its description of a ‘common’ form of poetry ‘not given by the culture but passed from hand to hand’.¹³ The tactility of the small press is not limited to the printing and sewing of books, but extends to tactile engagements with place, the repetitious hands-on activities that maintain a house, and the creation and moulding of place through gesture and the work of the hands.

This thesis is not mired in the technicalities of hand-printing, accepting that the printing work of small press practitioners typically arises from necessity and economy, rather than the desire for a fine printing aesthetic. Allan’s reference to the overlaps between this movement and the fine press are less pertinent to the presses at the heart of this study, for whom the craft elements of book production are secondary to the work’s form and content, but it does gesture towards a common ancestor of careful small-scale production: the private presses of the Arts and Crafts ‘movement’. Imogen Hart describes

¹¹ Drucker, p. 88.
¹³ Thomas A Clark, Poor Poetry (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2018).
the group of artists ‘who self-consciously pursued a common life in which work and play were both collective and interconnected’,\textsuperscript{14} while Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan explore an ‘Arts and Crafts philosophy’ that favoured ‘[c]lose identification of a way of life with the very creation of objects’.\textsuperscript{15} Their way-of-life approach and philosophy of attentive care speaks to the small press model in this thesis, and resonates with Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton of Corbel Stone Press’s description of the careful processes of small press publishing:

Traditional publishing seems weighted towards volume and quantity, but with small presses such as ours, a publication might contain a single poem, or, in the case of Moschatel Press, a single line. When the aggregate of words and pages diminishes, it paradoxically becomes more difficult to produce. Firstly, it requires a certain amount of courage to publish something so seemingly small, and secondly, the pared-down nature of the work means that more attention needs to be given to the design, to the printing, to the materials, and so on […] you have to care immensely about each and every word, every line\textsuperscript{16}

Small Press Bios

Moschatel Press was founded in 1973 by the poet Thomas A Clark and the artist Laurie Clark. The pair were given a treadle press as a wedding present, which allowed them to start printing their own work. The bulky treadle was quickly exchanged for an Adana tabletop printing machine, and Moschatel Press began. Originally based in a small cottage in the Gloucestershire town of Nailsworth, the press moved to Pittenweem, Fife,

\textsuperscript{16} Allan, p 31.
in 2002. The Clarks have also run Cairn Gallery since 1986, based in the gardens of their successive homes, created as ‘a space for minimal and conceptual art’. The gallery often displays their own work, but also helps to situate the pair in relation to the artists that inspire them, with previous exhibitions of work by Sol LeWitt, Roger Ackling and Laura Aldridge.

Moschatel is characterised by its small-scale, minimalist pieces – a few words printed onto a folded card, pocket-sized pamphlets, a line of verse painted on a wall. The press predominantly produces small paper works: cards, pamphlets and ephemera, as well as art objects and installations.

**Coracle Press** began in 1975, founded as a collaboration between poet and artist Simon Cutts and artist Kay Roberts. Cutts was previously co-runner of Tarasque Press (1965-1972), with Stuart Mills, which was based in Nottingham. Coracle was based in a house-gallery in Camberwell until the mid-1980s, and has operated from a number of locations: Limehouse and Whitechapel in London, Liverpool, Docking in Norfolk and now Ballybeg in County Tipperary.

Roberts left the press in 1980 and the artist Erica Van Horn joined as co-runner in 1988. The press operated between London and Docking at this time. A bookshop, workfortheeyetodo, was based in Limehouse and then Whitechapel from 1990 until the press moved to Tipperary in 1996. Mainly producing paper pieces and ephemera, Coracle

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has also published work by other artists and writers, and curated and performed exhibitions.

**Corbel Stone Press** was founded by Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton in 2009. The press has been based in Cumbria and in Scotland, and is currently run from Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders. The press publishes paper works, art editions and music, as well as producing films and exhibitions. The pair work together under the name *AR, typically when producing smaller-scale handmade editions.*

The press’s biannual journal, *Reliquiae*, curates new writing and archival work on the theme of landscape, nature and mythology.

**Common ground**

This thesis focuses on these particular presses because they all have a similar core model: they are operated from home, are run as partnerships, take an interest in the small scale and the particular, and produce a substantial amount of work that engages with and raises questions around place. They also observe similar models of distribution, and often give pieces away as gifts. This aspect of small press practice is one that resonates with me, as my own relationship to the small press was sparked by being given the gift of ‘Territory’, a miniature sewn pamphlet containing a poem by Thomas A Clark and a drawing by Laurie Clark, by one of my undergraduate supervisors.\(^{18}\) The poem comprises a stanza repeated four times:

\begin{quote}
a wren poem must be read again and again
\end{quote}

to allow the image
to explore its territory

At each repetition, the word ‘wren’ moves, flitting across its stanza and coming to rest at a different spot. I was moved to be given this beautiful miniature object, something small enough to fit in the palm of my hand or be carried in a pocket, an item handmade by the Clarks. The wren poem connects me still to my former supervisor, but also to the artists by whom the piece was written, drawn, printed and folded, placed in an envelope and carried to the postbox.

It’s fitting that my small press collection started with a gift, for the gift is the foundation stone of Moschatel Press. The Clarks’ wedding present allowed them to begin making small cards and booklets, which they sent to friends through the post. Generosity flows through the work of the small press – something I have encountered from meeting small press practitioners, and that is evident in the time that they dedicate not only to their own work, but to the work of others.

In terms of influences and aesthetic, there is a more obvious parity between Coracle and Moschatel, whose practitioners are also long-standing friends. Corbel Stone Press is the outlier here, with Skelton also reluctant to consider Corbel Stone part of a small press ‘tradition’. There is nevertheless an important line of influence running from Moschatel to Corbel Stone, Richardson and Skelton starting the press after meeting the Clarks and heeding Thomas Clark’s words around ‘living a creative life’. Skelton describes Moschatel as a ‘blueprint’ for a long-running creatively-independent model of

19 Private email correspondence, 13 April 2022.
20 Allan, p. 31.
Corbel Stone Press is more explicitly engaged with a theoretical understanding of the artists’ relationship to more-than-human actors, and this perspective can be illuminating when brought to bear upon the other presses; Corbel Stone Press’s role in this thesis is disruptive, challenging some of the ideas of earlier presses. Moschatel is informally a locus around which they all happen to interact, but note that Corbel Stone have not collaborated with Coracle or with Wild Hawthorn Press.

The small press model in this thesis is one that has been heavily influenced by Wild Hawthorn, Ian Hamilton Finlay’s press (1958-2006). While three presses are the main focus of the thesis, the shadow of Wild Hawthorn Press looms large. There is a significant body of criticism around Finlay, though Wild Hawthorn is often somewhat incidental in accounts of his work, and his sculptural pieces are favoured over writing about his self-published paper works. Various hyphenated as ‘artist-poet’, or ‘poet-gardener’, Finlay pioneered that intermedial space shared by the presses at the core of this study. Cutts and both of the Clarks worked collaboratively with and corresponded with Finlay.

Finlay’s hybrid small press model is not only written through his poems, cards, photographs, sculptures, works in neon and gardens, it extends to his collaborative practice – Wild Hawthorn co-founder Jessie Sheeler argues that ‘it is hard to think of a body of work such as Finlay's [...] which is so consistently and successfully founded on the idea of co-operation’22 – and into his place of work. Michael Hamish Glen, who printed

21 Private email correspondence, 13 April 2022.
many Wild Hawthorn publications with Finlay, highlights the simultaneity of the artist's home and garden Stonypath (later Little Sparta) in South Lanarkshire, as 'a home, a gallery, a landscape, a Temple.'\(^{23}\) Sheeler approaches the garden at Stonypath not as a contiguous collection of individual pieces, but 'rather a cumulative and complicated work of art as a whole', an observation that pertains equally to the small press model.\(^{24}\) Cutts writes of small press practitioners 'working with the serial platform of publication toward an accumulation that is their work',\(^{25}\) while Clark describes 'the creative process [as] a vocation that extends beyond the production of separate, self-enclosed, unique works.'\(^{26}\) For Alice Tarbuck, Clark's framing of his work in this way is hugely significant, making the case 'for repetition, for narrow focus, for creating works that offer minor variations on similar themes'.\(^{27}\) This accretive model enables ideas to develop across the lifespan of the press, and implicates apparently disparate pieces by these practitioners, permitting within the purview of their presses the inclusion of a broad, 'hybrid' range of activities. A holistic perspective upon the small press disrupts linearity, to such an extent that I mostly avoid viewing these presses through a temporal lens. Indeed, a tendency by practitioners to revisit their own work and return repeatedly to particular motifs and forms renders inadvisable an attempted teleology of the press.


\[^{24}\text{Sheeler, p. 17.}\]

\[^{25}\text{Cutts, 'Publishing as a Working Practice', p. 66.}\]


By its very form, the garden at Little Sparta works against attempts to view small press works in isolation. Francis Edeline, writing of a walk taken around the garden, emphasises ‘the integration of the works themselves (the garden is divided into several parts) and of the garden into the landscape. Where does the work end? It is not a fusion dissolving into the landscape. It is, remarkably, the landscape which is absorbed by the work’. He continues, 'one cannot say on this side of this blade of grass, this is the work, and beyond is no longer the work.' The critic approaching the small press faces a similar series of concerns when feeling for the edges of the work, given the integration of small press practice into everyday life.

**The critical field and theoretical framework**

This is the first sustained work to explore these particular small presses in tandem, and to foreground the role of place in their practice. The thesis speaks to, and builds upon, growing interest in this field.

Ross Hair’s substantial *Avant Folk: Small Press Poetry Networks from 1950 to the Present* (2016) is the most significant contribution to this area of research. *Avant Folk* examines the global interconnections between small press practitioners, tracing ‘the development of a loose-knit, transatlantic collective of poets, publishers, and artists that evolved in the late 1950s and early 1960s’, forming a ‘networked poetry community’ (*AF*, p. 2). Instrumental to Hair’s analysis is Jonathan Williams’s Jargon Society (founded in


29 Ibid.
1951), whose name helps define the grouping of artists he describes (AF, p. 5). Hair also covers Coracle and Tarasque, Wild Hawthorn Press, Moschatel and the book works of Lorine Niedecker.

Opening his argument, Hair follows Andrew Epstein in challenging “the Romantic myth of the poet as solitary genius”, grounding press work in the collective, shared and collaborative (AF, p. 1). For Hair, the small press community is performed primarily on the page. Framing poetry as a “social text” (AF, p. 1), he foregrounds the ‘social affinities, filiations, and fellowships’ created between the presses through ‘reciprocal borrowings, appropriations, and elaborations of material’ (AF, p. 7). The locations of members of the network are less important than the social space of the page – both in published work and through letters written, with Hair arguing that ‘poets, publishers, and readers were, in the broadest sense, co-respondents of the new poetry’ (AF, p. 17). His emphasis upon response brings to the fore the ongoing dialogue between and within the presses across the ‘cumulative and complicated’ body of small press work created over many years.

I build upon the model of a network articulated by Hair, and consider how working in a collaborative, open-loop manner permits a similar openness to place as something networked, social and co-produced, while exploring whether an emphasis upon mutual and careful response might be framed within Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘response-ability’, as ‘a praxis of care and response’.30

Visualising the small press as a network rhymes compellingly with a sense of place as networked, calling to mind ideas around co-production, interconnection and the distribution of agency in the writing of theorists such as Bruno Latour. Jane Bennett perceives networked matter as an ‘assemblage’, a term she adapts from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to describe ‘confederations’ of lively matter, a collaboration between human and non-human actants. Bennett borrows ‘actant’ from Latour, and glosses the term as ‘a source of action that can be either human or nonhuman; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events.’ I apply Bennett’s observations about lively or vibrant matter over to both place and the small press network, examining places as active networks that make a significant contribution to the work produced by these presses, and exploring social spaces within the small press as intertextual nodes in the network. In doing so, I also create more room for the collaborative networks that are nurtured between the small press and the more-than-human. Bennett rejects the ‘habit of parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings)’, instead ‘turn[ing] the figures of “life” and “matter” around and around, worrying them until they start to seem strange, in something like the way a common word when repeated can become a foreign, nonsense sound. In the space created by this estrangement, a *vital materiality* can start to take shape.’ Bennett’s analogy is an apt one for the small press, which persistently worries away at

32 Ibid., p. viii.
33 Ibid., p. vii.
words and concepts, honing in on them, repeating them into a kind of lively productive strangeness that requires new forms of attention to be brought to them.

Tarbuck’s unpublished 2019 thesis on Clark’s poetry and practice is a significant source for this thesis, particularly given that it arose from a collaborative supervisory arrangement with the Scottish Poetry Library (SPL). Tarbuck catalogued the SPL’s collection of Clark work as part of the project, and that catalogue has proved a vital resource. Tarbuck frames her work as a walk through different common habitats of Clark’s work, and situates her thinking around Clark in spatial terms, foregrounding place by exploring four particular sites of importance in his writing. Her thesis is less focused upon the running of the press.

*Candid Fields: Essays and reflections on the work of Thomas A. Clark* (1987) is an example of criticism that perpetuates the network, as its four essays are followed by poems from Cutts, Finlay, Peter Larkin and Clark himself. The essays speak to Clark’s understanding of space, and to some of the key themes of the work, but they neglect to approach Clark through the lens of the Moschatel way of life.

John Freeman’s essay in the collection, ‘Paradise and the Real’, explores the prevalence of pastoral imagery in Clark’s writing, although in the process speaks more to the work’s domesticity: ‘Flowers, gardens, landscapes: houses in landscapes where there is order, culture, human warmth and humane value, open to the influence of “Nature”’. Freeman highlights the importance of attention as a theme and an action throughout

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Clark’s work, as a ‘regular practice’ that can be honed and refined,\(^{36}\) and reflects upon the ‘weight, space and lustre’ that poetry ‘gives to each word’.\(^{37}\) For Freeman, Clark’s repeated interest in the subject of attention is distinguished by being ‘the result of many years attentiveness to words and their resonance. It is this history of attentiveness that lies behind Clark’s achievement.’\(^{38}\) He also states that ‘[a]cross as well as within sequences, the recurrence of key words indicates the persistence of Clark’s values.’\(^{39}\) This repetition of significant motifs, words and phrases is common across the work of my central presses and reaffirms the need to view each in the round, as an ongoing, non-linear corpus. Freeman’s use of the word ‘values’ aligns with Tarbuck’s study of Clark’s ethical framework. He repeatedly emphasises the ‘care’ brought by Clark to every word, suggesting, via Francis Bacon, that Clark ‘has gone on to build stately, not epics but stanzas, to build in sonnets pretty rooms, and to link those stanzas and sonnets into sequences, the architecture of a house.’\(^{40}\)

In “Into the Order of Things”: The Relations of Painting to the Poetry of Thomas A. Clark’, Robert Stacey observes the prevalence of painterly genres: ‘still life, landscape, and the domestic interior’ in many of Clark’s pieces.\(^{41}\) He quotes Clark’s introduction to a James Hugonin show held at the Murray Gallery in Edinburgh in 1985, which describes the ideal space in which to contemplate one of Hugonin’s pieces: “a quiet room where
the light streams through a window”, so that “whatever it touches is raised to a luminous transient being”. “This”, Clark argues, “is the image of undisturbed domestic order, brought to felicity by the transforming power of light or grace. It is an image which always comes before us as something unexpected, as a surprise or gift.”42 Stacey stresses the importance of the Clarks’ partnership and situates the work within the materiality of paper and making, considering the ‘interactive elements’ within a ‘Moschatel booklet or card’.43 He also calls attention to the prevalence of windows as an image in Clark’s work, ‘acting as intermediary’ between the domestic and the landscape – such troubling of thresholds will be returned to often in this thesis.44 Interestingly, Stacey argues that many of Clark’s early poems ‘are preparations for work, for a meal, for a turn in the garden, for a long walk in the weather, for a sketching-trip in the hills, or a stroll down to the pier, rather than descriptions of these activities and of their impact on the senses in reflection’, with ‘the finished artwork […] the invitation to contemplate that which is invoked’.45 He establishes a suite of significant places for Clark, his ‘chosen domain of hearth, kitchen, garden, fieldpath, meadow, pasture, orchard, wood, heath, harbour and sea-view’.46 The essay includes a quote from Clark that appeals to Hair’s observations around the individual genius-poet figure: “In the poetry I write the poet is impersonal, even when the word “I” is used, the poet speaks for the people.”47

42 Ibid., p. 28
43 Ibid., pp. 28-9
44 Ibid., p. 31.
46 Ibid., p. 35.
47 Ibid., p. 36.
Cutts’s poem in the collection pays tribute to Nailsworth, where the Clarks were living at the time, and Finlay describes his own short poem, ‘Three Stepping-Stones’, as being ‘perhaps by my old friend Tom Clark’.48 The piece by Peter Larkin, ‘The Garden Walls, A City of Language (24 Permutations from Poems by T.A.C.)’ appears to be made up of found pieces of Clark’s poetry, an example of the press’s ‘social texts’.

Tarbuck has argued that Clark’s ‘formal innovation […] has largely been considered secondary to his thematic investigations. This is perhaps understandable: the majority of Clark’s reviews focus on his more widely circulated collections, printed through mainstream publishers. These traditional bound poetry collections display less formal innovation than works published through Moschatel Press, which are better able to display presentation as an aspect of form.’ (SP, p. 10). The frameworks and influence of the small press network on Clark are similarly underexplored in these non-Moschatel editions.

Two recent collections of Clark’s work produced by publishers outside of Moschatel and the small press network start to make gestures towards the innovative forms enabled by the press. Matthew Welton’s edited poetry collection The Threadbare Coat (2020) for Carcanet picks up on the repetition of words across Clark’s poems, highlighting how ‘the reuse of a limited vocabulary across a range of poems feels appropriate to the landscapes that are the focus of these poems. The shifts in the particulars are part of a larger, continuing experience.’49 These ‘reused words’ can ‘nudge

48 Finlay, p. 38
us to think of the way form might extend across a fuller body of work'.\textsuperscript{50} Welton highlights ‘a continuing interest in the kinds of things that may often be overlooked’, noting Clark’s joyful finding of ‘a richness in the smallness of things’.\textsuperscript{51} He also highlights Clark’s references to non-specific places, ‘meadows’ and ‘paths’ that go unnamed, which is characteristic of Clark’s style.\textsuperscript{52} Welton locates Clark’s work within broader poetic traditions, in particular noting how his shorter poems ‘feel like continuations of the innovations of concrete poetry. Sometimes a short poem might feel like the product of long, steady attention’.\textsuperscript{53} Suggestively, he also argues that influence can be considered ‘a formal element’ – that Finlay, Niedecker and Frank Samperi have all shaped Clark’s forms, pertinently drawing out in the latter the sense of poetic practice as ‘a life’s work as an enquiry or vision discovered across individual ordinary incidents’.\textsuperscript{54} Welton also acknowledges the small press framework around Clark, although only in passing: ‘Ian Hamilton Finlay provided an example of how making poems might be a means of investigation of form and presentation, often going beyond what most publishers would allow. His Wild Hawthorn Press was the model for Clark’s own Moschatel Press.’\textsuperscript{55} A quote on the back of the collection from Peter Riley in \textit{PN Review} provides another nod to Clark’s wider poetic practice: ‘you do not write like this without going there and doing the walking.’\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. xi.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. xi.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. xii
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. xiv.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., back cover.
Of the Wayside (2019), published by Lawn Editions, moves a little closer to conveying the tone of the press, despite making no reference to Moschatel. The collection brings together pieces by Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark – Laurie’s drawings generally being excluded from non-Moschatel editions. Of the Wayside also includes photographs of some of the press’s site-specific pieces and other non-paper works, and incorporates some of the bold colours used by the Clarks across their work, which again are absent from the pages of most collections.

Corbel Stone Press’s work remains critically underexplored. My unpublished MPhil thesis (2016) on Skelton is one of the most substantial studies of his work, and necessarily informs my thinking. The work examined his writing, music and artistic practice and his *AR collaborations with Autumn Richardson. I also studied a shift in Skelton’s more recent practice towards an interest in alterity and the more-than-human. While those strands of work remain pertinent here, that thesis did not engage explicitly with Skelton as a small press practitioner; this project seeks to assert the vital importance of the press framework when approaching a critique of Richardson and Skelton’s practice.

Robert Macfarlane’s chapter on Richardson and Skelton in Landmarks (2016) has done perhaps more than any other source to bring their work into the realm of mainstream publishing, and establishes a place for them outside of the small press movement. Macfarlane finds parity with the artists through a shared interest in etymology, walking and archival research into toponyms. In the chapter, Macfarlane and Skelton meet, walk

57 Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark, Of the Wayside (Leeds: Lawn Editions, 2019), non-paginated.
together and discuss language, for Skelton ‘is a keeper of lost words’, and Macfarlane describes his visit as learning ‘some of his language, in its place.’ The pair return to the cottage Skelton shares with Richardson, and Macfarlane describes the keen domesticity, seemingly in contrast to their ‘austere’ work, crucially drawing out the importance of the domestic in their practice. Macfarlane describes Richardson and Skelton’s work as offering ‘a hint at a way of looking at the world that is now also lost, an attention to the form of things and a care, a generosity in the bestowing of names.’ Attention, care and generosity are all terms that signal towards the ‘larger, continuing experience’ (to return to Welton) of meeting the small press in this thesis.

The work of the small press has been received sympathetically by readers and movements outside of the small press tradition. Richardson and Skelton are absorbed into the ‘New Nature Writing’ genre by their inclusion in Landmarks, which also places them in dialogue with other nature writers included in the book, including Nan Shepherd and JA Baker. Similarly, Thomas A Clark’s work has reached new audiences through Harriet Tarlo’s anthology The Ground Aslant (2011), which situates him within the field of ‘radical landscape poetry’, aligning him with writers such as Zoe Skoulding and Peter Riley. I follow Tarlo in labelling Clark’s work ‘radical’. In her introduction to the anthology, Tarlo names Finlay as one of the forefathers of radical landscape writing, and describes how, in this genre of poetry, ‘the relationship between human beings, their fellow-

60 Ibid., p. 185.
creatures and the land we live in is under close and scrupulous examination." She discerns this scrupulous attention in Clark's poetry, 'working through incremental small changes in language and perception, page by page', an observation that that could be applied to the small press sensibility in this thesis more broadly.

There is a dearth of critical writing about Autumn Richardson, and this rings true for all of the female partners in the small press – including Sue Finlay at Wild Hawthorn, whose legacy is only beginning to be appreciated, such as in the account of her gardening at Little Sparta in the *New Arcadian Journal*. I try to address this in some small way, while acknowledging the limitations of this thesis and recognising the need for future scholars to pick up this important work. Nevertheless, taking a 'way of life' perspective upon my work towards this thesis, I will acknowledge my curation of 'Women and The Small Press' an exhibition highlighting some of the contributions by women to the movement at the Scottish Poetry Library in 2019, which sought to cast a light on some critically sidelined work. A different thesis might foreground the work of these women more than is possible when thinking about them from a small press perspective, rather than solely in terms of their artistic output.

Erica Van Horn's work is also comparatively underexplored, particularly compared to the large amount writing on Cutts. Of course, given that she joined the press at a later date, and that Cutts co-ran Tarasque prior to Coracle, there is perhaps a more defined

62 Ibid., p. 7
role for him in the small press lineage that follows Finlay. Nancy Kuhl’s *The Book Always Remembers* accompanied a 2010 exhibition of Van Horn’s work at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, which carries a large number of the artist’s work and papers. Kuhl discerns six loosely-gathered categories of work by Van Horn: ‘Daily Detail’, ‘Words for Living Locally’, ‘Leftovers’, ‘World of Interiors’, ‘Narrative and Pattern’, and ‘Identity and Likeness’.65 ‘Van Horn’s books’, argues Kuhl, ‘discover, explore, and sometimes enact their specific content; each tells the story of its making, its reason for being, and its author’s process.’66 This is a helpful summary of her work, particularly in its grounding of Van Horn in the work of making, which keeps her small press contributions to the fore.

The Uniform Books edition of *Living Locally* (2014), a collection of entries from Van Horn’s online journal, has a foreword by Susan Howe, who writes of how, within Van Horn’s locally-focused work, those ‘small details that constitute place accrue’ and describes the book as ‘a meticulous field guide’ of Van Horn’s life in Ireland.67

It is essential to acknowledge that the most prolific informants on the press are its practitioners, including those members of Hair’s wider ‘network’. Hair notes that a difficulty when approaching the network is the lack of a unifying label, and with that ‘a supporting manifesto that readily categorizes it as a collective.’ (AF, p. 5). Yet the exegetic writing

66 Ibid., p. 9.
67 Susan Howe, ‘Foreword’, *Living Locally* by Erica Van Horn (Axminster: Uniformbooks, 2014), pp. 5-6 (p.5).
and commentaries upon their own practice by the practitioners in this study builds into something resembling an informal manifesto, a thick paratext shadowing the publications.

Cutts in particular is a consistent critic of the press; most critiques of his work appear within books published by members of the network, and much is self-penned. *some forms of availability* (2007) gathers a selection of his substantial contribution to small press criticism, work that muddies the waters of an objective critique. In an essay about Coracle’s work, the artist and collector John Janssen confesses that his writing about the press ‘may be likened to writing a testimony for your best friend. Well meaning: surely; informed: well, perhaps; illuminating: at the best; but always highly subjective, and quite definitely biased.’68 Mindful of this bias, I nevertheless rely on these testimonies, particularly in the absence of a substantial body of criticism concerning the presses as presses (rather than criticism addressing their various outputs individually), and work to preserve a critical distance.

Richardson and Skelton’s work is rarely considered within the framing of their press – and this may in part arise from a level of unease at being explicitly aligned with that ‘tradition’.69 In this thesis, I am clear that it is particularly illuminating to read Richardson and Skelton through their wider small press practice; they cast new light onto their predecessors, and the older presses enable us to acknowledge the power in a home working model, and in making production ‘a way of life’, in ways that draw out new facets of Corbel Stone Press’s work.

69 Richard Skelton, email to Holly Richards, Wednesday 13th April 2022.
The small press model explored in this thesis is heavily influenced by the radical mid-century artistic movements that formed the background to its genesis, in particular what Liz Kotz has called a ‘turn to language in 1960s art’. Language, Kotz argues, ‘allows us to cut across categories and movements – like Fluxus, Minimalism, and Conceptual art – that are too often discussed in isolation. In addition, it allows us to understand the interrelations among experimental music, poetry, and art that were so crucial at the time.’ The hybrid small press model observed in this thesis germinated from the fertile mulch of this category-blurring, intermedial period of creative practice.

The legacy of Conceptualism is particularly prominent across the small press oeuvre, and not solely as a result of Conceptual artists becoming part of the small press network – both Moschatel and Coracle have collaborated with Conceptual artists who came to prominence during this period, Coracle publishing pieces from walking artists Hamish Fulton and Richard Long, and Cairn Gallery exhibiting work by Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Wiener. More pertinently, there are marked parallels between the values of Conceptualism and the processual, ‘way of life’ approach of the small press, the former being described as ‘paying more attention to the work of art than to the object of art: it is the activity that matters, rather than the thing’. Indeed, Lucy R. Lippard – incidentally one of the founders of artists’ book shop Printed Matter – argues that conceptual art is “work in which the idea is paramount and the material is secondary, lightweight,

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71 Kotz, p. 7.
ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious, and/or dematerialized.” Cutts’s emphasis upon ‘making available’ rather pursuing a fine press aesthetic speaks to this ideas-led approach, and it can be seen clearly in the ephemeral forms of much small press work.

Tony Godfrey suggests that Conceptual art is particularly critical and self-reflexive: ‘If a work of Conceptual art begins with the question “What is art?”, rather than a particular style or medium, one could argue that it is completed by the proposition “This could be art”: “this” being presented as object, image, performance or idea revealed in some other way. Conceptual art is therefore “reflexive”: the object refers back to the subject […] It represents a state of continual self-critique.’ The need to question art itself, and to question the institutions surrounding it such as the museum, gallery, library – or even the book – may be characteristic of Conceptualism, but is also printed through the radical small press.

Like Conceptual art, the ‘way of life’ approach to production ‘is concerned both with intellectual speculation and with the everyday.’ Objects of the everyday ‘could be art’ in this model, and distinctions between the day-to-day and ‘the work’ erode. Like Edeline at Little Sparta asking ‘Where does the work end?’, exploring the small press involves feeling uncertainly for its edges, and reappraising the mundane through the lens of practice. The everydayness of Conceptualism also appeals to the radical, DIY ethos of the small press, in its restructuring of power – moving it from the hands of the gallery owner or art collector and into the everyday. For example, the proposed walk is a common

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74 Ibid., p. 12.
75 Ibid., p. 15.
trope across conceptual art, perhaps because the action is deliberately envisaged moving outside of the gallery space and into everyday life.

Godfrey helpfully suggests four broad forms that Conceptual art might take:

- a readymade, a term invented by Duchamp for an art object from the outside world which is claimed or proposed as art, thus denying both the uniqueness of the art object and the necessity for the artist’s hand; an intervention, in which some image, text or thing is placed in an unexpected context, thus drawing attention to that context: eg the museum or the street; documentation, where the actual work, concept or action, can only be presented by the evidence of notes, maps, charts or, most frequently, photographs; or words, where the concept, proposition or investigation is presented in the form of language.76

Each of these forms is observed in the small press: readymades like Coracle’s ‘Mrs Price Edition’ (discussed in Chapter One) or their rice bowls, egg cups and shovels listed in Figure 1; the interventions of Corbel Stone Press’s site-specific installations (see Chapter Four) and Clark’s work in public spaces (as explored in Chapter Three); the documentation of walks taken, editions created and acts of fieldwork seen across the presses in this thesis (interrogated particularly in Chapters Two and Four) and the instruction pieces (examined in Chapter One) that use language to propose action and prompt a response from a perceived reader.

The conceptual element running through the press aligns with Cutts’s intriguing notion of ‘more hypothetical’ publishing – what if the idea, the proposal, or the embodied act is an act of publication in itself, the trace of which is then documented or formalised in print? There are strong affinities between this decentring of the art object in favour of a

76 Godfrey, p. 7.
holistic approach and the central tenets of Conceptualism, which interrogates and tests the art object, and the role of the artist; as Godfrey argues, the movement ‘challenges the traditional status of the art object as unique, collectable or saleable.’

Through this challenge to the object, other elements of the making process are allowed to come to the fore – often more embodied and performed qualities.

Challenging the unique art object strikes at a tension in the press that I return to repeatedly in this thesis; the tricky tussle between the act of ‘making available’ and the by-hand logistics of the small press. On the one hand, the small press presents us with carefully-made objects, and an emphasis upon making by hand, yet on the other, a more conceptual practice-focused approach is at the fore, and works are generally editioned, part of the process of ‘making available’. This uneasy dialogue calls to mind ideas raised in Walter Benjamin’s seminal ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1935), an important theoretical context for this thesis. Benjamin’s essay establishes a binary between the unique, handmade or hand-touched, and the mass-produced. He argues that the unique original art object possesses an ‘aura’ that ‘withers’ through the process of its mechanical reproduction. The opposition between the hand-produced and the mass-produced is perhaps most acute in the work of Corbel Stone Press, whose publications tend to fall into either the category of hand-cut, hand-sewn pamphlets and editions, or outsourced, perfect-bound printed books (something that I consider more closely in Chapter Four). Yet this proposed binary of the ‘unique’ and the machine-

77 Godfrey, p. 4.
produced is often disrupted; for example, in Conceptualism the mass-produced readymade can attain aura through its recontextualisation as art. The more hybrid forms that we see across the small press also dispute this binary; small, hand-operated printing presses create uniform texts that are then hand-folded and hand-sewn into an edition of pamphlets.

Benjamin’s essay foregrounds the reception of the mechanically-reproduced object – unlike the unique art object, which resides in the museum or gallery, something mass-produced can be viewed and touched by many people and brought into the home, allowing the ‘original’ work ‘to meet the beholder halfway’, which ‘reactivates the object reproduced’. This interest in a piece’s reception is shared by the small press, with practitioners experiencing a particular closeness to the perceived reader, typically arising from mostly distributing work themselves to their own networked audience. Opening work to activation, or completion, by a perceived audience is another characteristic of Conceptualism which, Godfrey argues, ‘demands a more active response from the viewer, indeed it could be argued that the Conceptual work of art only truly exists in the viewer’s mental participation.’ Similarly, in the small press the work, or labour, of art shifts over to the perceived reader or viewer, making them complicit, a co-creator, collaborator or – to return to Hair – co-respondent, widening the network participating in the ‘social space’ of the text.

79 Benjamin, p. 4.
80 Godfrey, p. 4.
‘Conceptual art’, Godfrey suggests, ‘asks questions not only of the art object: “Why is this art? Who is the artist? What is the context?” – but also of the person who looks at it or reads about it: “Who are you? What do you represent?” It draws viewers’ attention to themselves, making them self-conscious’. 81 This is particularly evident in the kinds of instruction pieces explored in more depth in Chapter One, which invite or instruct the reader to engage with the work in a particular way. Looking to theorists of reception, such as Wolfgang Iser, during this thesis disrupts the work of art, and the processes of (re)production, making them not the sole activity of the artist, but continued and challenged by the reader or performer of a piece.

A more thorny example of this invitation to participate, which plays with the aura of the art object, can be seen in a piece like Finlay’s ‘Arcadian Gliders’, a booklet of cardboard model aeroplane kits that can be cut out and assembled. 82 John Janssen queries whether the planes should in fact be assembled: ‘Do you dare use that "sharp modelling knife" on such a publication?’ 83 By choosing not to build the planes, is the work somehow incomplete? Or, are the kits perpetually enlivened by the possibility of interaction? As time passes, the monetary value (and aura) of such editioned pieces grows – and the likelihood of taking a pair of scissors to them fades. The decision-making becomes the heavy responsibility of the reader, viewer or audience. Do they need to be performed to be ‘completed’? Is it even possible to ‘complete’ the art work? Such issues,

81 Godfrey, p. 15.
raised so often by Conceptual Art, join the questions that I pose to the small press in this project.

Another prominent intermedial movement of the mid-century that invites an active response from its audience or reader is Concrete poetry. Concrete has unarguably had a profound impact upon proponents of the small press model in this thesis, starting with Finlay’s interest in the movement and his influence on Cutts and Clark (Tarbuck devotes an entire chapter of her thesis on Clark to his Concrete and post-Concrete experiments) and extending to the experimental page forms and attitude to language of Richardson and Skelton at Corbel Stone Press. Although an in-depth study of Concrete’s legacy falls outside the parameters of this project, the influence of many of the movement’s key characteristics, its impact on Finlay and consequently on other small press practitioners, cannot be overlooked. Finlay’s inclusion in Stephen Bann’s *Concrete Poetry: an international anthology* (1967) places him in dialogue with earlier proponents of the movement, such as Eugen Gomringer and Augusto de Campos, and established him as a pillar of the nascent British Concrete scene that also included Dom Sylvester Houédard and Robert Lax, members of the wider small press network and key influences on Thomas A Clark.84

Attempting to define Concrete is an often-problematic undertaking (see *SP*, p. 160), but broadly speaking this mid-century movement cultivated an ‘international literary

84 Tarbuck describes ‘the Clarks’ move to Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, in order to be in proximity to the concrete poets working there at the time, such as Charles Verey, Kenelm Cox and Dom Sylvester Houédard [sic], in turn allowing them contact, through these poets, with the broader international concrete poetry movement, as well as minimalist poet Robert Lax and Objectivist poet Lorine Niedecker.’ (*SP*, p. 14) She also observes how, in Gloucestershire, ‘Clark found receptivity for his ideas among the work of these other emerging conceptual and performative-based artists, connected by a trans- national network of avant-garde artists and poets.’ (*SP*, p. 174)
and artistic style […] defined at the most basic level by its focus on the visual, sonic, and otherwise formal or material elements of language.’ 85 Its defining characteristic is arguably ‘the use of a radically reduced language, typed or printed in such a way as to force the visible text on the reader’s attention as a physical object and not simply as a transparent carrier of its meanings.’ 86 The movement ‘turned pre-defined impulses towards the merging of artistic media to new ends in response to a gamut of new artistic, cultural, and social contexts’. 87 Concrete was part of Kotz’s ‘turn to language’, disrupting divisions between visual art and poetry – as Tarbuck notes of one of the movement’s founding members, Gomringer ‘worked to define concrete poetry through its relational aspects, as well as its formal aspects, specifically identifying it as an intermedial form, influenced by a number of different disciplines.’ (SP, p. 162). The impulse towards hybridity is clearly written through both Concrete and small press practice.

Sheeler argues that Concrete poetry is ‘composed of words as blocks of meaning not necessarily joined by narrative or programmatic connections’, and that it ‘lays out on the page an image which elicits from the reader an imaginative response to the visual appearance of the words, the ideas they present and the juxtapositions of sound, shape or reference designed by the poet.’ 88 This further acknowledgement of the reader brings attention to another important legacy of Concrete; it playfulness. Tarbuck suggests that Concrete poetry ‘invites the reader in, admits them into the poem’s ‘game’ or ‘rules’ and

87 Thomas, p. 1.
allows them to play. In this way, concrete poetry, and particularly the poetry of Clark, invites the reader in through simplicity and then to allows them to find complexity, rather than the other way around.’ (SFA, p. 180).

Concrete’s playful approach to language poses a challenge not only to conventional stanzaic forms and page layouts, but also to the media of poetry. This proved highly influential for Finlay. Hair, via David M Black, describes the “range of typographical, kinetic, standing and opening poems” that Finlay pioneered in the concrete phase of his poetry – where “words have escaped the bounds of sentences” (AF, p. 70) and the page gains a renewed sense of movement. Tarbuck observes a similar impact of Concrete on Clark, proposing that his ‘folded objects, an extension of his interest in materiality and presentation of text derived from concrete poetry, allow Clark to form close congruence between the form and the content of his work.’ (SP, p. 38). Acknowledging the influence of the mid-century Concrete movement on Clark, she nevertheless argues that his work is more a type of ‘post-concrete poetry that investigates the spatial components of form, with particular attention to poem-objects and objects with unusual folds’ (SP, p. 103). In interviews with Tarbuck, Clark has stated that he does not ‘consider himself to have ever been a concrete poet. A generation younger, Clark considered Finlay et al to be “mentors”’ (SP, p. 168). She classes Clark, Cutts and Mills together, as post-Concrete practitioners who share an ‘understanding of concrete as a reduction, symbolic of the absolute minimum, most extreme aspect of poetry, from which a new poetry could be built.’ (SP, p. 170).
Such minimalism, the sense of a reduction, is certainly evident across the small press – recall Skelton’s account of small presses having the freedom to publish a single poem or single line, and the resultant care and attention that this necessitates. Tarbuck cites Max Bense’s argument that Concrete ‘actively develops concentration through engagement. [...] ‘Fascination’ and ‘concentration’ are forms of attention, in Bense’s argument. As has been demonstrated, Clark is a poet drawn to works that elicit certain types of attention, and it is Bense’s definition of concrete poetry as eliciting fascination and concentration, which explains why Clark finds concrete poetry such an appealing form.’ (SP, p. 163). Concentration might also indicate thickness, or the quality of being condensed. The small press is characterised by minimal forms that carry rich ideas, promoting this kind of fascinated attention and multiple readings.

Kotz argues that language-based art treats words ‘in some sense like objects – to be looked at, and also to be accumulated, built up, moved around, and broken apart’.89 In support of this, she cites the artist Robert Smithson’s description of how, when used in art, “language is built up, not written”.90 This philosophy is true of the press, evidenced by the words and phrases that accumulate, building up across small press oeuvres. ‘In this context,’ Kotz suggests:

language is increasingly understood not just as a material but as a kind of “site.” The page is a visual, physical container – an 8½ x 11 inch white rectangle analogous to the white cube of the gallery – and also a place for action and a publication context. This site is implicitly relational and dynamic: words on a page operate in relation to other texts and statements, since language as a system is perpetually in circulation.91

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89 Kotz, p. 2.
90 Cited in Kotz, p. 3.
91 Kotz, p. 138.
This spatial treatment of language resonates with the press’s approach. Kotz's likening of the space of the page to a gallery, emphasising the page’s potential and mutability, is something I return to in Chapter Three. Her conception of language as a dynamic, circulatory site will also inform my exploration of the found texts and objects used in the practice of the small press.

**Place**

Extant criticism of these practitioners generally frames them in terms of their relationships to place, but has less regard to ways in which running a hybrid self-publishing press shapes these relationships. Place and space are central to this project, and to how I relate to small press practice. Both are also elusive and slippery concepts. A discussion of the differences between space and place is not the aim of this thesis, although I do attempt to avoid the anthropocentrism written through notions of space as empty (of human influence) and place as meaningful. In general I favour the term space when thinking about in-situ or site-specific works such as standing poems and wall-works, and use place for the named locations of the press. I use the terms fairly interchangeably, primarily to avoid being overly repetitious, and employ ‘spatial’ in the absence of an equivalent adjective for place. I tend to employ the term ‘place’ for inhabited or domestic sites, while ‘space’ is applied to public sites such as hospital buildings or gardens. I also use ‘space’ for the area of the page, and consider examples of work that makes a space for the reader’s collaboration.

The ‘freedoms’ of the small press are strangely apparent in its limitations; indeed restrictions upon press activity, which are embedded in the scale of the term ‘small press’
itself, become generative. A lack of staff, and limited time and money, engenders more of a make-do approach to production (‘the means become creative’) and when Clark writes later in his 1995 letter about the press’s characteristic simple book form – typically a few pages sewn together – he describes it as a ‘limitation to work within, about what we can manage in terms of expenditure and time’. I would expand this brief catalogue of limitations to include ‘space’ – and indeed, the etymology of limitation is itself spatial, evoking the boundaries around a plot of land.\textsuperscript{92}

I take certain theoretical frameworks as a starting point, but am also led by the approach to place as practised by the presses, and this ensures that the focus largely remains on everyday places tangled up in the ‘way of life’: the home, the local area, public footpaths, gardens and hospitals, rather than conventional gallery spaces. The places of the small press are not simply those that are common subjects of publications, but are also the homes of practitioners, the spaces in which they work and the habitats of their pieces. This thesis incorporates ‘the geographies of production, circulation and reception’ that shape its core texts.\textsuperscript{93}

My understanding of place in this thesis is as something accretive and unfixed. I follow David Matless, via WJT Mitchell, who proposes ‘approach[ing] landscape as a verb rather than a noun’; this suggestive notion should be kept in mind as we approach the landscape works of these practitioners.\textsuperscript{94} Place is therefore active and continuous – as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{92} ‘Limitation’, \textit{The Oxford English Dictionary} [online], \texttt{<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/108489?redirectedFrom=limitation#eid>} [accessed 13 June 2019].
\item \textsuperscript{93} Neal Alexander, “On Literary Geography”, in \textit{Literary Geographies} 1, no. 1 (2015), 3-6 (p.5).
\item \textsuperscript{94} David Matless, \textit{Landscape and Englishness} (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2016), p. 29.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Tim Creswell argues, ‘places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process’.95 Felski, via Michel de Certeau, calls for ‘an active practicing [sic] of place’ and, as its appearance in my title might indicate, this practising is written indelibly through my reading of the small press (IEL, p. 87). The small press practising of place produces what Kenneth R. Olwig has called a ‘substantive’ landscape. The term, he explains, describes a place that is ‘a creature of inhabitants’ daily tasks and habits’,96 and embeds an understanding of place in dailiness and routine, markers of the everyday that speak engagingly to Felski’s work.

A card produced by Cutts and Van Horn after moving from Norfolk to Tipperary in 1996 captures some of the challenges and opportunities of small press places in this thesis.

![Figure 2 Coracle Press's change-of-address postcard](image)

The postcard is a potent form through which to think about the small press and place. As an item that is ‘quotidian, cheap, small, easily reproducible’, it speaks to the everyday, domestic world (AF, p. 153). Indeed, its postable form enables it to pass easily from the hands of the practitioners into those of the reader, sidestepping the standard distributive channels of large publishers, to enter the home directly. Clark advocates sending small press work by post, as a stealth method of bringing art into the home, which offers ‘a new kind of route for poetry, or a new place for poetry in the world’.97

The postcard, as a form inclined to brevity, can struggle to convey the complexities of place, something towards which this piece gestures in the repeated, insistent list of unanswered questions on its front. The questions ‘was that your work? how long were you there? when did it open? what did you use the place for? is that all you had in there? whose work was it anyway?’ were collected over the years in which Coracle Press was based in Camberwell.98 Cutts and Van Horn embrace the card’s constraints, choosing to break words and sentences over new lines in the limited space. The piece speculates on what else might be fractured when condensing place down to postcard size.

The back of the postcard lists Coracle’s five previous homes along the top, balanced at the bottom by the five components of its new address. The detailed rendering of Coracle’s address is not only evident in this formal announcement of their move to Ireland. ‘Ballybeg Grange Clonmel Tipperary Ireland’ also appears on most of their printed publications and in many library catalogues and bibliographies when referencing

97 Thomas A. Clark and Laurie Clark, interviewed by Holly Richards, 21 September 2018.
98 Simon Cutts, email to Holly Richards, 15 April 2022.
Coracle’s Irish work, where ‘Ballybeg: Coracle’ might be expected to suffice. In an earlier incarnation, ‘Coracle Docking Norfolk England’ located the press at the heart of a series of bounded places, listed from smallest to largest: the village of Docking, inside the county of Norfolk, in the country of England. ‘Ballybeg Grange Clonmel Tipperary Ireland’ disrupts this concentric model of place. Ballybeg is around 4km from Grange, which in turn is outside the town boundaries of Clonmel. Clonmel is divided by the River Suir, which sets it on the border of both Counties Tipperary and Waterford.

Doreen Massey argues that place is social, and warns that ‘the particular mix of social relations which are thus part of what defines the uniqueness of any place is by no means all included within that place itself. Importantly, it includes relations which stretch beyond – the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside.’ Rather than an affirmation of bordered places, Coracle’s address is similarly relational, resembling a set of instructions, of places to be passed on the way, an oral telling of place that resists the overlaying of administrative boundaries.

‘Coracle’ usually prefaces the unpunctuated list of toponyms in the press’s publications, undifferentiated and aspiring to place status itself, demarcating a space for the domestic core of the press. Felski writes that home ‘is central to the anthropomorphic organization of space in everyday life; we experience space not according to the distanced gaze of the cartographer, but in circles of increasing proximity or distance from the experiencing self. Home lies at the center [sic] of these circles.’ (IEL, p. 85).

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99 Doreen Massey, Space, Place, and Gender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 5.
reminds us that those circles are not necessarily neat or concentric. In Coracle’s routine listing of the informally-related components of its address on its publications, there is a sense of moving unevenly across different scales, and of the simultaneity, multiplicity and uncertainty of place.

Place is persistently told at the scale of ‘the experiencing self’ in small press work. Small press practitioners experience places through bodily engagements with them; in this thesis, this begins with the repetitive and interwoven domestic actions of printing, cooking and cleaning, and ultimately extends to experimental acts of burial in Skelton’s work. The postcard facilitates bodily engagement, as a compact form that can be held in the hand, slipped into a pocket, and dropped into a letterbox, its smallness determined against the scale of the body.100 I attend to the various embodied practices of the small press throughout this thesis, while remaining mindful of Bennett’s observation that it is ‘not enough to say that we are “embodied.” We are, rather, an array of bodies’.101 This aligns with Massey’s socialised sense of place as something ‘constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus. […] It is, indeed, a meeting place.’102 This fundamentally social, networked understanding of place recalls Hair’s small press network, and opens up room for honing in on meeting places, on sociable nodes within the network, when examining small press

100 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1996) As Stewart observes (p. 55): ‘There are no miniatures in nature; the miniature is a cultural product, the product of an eye performing certain operations, manipulating, and attending in certain ways to, the physical world.’ She also argues (p. 56) that ‘[t]he miniature assumes an anthropocentric universe for its absolute sense of scale’.

101 Bennett, Vibrant Matter, p. 112. Italics in original.

102 Massey, Space, Place, and Gender, p. 154
practice. Overlaying Bennett onto Massey’s thoughts also allows these social relations to be witnessed through and between human and more-than-human bodies.

References to embodied acts in this thesis indicate kinaesthetic and somatic acts such as walking, carrying, printing, folding, finding, gathering, burial, typesetting, writing and making music. Alec Finlay argues that the embodied nature of running a small press extends into new understandings of reading whereby, via ‘the process of making, these publishers [gain] a new awareness of the proprioception of the book – of how reading is absorbed through the body as much as the mind’.103 For David Howes, ‘embodiment’ is insufficient for a holistic appreciation of bodily engagement with place, for while it ‘implies an integration of mind and body, the emergent paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment. This environment is both physical and social, as is well illustrated by the bundle of sensory and social values contained in the feeling of “home”’.104

Methods

The challenges of a poetry passed informally through a network rather than distributed through larger-scale publishing channels has made accessing certain pieces for this thesis difficult. Conversely, the sheer volume of publications produced by these three presses (alongside the sympathetic works of Finlay and other proponents of the small press’s network of influence and inspiration) has, oddly, acted as a limitation upon the

project in terms of being able to choose publications most suited to the thesis, and being able to spend sufficient time with those pieces.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact upon access to a corpus of work primarily held within archives, although the last few years have, presumably as a result of this, witnessed an increased number of digitised copies of small press work. These versions thwart Van Horn’s desire for things ‘that can be touched by others as they read and look at them’ of course, but resources including the Yale archives online have been helpful for reference purposes.

The Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh holds a large collection of Moschatel pieces, while the Glasgow School of Art Library carries a range of more recent publications by Coracle Press. Accessing work by Corbel Stone Press has been the most problematic, and I have relied upon items in my own collection, which has precluded access to earlier editions of key pieces and to rarer items. Richardson and Skelton have also generously shared information about the press and photographs of some of the work.

Funding from the Getty Foundation enabled me to spend time researching the vast Coracle Press archive of papers and publications at the Getty Research Institute in California. Limits of travel and finances have prevented me from acquiring or visiting certain items and collections.

I have met and corresponded with the artists informally, and carried out an in-person formal recorded interview with the Clarks at their home in Pittenweem in 2018. Plans to spend time visiting the homes and local places of the other practitioners were foiled by the pandemic, and have been (reluctantly) replaced by interview questions sent
by email. Not being able to spend time in the places that are so crucial for these practitioners has certainly affected the thesis, but experiencing these places through the work is some compensation.

Approaching this thesis, I have endeavoured to follow Thom van Dooren, via Haraway, in undertaking ‘careful scholarship’.\textsuperscript{105} Van Dooren suggests that care is a vital concept for an engaged environmental humanities. Much more needs to be done to articulate what different kinds of careful scholarship might look like in different contexts. Perhaps the first step is to begin to explicitly re-imagine our critical work as itself an act of care. Haraway has stated of her own work: “I will critically analyze… only that which I love.” Perhaps though, love and care require these acts of curious critique. Perhaps we must critique what we love. This would be a kind of affectively and ethically engaged scholarship; one that also works to position our writing, speaking and teaching – however modest their impact – as practical acts of care that can draw others into a sense of curiosity and concern for our changing world.\textsuperscript{106}

My desire to take this approach acknowledges the care and curiosity that underlines the work of the small presses in this study – the sense of responsibility (and response-ability) towards the places with which they engage, and towards their practice – to return to Richardson and Skelton, ‘you have to care immensely about each and every word, every line’. Perhaps a place-based practice is inextricable from a sense of affective mutuality; for van Dooren, ‘caring is always a practice of worlding’.\textsuperscript{107}

**Chapter Structure**

The unwieldy non-concentric form of place shown in Coracle’s postcard aligns with the manner in which my exploration of place unfolds across these chapters. While beginning

\textsuperscript{105} Thom van Dooren, ‘Care’, *Environmental Humanities*, 5.1 (2014), 291-294 (p. 291).

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., pp. 293-4.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p. 294.
in the home and ending with the wider landscape, place resists a neat zooming outwards from the domestic space, and the chapters overlap and intermingle.

My first chapter emphasises the profound impact of domesticity upon the small press, visiting the home as a site of production, and addressing the broader structures of labour that intersect with domesticity. Coracle and Moschatel both explore the kitchen as a zone of production, and there is a particular focus on the table. I also examine the role of hospitality, and the relationship between the guest and the host, as a route into understanding small press domesticity. Finally, I examine the testing of the domestic threshold through Coracle’s hybrid house gallery, and projects that carry the values of domesticity out into public space.

Chapter Two is focused upon localness, framed in the press as distinctly embodied. Walking is at the heart of the chapter, and facilitates the finding of materials to incorporate into the work. I examine diarising practices, exploring the importance of the journal in establishing the timescales of local work, and locating Van Horn within the nature diary tradition. Finally, I consider forms of mapping, and the problematics of attempting to sample place. While exploring these locally-focussed works I remain mindful of some of the wider forces that affect – and sometimes prevent – the practice of living locally.

Chapter Three explores site-specific installations, focusing mainly on Thomas A Clark’s commissioned work for New Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow. The chapter asks how intimate small press work is translated onto a larger scale, and studies bodily forms of attention. The chapter also examines how these pieces expose some of the ways that
hospitals work to conceal the vulnerability and strangeness of the human body. I take a brief diversion towards the chapter’s conclusion, visiting Little Sparta to help explore the garden in the press as a site of continuous co-production, and gardens as sites of kinship.

The final chapter engages with the work of the wider landscape in Corbel Stone Press via different canonical sites of knowledge production, such as the book, archive and museum. I examine Skelton’s burial practices as methods of decentring human agency in the landscape. I also pursue Skelton’s experiments with the page through open-field forms. The chapter closes by taking more of a deep-time perspective upon the landscapes in question, as a conduit to considering the power of the gift in small press work.
CHAPTER ONE

‘the domestic scale’: Home-making and The Small Press

The world begins at a kitchen table

– Joy Harjo\textsuperscript{108}

‘the domestic scale’: Home-making and The Small Press

This chapter explores the considerable role of the domestic space in small press practice and publication, focusing on the work of Coracle and Moschatel, for whom the home is particularly prominent as a place of work, a subject and an influence. I argue that the smallness of both presses is spatially determined, a reaction to the limitations of what Kay Roberts terms ‘the domestic scale’. The domestic scale has shaped the small press way of life, in terms of both methods and practices, and consequently choices made around publications. I examine these as productive constraints, demonstrating the marked spatial influence of the domestic upon the small press. All three of my central presses are based at home, and thereby find themselves tangled in a homeworking tradition that is rooted within both artistic practice and histories of domestic maintenance and (re)production. Their home-making is never divorced from homemaking, and this chapter remains conscious of histories of gendered labour within the home, and argues that housework is not just a prelude to creativity, but enmeshed within it.

In the early 1970s, prior to Coracle’s foundation, Cutts was witness to, and inspired by, multiple domestic spaces created by other artists. Cutts describes the holistic ‘environment’ of Finlay’s ‘intensely domestic’ set-up at Stonypath as an influential model for the Coracle way of life (BL, 4). He exhibited at Kettle’s Yard, where he met Jim Ede – who, lest we forget, describes the creation and maintenance of his house-gallery as ‘a

way of life\textsuperscript{110} – and spent time at Jonathan Williams’s home in Dentdale, Cumbria, where Williams (who ran The Jargon Society) and his partner Thomas Meyer acted as host to other poets and artists within the small press network. Cutts recounts being inspired by ‘the way he lived’, and assigns Williams to a tradition of ‘poets making houses and hosting and looking after guests’ (\textit{BL}, 6). These visits would prove significant for the press’s development, and in the small press model domesticity is intrinsically bound up in hospitality: as Derrida argues, ‘there is no home, no cultural home, no family home without some door, some opening and some ways of welcoming guests’.\textsuperscript{111} I am led by that definition of home in this chapter, looking at forms of the domestic created through hospitality.

I begin by examining the role of the kitchen in the small press, focusing particularly on the kitchen table as a workplace and communal site, and think through the problematics and intrusion of press activities into daily life. I trace the role of technologies, specifically the Adana printing machine, in enabling these set-ups, and explore the radical potential of the DIY approach to production.

I consider the domesticity of invitation pieces, works that must be activated or completed at home, including items sent through the post. I then approach the home as the habitat of many of the published pieces of the press, focusing upon Moschatel’s creation of work that resists the bookshelf, intended instead ‘for the mantelpiece.’\textsuperscript{112}

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argue that the standing poem plays a vital role in establishing a domestic habitat for the press.

I close the chapter by reflecting on work that draws domesticity outside of the home, studying the house-gallery run by Coracle in Camberwell (1976-1987) and exploring the extension of the domestic threshold beyond the immediate space of living. Finally, I turn to feminist domestic theory to think through the way in which the labours of home (re)production are managed by small presses, and performed away from the home.

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Section One: Working from Home

Printing and the kitchen

Figure 3 A Smell of Printing 1
a smell of printing
in the kitchen from
packets of unfolded
paper wrapped in
ribbed manilla:
uncollated pages
gathered in sections
& sewn after dinner

A Smell of Printing (1996), a Simon Cutts poem first printed on the back of a postcard, establishes the kitchen as integral to the working practices of Coracle, and grounds production within the everyday domestic life of the press. Boundaries between the work and the quotidian activities of cooking are muddled through the poem’s series of substitutions, ‘cooking aromas replaced by the smell of printing, and packets of ingredients substituted for packets of paper’ (AF, p. 31). There is a sense of inevitability in this act of production, which naturalises the kitchen as a site for small press work; the raw ingredient, paper, is unfolded and uncollated, anticipating the book and imprinted with its potential. The substitutions effect a mingling of printing and cooking; the subtle rhymes in the poem’s opening lines connect ‘printing’ and ‘kitchen’, threads of assonance and consonance binding together activity and location, while the ‘p’ of ‘printing’ echoes consonantly out through ‘packets’, ‘paper’, ‘wrapped’, ‘pages’, thickening the verse and extending the lingering scents of production. The blending of food and production hints at the economics of the small press, aligning the work that sustains them economically and

creatively with the work of cooking, and recalling Cutts’s frank accounts of living hand-to-mouth for many years of the press’s existence (BL, 8 and 12).

In the context of the Coracle corpus, conflating cooking and printing leaves little doubt as to the centrality of production to their way of life – food and cooking are a steadfast presence in the press’s publications. *A Smell of Printing* follows a cluster of culinary-focussed works from the early 1990s, the period in which Cutts was tasked with setting up an Italian offshoot of the Victoria Miro Gallery. Cutts and Van Horn moved to a house outside Florence, and Van Horn’s notebooks from this time reveal detailed records of dinners cooked for the numerous guests who visited them. Photos of some of these careful records are included in *Companions & Menus 1990-1991* (1992).114 Cutts and Van Horn write of visitors coming to stay ‘often under the guise and pretext of art, for food and conversation and the occasional visits to the neighbouring countryside and the cities and towns of the valleys surrounding us.’115 Cutts remarks that the house in Florence, and the people who came through, were ‘at least as interesting as the gallery’ (BL, 14).

These interactions provide context and content for their publications. *Companions & Menus* is ‘a scrap-book of our activity, our lunches and suppers; a notebook from the kitchen shelf, reduced, reproduced and added to. An attitude to food; of friends and time spent and digested over a year.’116 The zeugma of the closing sentence has a mingling effect, pulling friends, food and companionable time inextricably together. Just as stitching after dinner becomes a companionable and collaborative act, symbolic of the binding

115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
together of life and art, so too this series of dinners, conversations and journeys becomes part of the art, providing its material and contexts. The network of visitors to the house in Italy, including Colin Sackett, Stephen Bann, Bill and Pip Culbert, and Yoko Terauchi, is all associated with Coracle production and publication.

The Coracle ‘attitude to food’ is also referenced in aglio 6 olio (1992), a collection of six simple recipes, each of which features garlic and oil. The book pays tribute to the non-prescriptive home cooking of Elizabeth David, ‘who rarely gave specific instructions for her recipes, but merely cited the ingredients within the understanding of an attitude to food’. This attitude suggests familiarity between ingredients and cook, a style of cooking that is intuitive and led by the ingredients themselves. The origins of the book arose from their domestic circumstances. Having seen Van Horn in her studio working on hundreds of drawings of garlic cloves for a different project, Cutts sought out ‘a way of gathering them up’ (BL, 21). Their home set-up grounds collaboration in their everyday, and is predicated upon engaging with what is there.

Companions & Menus is a pivotal work for investigating the Coracle way of life. Cutts describes how the book charts ‘the invention of the daily life’ of the press (BL, 14), his words surely a nod to de Certeau’s L’invention du quotidien (1990), the second volume of which (1994) examines ‘a "fine art of dwelling," in which places are organized in a network of history and relationship, and a "fine art of cooking," in which everyday skill turns nourishment into a language of the body and the body's memories.’ The network

117 Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, aglio 6 olio (Docking: Coracle, 1992), non-paginated.
of history and relationship surrounding the press includes the aforementioned influences of Finlay, Ede and Williams, and the ‘attitude to food’ via David, and also extends to other genres of worker within the kitchen. In small press practice, cooking and printing coalesce in the kitchen, both expressing that language of the body and its memories.

The printing technology alluded to by Cutts is the Adana Printing Machine, a letterpress machine that is sufficiently compact to sit atop a table or desk, and that has been used by both Coracle and Moschatel. The Adana has a printing area of either 6 x 4 inches (the size owned by Moschatel), or 8 x 5 inches (the size owned by Coracle). The Adana occupies an ambivalent position between the mechanics of industry and the taking of production into one’s own hands; it facilitates the production of large editions of near-identical printed works, which belie the tactile, embodied process of its operation. The company website exhorts the would-be Adana purchaser to ‘[e]xperience the tactile satisfaction of producing good letterpress printing’.

Printing equipment itself is, as an early manual explains, named after various body parts – elements of individual letters include the face, body, shoulder and feet, while components of the Adana include the gripper finger and the arm. The quoins holding together the printing furniture must be ‘only finger tight.’ Once the machine is ready, the ink is rolled out and the handle is pulled to create contact between the paper and the type. Setting type and using the Adana

120 Adana Printing Machines Ltd, Printing Made Easy (Twickenham: Adana Printing Machines Ltd, undated), passim.
relies upon a tactile negotiation with the idiosyncrasies of the machine, calling upon the ‘language of the body and the body’s memories’ to become accustomed to it.

The Adana mechanically reproduces the printed page and allows for some level of uniformity in the published works. It refutes a Benjaminian opposition between the unique art object and the reproduction, pieces printed in this way residing somewhere between industrial printing and craft; batch production, but powered by hand and bearing what John Bevis has described as ‘the visible hand of the producer’.122 Cutts argues that ‘the fusion of mechanical production with hand-finishing gives works in this field great resonance.’ (SFA, p. 62). Here, taking processes into one’s hands involves the hybrid extension of the body through the printing machine. The Coracle style has been described as one concerned with ‘scale, domesticity, and mechanical hand-made-ness’.123 This mechanical hand-made-ness joins the hyphenated and hybrid press and practitioners (poet-gardener, artist-publisher), to embed within the press a resistance to categorisation.

Luce Giard considers the kitchen a potent site for activating embodied memory, reflecting on her time spent in the kitchen and the way in which ‘[a] recipe or an inductive word’ might ‘arouse a strange anamnesis whereby ancient knowledge and primitive experiences were reactivated in fragments of which I was the heiress and guardian without wanting to be. […] It was something that came to me from my body and that integrated me into the great corps of women of my lineage, incorporating me into their

123 Eiji Watanbe, Simon Cutts, Erica Van Horn and Coracle, Brancusi’s Sewing Box & other works: an arrangement by Eiji Watanbe, Simon Cutts, Erica Van Horn & Coracle (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2016), non-paginated.
anonymous ranks.’

The kitchen activates somatic knowledge, assigning an inheritance to the individual and thereby establishing them within a lineage. For Giard, this is intimately connected to the dialogue between women and the work of ‘doing-cooking’. Giard describes her inheritance of gesture: ‘my sense memory had kept track of certain tastes, smells, and colors’ from watching female members of her family at work. The small press ‘way of life’, its domestic model, might also be framed in terms of inheritance, Cutts inheriting a vision for an environment of production from Finlay, Williams and Ede. An inheritance passes to Richardson and Skelton, the influence of the Clarks acting as a blueprint for their own practice. Living and working in the kind of collective environment that I examine later in this chapter in Coracle’s house-gallery at Camberwell also establishes a site for inheriting embodied knowledge of place and production, the ‘ancient knowledge’ described by Giard that is unwittingly ‘reactivated’ by the right environment, word or gesture.

The translator’s note that accompanies Giard’s thoughts on doing-cooking acknowledges the slightly awkward translation of the ‘inventive term faire-la-cuisine (“doing-cooking”), chosen by Giard ‘to resonate with the underlying theme for both volumes provided by Michel de Certeau in the expression arts de faire.’ The translation does not allow for the ambiguity of ‘faire’ as meaning both making and doing, with its suggestion of an inherent struggle between creativity and routine. The intersection of

125 Ibid., p. 153.
126 Ibid., p. 153.
127 Ibid., p. 153.
making and doing, doing-cooking, and making in the kitchen are all brought into play in the small press kitchen as an arena for different forms of production – printing, cooking, eating, sharing and cleaning.

The elision of an identifiable subject in *A Smell of Printing* engenders a sense of communality; the activities of printing, folding, gathering and sewing open to whoever is a guest at the most recent Coracle dinner. The poem distils an interplay between revealing and concealing labour that recurs across the small press. The feeling of communality negates individual responsibility, and the seemingly agential papers contribute to this negation by anticipating their folding, imprinted with the potential of becoming a book – almost as though they might fold themselves without the need of external input. Nevertheless, traces of concealed labour start to emerge, prompted by the jarring chemical smell of printing ink, a trace of earlier activity.

The postcard on which *A Smell of Printing* is printed enacts a similar ambivalent relationship with the dual labours of home and book production in its depiction of working in the kitchen. The front of the card bears a black and white photograph of ‘Madame Desvignes in her kitchen, stitching the first volumes from Les Éditions de Minuit’. Desvignes, pseudonym of Yvonne Paraf, the resistance publisher, sits framed by kitchen utensils, sewing together anti-Nazi pamphlets during the Second World War. This image of the kitchen is characterised by another series of substitutions – Desvignes blocks our view of the sink, obscuring a symbol of mundane domesticity; the draining board bears a pile of signatures rather than crockery and the pans and utensils of the kitchen hang in the background, while the book press stands out in the foreground of the photograph. The
handle of the book press recalls that of a washing dolly, or other antiquated piece of kitchen equipment, a visual that helps activate the histories of work in the kitchen. The visual pun is another way of naturalising the work of making books in the kitchen; the image of Desvignes helps to establish a tradition of book-work in the kitchen, into which Coracle steps.

Although the work of making art in the home temporarily obscures other forms of kitchen labour in the photograph of Desvignes, thinking of home as a site of production ultimately brings attention to the fact that, in Irene Gedalof’s words, making home is ‘a continuous act of production and reproduction that is never fully complete’. This begins to surface in Companions & Menus. A glimpse of some of the housework arising from near-constant hosting appears at the end of the book, over the page from the colophon. The colophon provides the edition number, press’s name, and year and site of publication, all of which typically signify the final page of a Coracle book. On this occasion, an additional page of text follows overleaf, without preamble, and with an anaphoric emphasis upon ongoing work:

Always the washing of clothes, tea-towels, sheets and napkins, always the drying and folding and storing. Lots of washing and lots of washing-up.

The repetition embeds these dinners and guests in the ‘continuous act of production and reproduction’. The end papers are printed with photographs of clothes hanging out to dry on the washing line. The appearance of these details after the colophon gestures towards

the concealment of these forms of labour (again heightened by the omission of a subject, once more obscuring who is actually doing this work), and highlights that the work is ongoing, continuing even after the apparent conclusion of the book. The guests have left, but the work continues. We, as readers, are also guests of Coracle through entering into the book, and experience privileged access to some of the workings across the threshold. We channel Gerard Gennette in perceiving the paratext as a threshold ‘or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a “vestibule” that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back.’

**Printing at Home: a cottage industry**

Of all the presses in this study, Moschatel most literally take the business of publishing into their own hands, the Clarks having printed, folded, sewn, packaged and distributed almost every publication themselves since the press’s foundation. The Clarks were given a treadle platen press in 1972 as a wedding present, which enabled them to start printing domestically, and which they stored in a spare room of the artist Joe Tilson, with whom they were living in Wiltshire. After moving to Iverna Cottage in Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, they were no longer able to accommodate such a substantial press, it being ‘too large and cumbersome for the scale on which we live’ and they therefore sold it to fund the purchase of their hand-operated table-top Adana. Until 1995, when the

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Clarks began using a computer printer, most of Moschatel’s paper works were set and printed on the Adana, before being hand-folded and sewn by the artists.

Hair’s suggestion that production as a way of life proposes ‘self-publishing as a cottage industry in which these activities are not ancillary to everyday life but an integral part of it’, gains new resonances in light of the Clarks’ experiences of literally working from a cottage.37 The term ‘cottage industry’ retains some of the quaint connotations of the cottage, and that quaintness sometimes permeates depictions of their lives there. ‘Nailsworth’, Cutts’s poem from Candid Fields, paints a harmonious domestic scene:

these custard squashes from your sloped garden baked in the aga

The narrow form with its heavy enjambment vividly evokes the precipitous sloping garden in the hilly Cotswold town. The compact stanza – or, we should recall, dwelling room, etymologically – also captures the miniature space of the kitchen in which these squashes are baked, the aga bringing suggestions of an intimate, cosy domesticity. Domestic imagery suffuses Clark’s writing, from the regular appearance of small dwellings in poems, to the language of homespun activities including the crafts of weaving and patchwork, as well as the sharing of stories and cooking.

Hair traces the ‘domestic values underpinning Coracle’s activities’ through into the partnerships running the various presses in his study (AF, p. 30), and Moschatel’s

domesticity is conspicuously co-produced in pieces that combine Thomas’s words and Laurie’s images, commonly seen in the embedding of a domestic perspective created by framing landscapes through a window. In Moschatel’s *Proverbs of the Meadow* (1979) – a folder of cards, each printed with a poem and a drawing – the drawings lead a domestic reading of Clark’s texts:

Pollen sleeps in the heart of the pebble

In this card, Laurie’s drawing is of pebbles collected and displayed in a bowl, rather than in-situ in their natural habitat.

The hours are thistledown the days are swallows

Here, a rural scene with diving swallows is framed through a window, complete with a window seat and cushion.

Eye bright meadow sweet

Clark’s text alludes to the plants ‘eyebright’ and ‘meadowsweet’, but by separating each word into two parts, there is a level of ambiguity. He could simply be referencing a bright eye and a sweet meadow. Laurie Clark’s drawing moves away from this ambiguity, depicting the flowers in a jar of water on top of a table, not in the field.

In spite of – or more frankly because of – its charming proportions, the challenges of working from a cottage were not insignificant. In the early years of Moschatel, the constraints of Iverna Cottage prevented the Clarks from having a separate printing room. Book production took place in the kitchen, with the Adana operated at the table, and
kitchen surfaces were co-opted for drying printed pages – a challenge, given that the room was no larger than six square feet. The caption accompanying this published photograph of the Nailsworth kitchen (Figure 4) gives some indication of its logistical challenges: ‘This tiny kitchen of a Gloucestershire cottage can only be photographed by virtually sitting on the Aga cooker.’

The printing environment exerts a marked influence over small press work processes. Van Horn describes the impact of the damp Tipperary climate upon Coracle’s primarily paper-based works, and printing letterpress is also a temperamental art, with ink being allowed to ‘set a bit in summer’ and ‘stand a bit and get rolled out a bit in winter when it was too cold.’ (BL, 4). The Adana demonstrates that the hybridity emphasised by Cutts is not solely generic, but baked into the methods of the small press in this continuous dialogue between body, machine and environment.

The processes of production in turn impact the home. Moschatel and Coracle both stored ink rollers in the fridge, and copies of books, sheets and signatures under beds. To avoid potential inconsistencies in appearance across editions, once the intricate task

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of setting type and locking it into the forme for printing has been undertaken, every sheet will ideally be printed in one session. Those sheets all need somewhere to be stored, and with little free space in the Moschatel kitchen, pages and books often ended up piled under beds. Such constraints naturally have an impact upon the editioning of books. When Cutts and Roberts ran their house-gallery in Camberwell, Roberts reflected that the limitations ‘were many; size was determined mainly by our interest in the domestic scale but limits of time and space kept down the edition numbers and quantity of finished books’ (*HAF*, p. 10). Cutts agrees that the number of pieces within a print edition was not primarily a creative decision, but rather arose as a result of ‘the scale of the operation and the way we go about things’ (*BL*, 19). He parallels some of the challenges faced by the Clarks in admitting to not wanting ‘more than 500 copies of a book lying under the bed’ (*BL*, 19).

Hair observes that the Adana and other ‘relatively modest printing technologies have been instrumental in formulating these presses’ respective poetics’ (*AF*, p. 28). Coracle’s publications are generally larger and issued in bigger editions than those of Moschatel, and this is likely as a result of Coracle having inhabited a larger space – and having an Adana with a larger printing area. Thomas Clark has described the ‘fairly severe limitations of the Adana’ as having been, at times, ‘the main influence’ on his work, contributing to his experiments in the minimal forms so characteristic of Moschatel

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136 Thomas A. Clark and Laurie Clark, interviewed by Holly Richards, 21 September 2018.
work. Crucially, this is a spatial influence. Given that the acquisition of a small-scale Adana was necessitated by a newly-constrained living space, which could not accommodate a commercial press, it could be argued that the particular domesticities of a small cottage, that ‘scale on which we live’, was ultimately ‘the main influence’ on Moschatel at this period. The trace of the domestic can therefore be read through into the pieces that Moschatel continues to produce, the press’s distinctive small-scale works retaining the imprint of Iverna Cottage.

Home-working

The Adana’s presence looms large in Coracle’s work. A second A Smell of Printing piece was published in 1997, the poem again printed on the back of a postcard, the front of which features a photo of an Adana press, captioned ‘The Original Desk-Top Publisher’:  

A smell of printing  
on the kitchen table  
from an 8 x 5 Adana  
used to impose  
signatures & sections  
to be folded & sewn

139 ‘It was necessary! I mean I always wanted them to be short, but the Adana suited the thing, but also influenced them.’ Thomas A. Clark and Laurie Clark, interviewed by Holly Richards, 21 September 2018.
140 Simon Cutts, A Smell of Printing 2 (London: Coracle @ workfortheeyetodo, 1997).
Both poems are reproduced in the collaborative Coracle/Granary Books collection of Cutts’s poetry, *A Smell of Printing: Poems 1988-1998* (2000), which features the photograph of Mme Desvignes stitching pamphlets as its cover. The two ‘A Smell of Printing’ poems bookend the collection. The significance of these pieces for Coracle is foregrounded by their prominence in the book, and underlines the importance of the kitchen as a site in this period from 1988, when Van Horn joined the press.

Mid-century developments in printing technology enabled the domestication of the press, and with it the small press’s home-working model. Home-printing machines like the Adana were more affordable than sending work away to be printed, and allowed more opportunities for experimenting. Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley chart the increasingly ‘diverse’ sites of production as a result of more portable and affordable technologies such as offset lithography, “from drawing boards to kitchen tables” (quoted in *AF*, pp. 154-5). In the sense posed by Colomina and Buckley, the kitchen table possesses radical potential, enabling artists to seize the means of printing and reject impersonal mass production.

Cutts invites these radical connotations in choosing the image of Mme Desvignes to accompany *A Smell of Printing*. Hair cites Cutts’s thoughts on how “[t]he polemics of ‘underground’ and hand-distributed publishing are fully endorsed by this classic photograph”. [...] Although the stakes have never been as perilously high as they were for the French Resistance publishers, Coracle has, nevertheless, observed much of what

142 This also brings to mind radical practices such as those of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, founded in 1980.
is suggested in Doisneau’s photo. Thus, as much as it is a “eulogy” for Desvignes, Cutts’s card is also an assertion of Coracle’s own in-house economies.  

The second *A Smell of Printing* card also speaks to the DIY, underground ethos, its slightly blurry red-tinted photo suggesting fast kitchen-table homemade production. The two postcards assert that there is something revolutionary about working in the home, and indeed, there is a radical quality to starting to acknowledge the different forms of work that take place in the home and allow them to stand alongside these forms of production.

In her account of the early modern kitchen, Sara Pennell perceives a ‘locus of “spatial solidarity”, where those internal and external to the household could come together with relatively equal rights of access and belonging, and in which relations of proximity – between family, kin and neighbours – are often enacted’. The small press way of life is one that relies on this solidarity. In invoking *spatial solidarity*, Pennell looks to Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson, who define the term as the building of connections within a group ‘not by analogy and isolation, but by contiguity and encounter. To realise this it must stress not the separateness of the interior but the continuity of interior and exterior. Movement across the boundary […] is the fundamental condition of existence for a spatial solidarity.’ The kitchen, if we follow Giard’s readings, is a place where relations of kinship, of contiguity and encounter can occur via connections across time, the activation of a somatic knowledge over which the enactor seems powerless – it ‘came

to me from my body’. Giard perceives this connection with the women she has watched working in the kitchen. Coracle connects in a different way, moving across the boundary of the house to kitchens in other times and places. A sense of kinship and solidarity is created with their self-appointed forebear, Desvignes, but also with others who have brought production into the home, including Finlay, Williams and Ede, and Coracle’s kitchen-printing contemporaries at Moschatel Press.

The kitchen table

The OED charts a range of meanings associated with ‘kitchen table’ aside from its most literal sense, the term connoting ‘the hub of domestic discussions’, ‘medical procedures performed at home or outside a clinical setting, typically using makeshift implements’, ‘businesses or occupations which are carried out from home, part-time, or on a small or amateur scale’ and ‘relating to social and political issues that affect ordinary families, households, or communities’. References to the kitchen table pepper Coracle’s work, with Cutts making reference to ‘difficult [economic] circumstances when you only had your kitchen table to work at’ (BL, 6). The appearance of the table across the Coracle corpus pulls together some of these connotations of a site of shared discussion, a symbol of the makeshift or improvised, a locus of community.

A Table in Ballybeg (2021) narrates the period of the Covid-19 lockdown in which Cutts and Van Horn ‘endured almost a year of making and eating our own food, with no

abatement. No cafés to visit. No tables to travel to. No take-away.'\(^{147}\) The period is told through photographs of their meals, extracts from Van Horn’s journals, handwritten menus and a reflection upon the significance of the table for the artists. Cutts and Van Horn locate the book as ‘a continuation from *Companions & Menus*, the culinary record of a year in Italy, 1990-91. That book was a celebration of time spent both in good company and by ourselves, surrounded by seasonal food and olive trees and alongside our other daily activities.’\(^{148}\) Within, ‘[t]here are no recipes, just a chance occurrence of available produce modified by intention and previous use, sometimes permanent leftovers, the joy of ingredients within an attitude to eating.’\(^{149}\)

The early days of cooking in Ireland were centred around ‘an improvised barbecue’, in spite of which they still managed to cook ‘quite elaborate food’ for guests on their ‘rudimentary set-up’ and using ‘what was available’.\(^ {150}\) They write of coming to enjoy simplicity, ‘plainness’, the ‘smaller in scale’.\(^ {151}\) Their ‘attitude to food’ (and to cooking, via David) aligns closely with their attitude to small press work – their production of work using what is available, and the improvisatory quality of working at the kitchen table. Cutts has described *Companions & Menus* as a depiction of ‘[a] year of improvisation with food and friends’.\(^ {152}\) These improvisations extend to their use of a ‘pepper-box’, adopted through want of a pepper mill, which appears to be a small cheese

\(^{147}\) Cutts and Van Horn, *A Table in Ballybeg* (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2021), p. 63.
\(^{148}\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^{149}\) Ibid., p. 10.
\(^{150}\) Ibid., p. 6.
\(^{151}\) Ibid., p. 9.
box containing pepper corns, with a hammer to grind them up. *Companions & Menus* takes on the material of the place, the cover paper reproducing drawer linings in the house, another form of improvisation, of using what is available. The book’s categorisation as a ‘scrap-book’ of their activity aligns it with their piecemeal, improvisatory methods of making a home.

The kitchen table is a significant site for the small press network; a node in the network, a meeting place (to invoke Massey), a coagulation where different groups can meet temporarily, as seen in *Companions & Menus*, which includes a drawing of one of their table layouts at a time when they had a large number of visitors. The table crops up repeatedly in Coracle’s work, grounded in the ‘Périgord maxim’ that has been used by Cutts in multiple pieces: ‘the sky is too high/ the earth too low to stoop/ only a table is the right height’.\(^\text{153}\) Though the original French uses the word ‘comptoir’, more typically meaning ‘counter’, or ‘bar’, Cutts adopts the translation of ‘table’, underlining the table’s importance for his practice. The maxim ‘says it all. It has been the abiding resolve of all our days in different abodes and places. The places change but somehow are always the same: London; the Val de Pesa in Tuscany, Docking in Norfolk, and since 1997, Ballybeg, in County Tipperary.’\(^\text{154}\) The table offers continuity, this (s)table place asserting itself at the centre of their activities, perhaps able to initiate the reactivation of their inherited knowledge of the press and the kitchen.

\(^{153}\) Cutts and Van Horn, *A Table in Ballybeg*, p. 5. Original emphasis.  
\(^{154}\) Ibid., pp. 5-6.
Van Horn created an inventory book while in Italy, with drawings of every item of furniture in the house.\footnote{Erica Van Horn, \textit{A Brief Visual Inventory of the Furniture and Objects in the House (Via Perseto 9) Which Belong to the Goretti Family (as Does the House): June 1990 (Italy, 1991)}, non-paginated.} Significantly, the first piece drawn is the table, a sign of its primacy in their home. Similarly, their life in Ireland started with ‘building various tables as we needed them. At the beginning, we slept on wooden pallets and used one wobbly table left behind by the previous owners. That served as our kitchen worktop.’\footnote{Cutts and Van Horn, \textit{A Table in Ballybeg}, p. 5.} Cutts describes building tables often, creating ‘some platonic archetype that you need for discourse and commerce, to sit round and to eat at and to put things on’ and to work at (\textit{BL}, 13). Moving to Hanbury Street, the press’s location when \textit{A Smell of Printing} was written, Cutts made up a table from an old piece by Bill Culbert, ‘An Explanation of Light’, repurposing art into something to facilitate its production (\textit{BL}, 16). Hair describes the small press publication as being “without” place’ because it becomes the site of an indeterminate interspace — a utopic ‘nowhere’ or ‘elsewhere’ — where geographically remote poets, artists, and readers might intersect’ (\textit{AF}, p. 13). The table performs a similar function, a site of small press intertextuality, ‘an affirmation of the home-made, where production values can be accomplished around the kitchen table.’\footnote{Simon Cutts, ‘Rubber Stamp Mini-Printer’, \textit{ecopoetics}, 3 (2003), p. 161.} The kitchen table is synecdochic of small press domesticity, and of the wider small press network. It has a connective function, connecting to other tables used by the press, and to the other convivial sites of small press work. It concentrates spatial solidarity, connecting people,
the different kitchens the press has occupied over time, and the kitchen as a concept, with its histories of different modes of work.

‘The world begins at a kitchen table’, writes Joy Harjo.\(^{158}\) For the small press, the cycles of production and the domestic habitat of works discussed in the next section, mean that works are both made at, and return to, the table: ‘Thanks again for the books’, Clark writes, in a letter to Simon Cutts, ‘They are just the thing to arrive with the toast and marmalade.’\(^{159}\)

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Section Two: Work in the Home

Invitation, instruction, collaboration

Clark’s consumption of books at the kitchen table, taken with the toast and marmalade, is made possible by their arrival in the morning post. The small press relies upon the postal system, its primary channel of distribution, foregoing the formalities of the bookshop or other intermediary, and the network is oiled by the circulation of pieces in the post. Small press practitioners have a lot of control over the distribution of their work, and in the colophon of Companions & Menus, Cutts and Van Horn share an insight into the distribution of their work. Beneath the edition number, a handwritten list of names seems to indicate who will receive the first copies from the edition, beginning with Simon and Erica and then listing ‘Sif’s mum’, ‘Paul’s friend’, and ‘Chris’s wife’. Their distribution

\(^{158}\) Harjo, The Woman Who Fell From the Sky, p. 68.

map is relational, comprising people we don’t know, friends of friends. In a postscript to a letter to the artists after the book’s publication, Jonathan Williams adds, ‘Forgot to say that COMPANIONS & MENUS is really a delight. Sell me 5 copies to send to five nice people.’

“Oh, they’re just the people who like sending things to each other in the post”, the critic Waldemar Januszczak said of our endeavours at Coracle in the early eighties’ recalls Cutts: ‘It was an important and formative rejection.’ (SFA, p. 91). Coracle’s understanding of an attitude to food and to eating extends into an understanding also of an attitude to poetry, and the anticipation of a knowing, sympathetic audience.

Distributing work by post, Cutts argues, is ‘a very direct kind of interaction’ (SFA, p. 20), one that allows the artist to address the reader on an individual level. He describes a fascination with ‘the idea that a postcard went out through a whole network that you did not invent, when it was read by the postman, it was read by the recipient, it was read by officers and people on the way’ (SFA, p. 20) an extension of the passing of poems ‘from hand to hand’. Alec Finlay’s sense of the small press network as a ‘great circulatory system’ is recalled in this movement of works through the post, which also brings to mind de Certeau and Giard’s perspective on movement within and through domestic spaces: ‘the private space must know how to open itself up to the flow of people coming in and out, to be the passageway for a continual circulation, where objects, people, words, and ideas cross paths; for life is also about mobility, impatience for change, and relation to a

plurality of others.' The flow out from and across the domestic threshold is epitomised by the profuse movement of small press items through the postal service.

Multiple forms of address to the reader are performed in these posted publications, particularly in the many invitation pieces produced by Moschatel for Cairn Gallery, and by Coracle in the house-gallery years. Envelopes literally addressed to an individual reader invite the reader to open them, to engage with the card within and the extended invitation to the gallery. John Janssen recalls receiving around ten small invitation cards in the post per year during Coracle’s time in Camberwell. Each ‘at a little over 10 by 13cm, well under postcard size, not only reflects the modest, essentially domestic, dimensions of the gallery, but at the same time feels perfectly comfortable in the palm of one’s hand, and, therefore, establishes an easy personal relationship between gallery and potential visitor from the start.’

There is a renewed sense of communality or tactility in this easy relationship between gallery and visitor, poet and reader, which extends some of the warmth and conviviality of small press hospitality.

Derrida’s argument that hospitality ‘is part of being at home; there is no home, no cultural home, no family home without some door, some opening and some ways of welcoming guests’ appeals to the passage of invitations across the domestic threshold. Derrida’s vision of hospitality is a form of home-making, aligning with Cutts’s description of Companions & Menus as the invention of their daily lives; their time in Florence was characterised by a near-constant influx of guests. Invitation pieces perform a shifting,

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mutable interaction between guest and host, as the small press (host) extends an
invitation to the reader (guest), the card arriving at the reader’s house, at which point they
become the host, receiving the piece (guest). Homi Bhabha glosses Derrida’s take on
these kinds of interactions, in which “the master of the house is at home, but nonetheless
he comes to enter his home through the guest—who comes from outside.... He [re]enters
his home ... [through] the grace of the visitor....”163 In arriving by post, pieces cross and
trouble the domestic threshold of both reader and practitioner, complicating the
relationship between guest and host.

Invitation cards are not only literal invitations to gallery shows, but also appeal to
a more conceptual mode of work, invitation works that gently request participation. These
are not so strict in their desire for a response; there is a distinction between inviting and
instructing. Even the ‘recipes’ of aglio 6 olio do not offer instructions, but instead are non-
prescriptive in their focus upon an ‘attitude’ to cooking rather than one’s aptitude. Some
Forms of Availability includes a prose passage by Cutts entitled ‘The Idea of Making a
Table’, about sharing the instruction for making a table with a friend. The imperative tone
of this as an instruction is tempered by the instructions being telephoned ‘to a friend’.

This particular table I told Laurie Clark about for the room in her gallery.
First measure the floor and draw on it a square or rectangle that will allow
you to circulate in the room, but still give the most surface possible.

[…]

Books can be placed on the table.

(SFA, p. 86)

The piece closes with another iteration of the ‘Périgord maxim’. The table, as we have established, is a locus of spatial solidarity, a place around which the small press network gathers. Here, Cutts shares the formula for reproducing that table, and in so doing, he metaphorically offers the reader a seat at the table.

This generosity is embedded in Coracle’s poetics, which creates ‘an area of ambiguity that the reader can find his space in too’ (BL, 5). It is telling that Cutts frames this collaboration in spatial terms. He also suggests a particularly active form of reading, in which ‘someone has to provide parts of themselves’, in an act of participation (BL, 5). The ambiguity of a text means that the reader is required to ‘go towards it more’, ‘if it’s understated and [without] the force of a personality trying to dominate the situation’ (again, dismantling the individual genius poet) (BL, 5). Cutts reveals much about the perceived relationship between small press practitioners and their readers, and there is a marked affinity between the language of his approach, and that of Wolfgang Iser in his ‘phenomenology’ of ‘the reading process’. Iser argues that reading is ‘active’, that literary works are brought ‘into existence’ through a ‘convergence of text and reader’. He notes that ‘the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself.’

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165 Ibid., p. 279.
166 Ibid., pp. 284-5.
There are different methods of offering an invitation to the reader; recall Tarbuck’s assertion that Clark ‘invites the reader in through simplicity and then allows them to find complexity’ (SP, p. 180). In these different examples, the key is extending an invitation to the reader to participate. Iser describes reading as ‘the interaction’ between a work’s ‘structure and its recipient’, the framing of a reader as a recipient underlining the text as invitational, and also suggesting that the author is imparting a gift. Through reading, Iser observes a ‘concretization’, a kind of activation or performance of the work initiated by the reader. The word ‘concretization’ is a loaded one in the context of this thesis, reaching out to the participatory poetics of the Concrete movement. Tarbuck highlights the belief among followers of Concrete in Clark’s circle that ‘the concrete poem should be understood as a site of interaction.’ (SP, p. 163), noting that ‘[p]articipation, the “activation” of the object by a human agent is, for Houedard [sic], what ultimately defines concrete poetry.’ (SP, p. 163). Noting Emmett Williams’s argument that ‘concrete poetry was “to be completed or activated by the reader”’, she suggests that ‘[t]he process of activation situates the reader as central to the overall success of the work. Through the theory of activation the idea of play as a vital component of concrete poetry is reintroduced. The idea of “activating” a work permeates all of Clark’s folded objects and poems that must be removed from envelopes: the reader must physically engage with the poem to activate it properly.’ (SP, p. 164).

167 Iser, p. 20.
168 Ibid., p. 21.
Iser describes the reader’s response as the ‘production’ of the text, which would further expand the boundaries of the press’s domestic threshold, its mode of production as a way of life and of home-making shared with the reader.\textsuperscript{169} The reader is able to perform their own way of producing the work at home. Thinking about the activation of the poem at home also brings us back to Benjamin’s description of the mechanically-reproduced art object being ‘reactivated’ when ‘meet[ing] the beholder or listener’ in their ‘own particular situation’. He positions this reactivation in the domestic space, one of his examples being the reactivation of live music via a recording played in the drawing room.\textsuperscript{170} The machine editioning and hand-compiling, -folding and -stitching ensures an innate hybridity to these pieces, such that their reactivation constructs a connection between the home of the artist and the home of the reader, the hand-worked item delivered into the reader’s hands for activation.

Thomas A Clark’s account of the activation of ‘the standing poem’ in the home recalls Iser’s thoughts upon concretization:

\begin{quote}
If a piece of card is folded once, an astonishing thing happens – the card can stand up! It has an air of self-possession about it. It holds its place.

If the words are then printed on the front of the card, rather than inside, something equally miraculous occurs – poetry moves from the private into the public realm! Instead of being assigned to a secluded, literary space, it enters the ordinary, everyday world, taking part in the occasion.

The words are not painted on a wall or carved in stone. The card is a modest format. It sits quietly within the situation, making a difference, suggesting another possibility.

Our relation to literary products is usually voluntary; you go to the shelf to find the book to look up the poem. By contrast, a card is available at a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., pp. 20-1.
\textsuperscript{170} Benjamin, p. 4.
glance. You can forget it for days or weeks and then come into a room and discover it again. It takes you by surprise.\textsuperscript{171}

Clark’s introduction of the poem to the ‘ordinary, everyday world’ emphatically marks its place in the home. In Clark’s view, the standing poem becomes an active subject, ‘taking part in the occasion’. The standing card is imagined in the domestic space – ‘if we could print a little card, somebody could put it on their table, and that would be part of their lives’.\textsuperscript{172}

Here, the poem is lived with and acclimatised to, to the point that it can then ‘take you by surprise’. The ability to be surprised by something that, if we follow Iser, we have helped to produce, recalls Latour’s thoughts on the ‘slight surprise of action’.\textsuperscript{173} His argument hinges upon a disputing of ‘mastery’, proposing that ‘whenever we make something we are not in command, we are slightly overtaken by the action’: ‘I never act; I am always slightly surprised by what I do’.\textsuperscript{174} Latour argues that the person making has always been ‘surprised, overcome, ravished by what she was – what they were – doing’\textsuperscript{175} The poem’s independent existence in the world may be another legacy of Concrete; Hair observes the ambition of Finlay’s ‘suprematist’ Concrete poems to attain ‘a formal objectivity and a “perfection” that exists independently of its maker.’ (\textit{AF}, p. 97). One aspect of that independence seems to be as a form of place-creation, that it can

\textsuperscript{172} Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark, interviewed by Holly Richards, 21 September 2018.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
‘hold its place’: ‘only when the idea is constructed can it sit upon the table’, a Thomas A Clark card of 2013 affirms.176

The reader’s activation or concretisation of a piece is not solely performed through the act of reading itself, but also led by the folded form of these pieces, and the fact that Moschatel presents most of its standing pieces in envelopes. Hair draws attention to the work of the reader in removing a piece from its enclosing envelope and folding it (cited in _SP_, p. 38), and Tarbuck suggests that as a result of these actions, ‘the reader becomes intimately engaged with realizing the work’s full form and meaning, entering fully into the imaginative space set aside by the poem. By engaging the reader through manipulation of the object, Clark can have the work “performed” by the reader, as an additional level of engagement and understanding’ (_SP_, pp. 38-9). Tarbuck also notes ‘Clark’s investigations into the way in which meaning changes if words are wholly or partially revealed to the reader in the poem’s “inactive” form. It is not until the card is removed from the envelope that the “other half” of its meaning is revealed.’ (_SP_, p. 182). The placing of these pieces in envelopes also highlights their place within the postal system, and their role as a form of gift (_SP_, p. 186).

Clark’s investigations of the standing poem follow Finlay’s invention of the form, which grew from his desire to create a poem that would be independent from the self, which allows it, Tarbuck argues, to ‘take up space in the world as an independent object.’ (_SP_, p.181). Though reminding us that the standing poem must always be read in relation

176 Thomas A Clark, _only when the idea is constructed can it sit upon the table_ (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2013).
to its surroundings, Tarbuck relegates the piece to objecthood (*SP*, p. 181). Yet the poem’s power to surprise, to act, makes it a subject within the room, acting upon, and in turn being shaped by, the room’s other subjects.

One standing piece in particular, ‘Attention to detail revives a sense of scale’ (2016) invites the kind of attention to detail advocated in its content – from the hand-colouring of the three bluebell stems drawn by Laurie Clark to the texture of the card.¹⁷⁷ Such simplicity promotes questions around the materiality of the work, the need to probe the scales within which it resides, or the materials from which it has been created. Close attention begins to reveal a more detailed understanding of some of the vast material entanglements contributing to this tiny poem, to the trees, waxes, oils, dyes, words and thoughts, gravity and resistance of the standing poem. A sense of scale is established by acknowledging that the piece is more than the sum of its parts, the actions exceeding the work. In attending closely to the details of this piece – the texture of the card, the often hand-coloured drawings, it starts to gesture towards forces outside of and intersecting with the home, towards the numerous subjects at work within its production.

**Words for the mantelpiece**

For the small press, the house is not only the site of production, but also a living space for many pieces, and folded forms such as the standing poem resist the bookshelf and are able to hold their place within the domestic ecology. Clark proposes an active part for poetry within the home, part of his interest in pieces entering ‘by stealth’ into apparently

¹⁷⁷ Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark, ‘Attention to detail revives a sense of scale’ (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2016).
non-literary spaces.\textsuperscript{178} Moschatel publications have been described as ‘words for the mantelpiece’,\textsuperscript{179} ‘rather than the bookshelf’, asserting a resoundingly domestic role for them.\textsuperscript{180} For Clark, these forms facilitate ‘a more intimate and resourceful relationship’ with a poem than if it were ‘lost somewhere in the middle of a collection’.\textsuperscript{181} The frequent alignment of Moschatel pieces with the mantelpiece becomes shorthand for their prominent domestic setting.

The press’s 2001 exhibition ‘Words for the Mantelpiece’, at the Gabrielle Keiller Library in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, foregrounds the connection between production as a way of life and the presence of pieces in the home, including by reproducing Clark’s 1995 letter in the exhibition catalogue. The mantelpiece is a suggestive location for small press pieces; there is a particular resonance in placing them at the heart(h) of the home. As Pennell notes, a fire burning in the hearth was traditionally ‘the structural and psychological centre of the household. Not only was the cooking hearth often the sole fire to be kept alight throughout the working day, but the chimney […] supplied the physical spine of the house’.\textsuperscript{182} Moschatel Press works being ‘for the mantelpiece’ are therefore central to the domestic space. The hearth represents both the working centre of the home and symbolises domestic warmth and intimacy.

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\textsuperscript{178} Thomas A, Clark and Laurie Clark, interviewed by Holly Richards, 21 September 2018.
\textsuperscript{179} Moschatel Press, \textit{Words for the mantelpiece}.
\textsuperscript{180} Biography of Moschatel Press in the Coracle Press archives at the Getty Research Institute.
\textsuperscript{181} Moschatel Press, \textit{Words for the mantelpiece}.
Section Three: ‘show your work’: the residency and the invisible everyday

Coracle Galleries

In the early 1980s, Cutts wrote a proposal on the planned creation of a house-gallery-residency space in Docking for Coracle. The pamphlet containing the proposal opens with a quote from Duncan Phillips, ‘An opportunity of the intimate gallery which we cherish… is to place well and enjoy little masterpieces for small furnished rooms.’ The plan was ‘very much influenced’ by Kettle’s Yard and Stonypath, and was conceived of by Cutts as ‘a continuous project’, comprising a permanent collection, a temporary exhibition space and a gallery, plus living spaces and a garden for artists-in-residence. Cutts envisaged a place characterised by an ‘openness of spirit’, an ‘informal setting’ in which ‘interchange between guests and visitors will become a natural basis for more formal workshops and proposals. A meal taken together in the early evening will be the convergence of each day.’ The proposal was never fulfilled, but the spirit of conviviality infusing the concept is aligned with the different dwelling sites and kitchen tables occupied by Coracle over the years, and a version of this imagined house-gallery filled with guests eating and working together existed at the Coracle Gallery in Camberwell.

Hair suggests that ‘the space and economies of domestic living have been an integral factor of Coracle’s poetics which have brought notions of warmth, intimacy,
dwelling, and social company into the arena of contemporary art as an alternative to the cold, indifferent space of the traditional gallery.’ (AF, p. 29). This was particularly evident in Coracle Gallery, the house-gallery run by the press, and the inspiration for Roberts’s thinking around the domestic scale and her suggestive explorations of the ‘house as format’ (HAF, passim). The building chosen by Cutts and Roberts for their first gallery on Camberwell New Road was a Georgian house, with plate glass display windows and a high-ceilinged gallery space at the front, which at 12ft x 11ft was not significantly larger than a living room. The rooms upstairs included a space that became the site of a more permanent art display, as well as a kitchen, a flat and a work room. Downstairs were the basements, in which were kept the printing machines and guillotine.

Responding to the challenges of exhibiting and working in this environment, Kay Roberts proposes the concept of ‘House as Format’, an idea she explores through an essay of the same name, which considers format in terms of the proportions of the domestic gallery, and also the spatial constraints that affect the format of published work. Coracle Press Gallery, uniting press and gallery on a domestic scale, is a useful case study for visualising forms of making production a way of life, enabling as it did ‘the integration, or rather reintegration of the living and working, visual and written, decorative and functional’.185 Bevis’s comments here on the ‘reintegration of the living and working’ evoke cottage industry models of bringing work into the home. However, work has never stopped being performed in the home – the continuous labour of ‘production and

reproduction’ is what makes home, and his thoughts elide these (typically gendered) forms of working in the home that enable everyday living.

Trevor Winkfield recalls his visits to Coracle in Camberwell, describing lace curtains hanging in the front windows and how ‘upstairs, on the top floor, sometimes one was invited for a cup of tea, and if one rubbed a porthole through the kitchen window’s condensation, one could glimpse three decrepit Victorian gnomes glowering in the garden flowerbed. The whole thing – gallery, bookshop, house upstairs – was as much an environmental experience as a Schwitters Merzbarn [sic].’

Being invited for tea recapitulates the conviviality and hospitality of the press, while the condensation on the windows further suggests the warmth of the interior. The garden also becomes part of the experience, the addition of gnomes broadening the domestic threshold. Winkfield’s reference to the Merzbau is particularly productive. Schwitters’s large-scale domestic collages recall the small press way of life, being described as ‘an unfinished permanent work in progress, intended to grow and spread’, which Schwitters started ‘again and again at the different locations where he lived […], carrying it around him like a snail-shell.’

This could easily be describing the Coracle oeuvre itself, the permanent work-in-progress that has been carried across to different locations. The snail shell simile recalls Cutts on his choice of ‘Coracle’ when naming the press. While ‘hunting for a noun’, ‘an object in the world’, he was drawn to the coracle as something that is carried on the

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back between uses, and to its ‘scale and domesticity’, ‘its function’ and ‘its adaptability’ 
\((BL, 6)\).

This series of artistic (re)creations is a helpful way to consider the press at different sites, Schwitters’s immersive merging of art and the domestic illuminating the Coracle model. Elisabeth Thomas describes Schwitters’s project as ‘a whole environment, and one that was in constant flux.’\(^{188}\) Meanwhile, Jaleh Mansoor writes of how Schwitters ‘continuously composed […] this assemblage’, using ‘found materials’,\(^{189}\) treating is as ‘a \textit{continuous project altered daily}’\(^{190}\)

‘The Dadaist Hans Richter generously saw \textit{Merzbau} as a living, daily changing document on Schwitters and his friends’, notes Mansoor.\(^{191}\) ‘Richter goes on to state, incredulously, “[Schwitters] even wanted to integrate the machine into art, along with kitsch, chair legs, singing and whispering,”reiterating the degree to which Schwitters’ process and use of materials effaced painting’s categorical boundaries.’\(^{192}\) Effacing categorical boundaries is a characteristic of the hybrid small press, and Cutts and Roberts were acutely aware of the importance of the house as a hybrid environmental experience, building on its domesticity rather than trying to conceal it. The house was not simply a shell to accommodate the gallery; its character enhanced the press’s domestic qualities. The house impacted the work in many ways, including the spatial and temporal

\(^{188}\) Elisabeth Thomas, \textit{In Search of Lost Art: Kurt Schwitters’s Merzbau} (2012) [accessed 19 June 2022].
\(^{190}\) Ibid., original emphasis.
\(^{191}\) Ibid.
\(^{192}\) Ibid.
constraints that Roberts describes – for example, the ‘Miniatures’ group exhibition charged the artists involved with making a small work ‘because Camberwell Coracle was quite small’ (BL, 8).

The house-gallery pushes against some of the constraints of the domestic, in a way that is less evident in the work of other presses in this study. In some ways, this is anticipated by Coracle’s approach to the Adana. While Clark embraces the machine’s limitations, Cutts describes employing methods to extend the printing area, using whatever was to hand. This domestic improvisation led to the use of pieces of tape, sticks and hairclips to expand temporarily the printable area (BL, 21).

Coracle became a collective for a short period in the early 80s, and Cutts describes the ‘patchwork’ of people coming and going in the space, some of whom occasionally slept in the house, including printing assistants, cleaners and students (BL, 8). People dropped in to help with the work of ‘collating, folding, finishing, gluing’ and ‘stitching’ (BL, 11), working together on the wider project, living and working in the space in different ways, and also collaborating with the space: ‘it was such a quirky space, you could only work with it’, observes Cutts (BL, 11). Design ideas were discussed ‘between a group of very sympathetic people’, ‘in sympathetic hands’ (BL, 9). ‘Improvisation’ was the order of the day given their financial constraints (BL, 8), and this contributed to the small press habit of continually reappraising everyday surroundings through a creative lens.

**Furniture after Brancusi**

Coracle’s sense of domesticity continually questions where ‘the work’ begins and ends, and also where the home begins and ends, perpetually testing the domestic threshold.
Cutts and Van Horn explore this in a series of pieces inspired by the artist Constantin Brancusi, published between 2010 and 2016. *After Brancusi* (2010), a concertina card, responds to Brancusi’s axiom that ‘all sculpture is furniture’, with ‘all furniture is sculpture’. All sculpture as furniture wears away at the sense of aura surrounding sculpture – furniture is designed to be touched, to be used. The statements sit at either end of the concertina, with a drawing of a bench by Van Horn between them. The bench is an invitation to sharing, its connotations of companionship and support again countering the ‘hands-off’ associations of the art piece.

The second of these works, *Brancusi’s Sewing Box & other implements 1923-1957* (2012) responds to the sale of some of the artist’s possessions at an auction in Paris. The items, which include a lemon squeezer, sewing box and cutlery, are described by Cutts and Van Horn as ‘domestic artefacts’, used by Brancusi for several decades in his studio. The nature of these artefacts – things used for cooking, eating and sewing – align with the foregrounding of these activities in the Coracle way of life, bespeaking a particular sensibility for Cutts and Van Horn and a continuity with their own daily lives. They note that the artist gave these items to two friends, who ‘continued to use them in their daily lives’. ‘The Sewing Box itself remained unsold after failing to reach its reserve price of 1000 euros: given the nature of all his work and his axiomatic *All Sculpture is Furniture*, it is remarkable that his domestic tools and objects should be of so little exchange value.’ ‘As exchange-values, all commodities are merely definite quantities

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193 Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, *After Brancusi* (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2010), non-paginated.
194 Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, *Brancusi’s Sewing Box & other implements 1923-1957* (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2012), non-paginated.
of congealed labour-time’, Marx argued. I would add that labour-time is not solely laid down in their initial production, but that these items also congeal the labour time implicated in their use, their participation in the labour of making a home and the roles they play in the unpaid labours of everyday life. As Godfrey observes, Marx suggested that ‘a man-made object, a commodity, may appear “a very trivial thing and easily understood”. But “it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties”. Because of the labour invested in it, it becomes a social thing, and assumes a transcendental nature far greater than its mere use-value.’ Objects bear the trace of the ongoing labours in which they participate, of their ‘social’ lives. Reflecting on the items sold at auction, the piece describes how ‘[t]he clarity of these objects remains, unbranded stylistically as art works, confirmed by the disregard their presence engendered in the saleroom. They are pure sculpture, and exist with the certain disposition of a sensibility, a way of life, of having been made and used.’ They are part of a way of life, which in this iteration is connected to the tactility – and sociability – of both making and use.

The most recent publication in the series, Brancusi’s Sewing Box & other works: an arrangement by Eiji Watanbe, Simon Cutts, Erica Van Horn & Coracle (2016) was published for a collaborative exhibition created by the named artists, again focused around these Brancusi pieces and their perceived lack of exchange value in an auction setting, particularly compared to ‘the so-called sculptures’. The piece points to a

196 Godfrey, p. 32.
197 Brancusi’s Sewing Box & other works.
‘discrepancy in the estimation of the relative value of objects from the same hand’. There is a keen sense of aura imbued in the artist’s hand, and Coracle emphasises the implication of objects in the way of life, if used in daily life, and passed between people. Living with the items, working with them appeals to Cutts and Van Horn’s worldview, and does not translate into exchange value. They prize use value much more – not only the work that went into making something, but the work of using it.

The Brancusi pieces explored by Cutts and Van Horn continue a theme from a show at the Coracle Gallery some 30 years earlier. ‘On Loan’ (1980) borrowed items from artists that were not necessarily a product of their own hand, but that were implicated in their wider practice. For example, Roger Ackling contributed a series of hats worn when he was out working (BL, 9). The ongoing interest in items adjacent to the way of life of other artists asserts Coracle’s expansive and fluid perspective upon practice.

‘The Invisible Everyday’ and IMMA

Coracle also expand the boundary of the domestic through public work that shines a light on some of the working practices that are usually undertaken at home. Cutts and Van Horn undertook two residencies at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) in Dublin in the mid-1990s. The first, in 1994, was described as an exhibition, titled ‘The Irish harp is not constructed but carved from a single piece of wood like a canoe’. For the project, Coracle Press moved into the media room of the museum, which became a workspace. Cutts and Van Horn worked on their book Views from the Windy House: The Notebooks of Rob Smith, ahead of the IMMA exhibition ‘Rob Smith: Paintings, Drawings, Notebooks
and Sketchbooks’, which took place that spring. The invitation card describes the exhibition as ‘a space for meeting, seeing and discussing Coracle’s ideas and practice.’ The artists worked there six days a week for just under three weeks in February 1994. The card’s description of Coracle work ‘adapting to each new set of circumstances and working with available resources’ recalls the continuous, adapting environmental experience of the Merzbau. The card also described how ‘Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn will continue their daily activity of the organising, assembling and finishing of various kinds of printed work, and will also be available for discussion.’ In a letter to curator Declan McGonagle, Cutts lays out Coracle’s plan to ‘utilise the room as part of the Museum, but activated by our presence and on-going work.’ Cutts outlines the ‘participatory project’ and proposes that ‘it requires an act of engagement with its audience, and this should follow directly from the activation of a space in a museum.’ The project entails different forms of participation, highlighted by the recurrent trope of ‘activation’, enabling a kind of co-performance between artists, audience and the museum as both place and institution.

The project underlines the domestic elements of the ‘residency’, with Cutts and Van Horn living much of their everyday activity within the museum space, making visible the labours of the press. In doing so, the artists become entangled in what Giard, Smith’s exhibition took place from 19 February-17 April 1994 at The Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, *The Irish harp is not constructed but carved out of a single tree like a canoe* (Dublin: Coracle, 1994).

Ibid.


Ibid.
borrowing from Paul Leuilliot, describes as ‘the “invisible everyday”’. Giard evokes the ‘silent and repetitive system of everyday servitudes that one carries out by habit’, unacknowledged acts of domestic maintenance. As part of making production a way of life, the presses reveal some of the processes behind the published work, but, as seen in pieces like *Companions & Menus*, Coracle has a somewhat ambivalent relationship with revealing the other ongoing labours of (re)producing the home.

The public display of their working practices in this manner serves to ‘flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art’, in the words of Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s ‘MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART, 1969!’. Ukeles proposes merging two aspects of her life – ‘maintenance everyday things’ such as ‘washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc.’, and art. There is a kinship between this strand of Conceptualism and the practice of Coracle Press, concretised in Ukeles’s dictum to ‘show your work’, but the labour of maintaining Coracle’s workspace remains hidden, presumably undertaken by museum staff after hours. Ukeles’s manifesto outlines a potential exhibition entitled ‘Care’, which would see her articulate the invisible everyday: ‘I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls i.e. “floor paintings, dustworks, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings”’: in sum, ‘MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK’. The hybridity, this hyphenated merging of her art practice and practising of the domestic space, recalls the mingling of kitchen duties and press activities in *A Smell of Printing*. Ukeles lists some of the imperatives of the artist, concluding with ‘Show your

\[\text{203} \text{ Giard “Plat du Jour”, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 171-198 (p. 171).}\]
\[\text{204} \text{ Ibid., p. 171.}\]
\[\text{205} \text{ Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*.}\]
work. Show it again.’, punning on the showing of art work in an exhibition, and this very public show of her work(ing), her regular maintenance labour, to draw attention to the way in which showing one’s work typically overlaps with concealing one’s working. In Coracle’s ‘On Loan’, this maxim was reversed, with artists revealing their congealed ‘use-time’, the non-commodifiable objects used during their practice, showing something metonymic of their working, rather than their work.

Ukeles’s model is a useful one to apply to the practice of the small press; ‘production as a way of life’ mirrors ‘MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK’. In the small press, wider creative practice becomes part of ‘the work’, but Ukeles’s proposal is a prompt to consider also domestic labour practices, opening up work that has historically been the domain of women and inviting it to take its place as part of art practice. If production is a way of life, if living creatively is vital to the holistic practice of these presses, then the duties of domestic living, the routines and rituals that permit the normal functioning of the domestic environment, must all be incorporated into any consideration of this way of life, and can also be considered under the subtitle Ukeles ascribes to her proposal: ‘CARE’.

Felski notes that ‘home is, in de Certeau’s terms, an active practicing [sic] of place. Even if home is synonymous with familiarity and routine, that familiarity is actively produced over time, above all through the effort and labor [sic] of women.’ (IEL, p. 87).

Alongside all the repetitive acts of the press are the maintenance acts of the home, which underpin and permit the press’s successful running. The maintenance acts that contribute to the press’s ‘way of life’ can be reappraised not as incidental to the press, but
fundamental to it. As Felski argues, ‘acts of innovation and creativity are not opposed to, but rather made possible by, the mundane cycles of the quotidian’ (IEL, p. 84).

The relationship of the small presses in this study to the maintenance of the home is somewhat ambivalent, as the interplays between revealing and concealing labour in pieces like *A Smell of Printing* and *Companions & Menus* begin to unpick, alongside the uniformity of mechanically-printed works that to some extent elide the tactility of operating the Adana. Practitioners write of the activity of the press, and of the book as a process, but the (re)production of familiarity is less prominently considered.

‘Mrs. Price Edition’, a 1988 collaboration between the Victoria Miro Gallery and Coracle, explores the visibility of labour more openly. The piece is an edition of 25 readymades, individually-boxed feather dusters with orange plumage and a yellow plastic wand, to which is attached an information card, detailing the work of Mrs Connie Price, a cleaner of galleries along Cork Street (where the Miro Gallery was located). Mrs Price ‘arrives at 2:30am, and leaves at 11’, her work therefore largely taking place at night, the garishly-coloured duster contrasting with her covert cleaning work. ‘Mrs Price Edition’ is a fitting tribute to its subject, the simple irreverence characteristic of much Coracle work concealing the labour involved in the making of the ready-made, much as the labour of the cleaner is hidden.

The piece draws attention to the maintenance involved in running the Miro Gallery. If the text is to be believed, and the cleaner keeps to the hours suggested above, the

labour is hidden, undertaken during the night, at times when the gallery is closed. ‘Mrs Price Edition’ engages with histories of art that interrogate ideas of labour and the art world itself, or what Helen Molesworth describes as ‘the Duchampian legacy of art’s investigation of its own meaning, value, and institutionality.’ It may be seen to symbolise the cleaning away of everything that obscures the labour of the Miro, while interrogating the structures and institutionality of this street of expensive art galleries. The piece also socialises the gallery by telling stories of those who care for it, and thereby carrying with it some of those values of warmth and intimacy observed by Hair in the Coracle house-gallery. ‘Mrs Price Edition’ was not Cutts’s only attempt to extend the domestic values of Coracle to his work at the Miro Gallery, the artist at one time placing a table in the window around which to conduct meetings, and in doing so bringing a visual representation of small press conviviality to the gallery’s ‘cold, indifferent space’ (BL, 13).

This chapter has demonstrated the profound importance of domesticity to the work of both Moschatel and Coracle Presses – as a site and subject of work, a spatial influence, a method of connecting to a perceived reader, a practised space of communality and a site of (re)production. The kitchen is a particularly critical space, a site rich with overlaid histories of labour and embodied memories of gesture, figured as a social space and a place of creative practice by both presses. The kitchen table emerged as a site of intertextuality for Coracle, and a synecdoche for small press domesticity, symbolising the work of small press production, and the work of hosting.

A complex guest-host relationship is enacted between practitioner and reader in small press work, ambiguous texts (host) inviting the reader (guest) in and creating a space for them to participate in the work’s production, while also arriving at the home of the reader through the postal network, and taking up residence in the domestic space. Forms such as the standing poem can hold their place on the table or mantelpiece, ‘taking part in the occasion’ and resisting the bookshelf, becoming active subjects within the domestic ecology.

Performing domesticity beyond its threshold exposes some of the processes and labours of the press and of the home. Coracle’s experiments with different ways of showing their ‘work’ help to flush the labours of the home ‘up to consciousness’, and question the value placed on artefacts of the everyday lives of artists.

The embodied nature of domestic work illuminates the labours of the press, but also the processes of (re)producing place. The improvisatory quality of the domestic, its reliance upon the available and the close at hand, is the object of further attention in Chapter Two, while my thoughts around expanding the perceived boundaries of place through embodied actions also open up questions that I continue to pursue in the next chapter, which explores small press localness.
CHAPTER TWO

the practice of living locally

Daily walking, in all weathers, in every season, becomes a sort of ground or continuum upon which the least emphatic occurrences are registered clearly.

– Thomas A Clark²⁰⁸

I found the poems in the fields,
And only wrote them down

– John Clare²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ John Clare, quoted by Simon Cutts (@thecoracler, 4 July 2020), ‘A small video of the stone barn in its location [ grid ref. 585001 ] The barn houses the aeolian neon of John Clare's line 'I found them in the fields and only wrote them down', hidden inside the tiny building where it has been illuminated since the summer of 2004. Simon Cutts' (tweet), <https://twitter.com/thecoracler/status/1279417825673781248> [accessed 21 June 2022].
The practice of living locally

We work from a spare room in our cottage in Cumbria, and are always aware of maintaining the balance between working indoors and being outside. Without the latter there would be no work to publish.\textsuperscript{210}

Richard Skelton’s description of the working set-up of Corbel Stone Press, established in response to advice from Thomas A Clark about the importance of ‘living a creative life’, initiates a dialogue between the domestic space and the places immediately beyond its walls.\textsuperscript{211} Having explored some of the challenges and opportunities of small press domesticity, I move to work at that balance between the domestic and the outdoor, the places that begin at the domestic threshold; in this chapter, my focus is Coracle Press’s and Corbel Stone Press’s extensive locally-focused practices. Occupying the balance between the domestic space and being outdoors is the rural localness that is the site of so much practice and published work by these artists.

Localness is written through the practices of these two presses in particular, neatly encapsulated in Van Horn’s idea of ‘living locally’. Given the prominence of domesticity in the small press way of life, a close engagement with the places just over the porous domestic threshold is inevitable. Localness is not easily definable, as we witnessed in Coracle’s non-concentric, relational position established by their change-of-address postcard. However, following Felski’s assertion that home and ‘the experiencing self’ are the core of a relational sense of place, localness in this chapter is defined in relation to

\textsuperscript{210} Allan, ‘Conversations with Poetry Micro-Publishers’, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
the domestic. Indeed, Gedalof’s account of the home as reproduced and always incomplete bundles domesticity, ‘belonging and community’ together ‘as a kind of work-in-progress.’

Sue Clifford and Angela King write of local distinctiveness and the small-scale as ‘a fineness of grain’, warning against trying to detect the ‘essence’ of ‘local distinctiveness’ – ‘[i]t is a compound thing and a messy one as well as being dynamic hence its elusiveness’ – and also stressing that ‘[s]mallness should not be confused with simplicity’, a maxim that might just as easily be applied to the small press. Their brand of ‘local distinctiveness’ is important for this chapter, for its emphasis on local ‘belonging’ as a symptom of attention and familiarity, rather than immanence. This definition also helps to refute what Felski terms the ‘fantasy of origin’ commonly associated with places considered to be one’s home, aligning with her assertion that home ‘need not be “where you’re from”’ and can refer instead to ‘any often-visited place that is the object of cathexis’ (IEL, p. 88). Van Horn’s deceptively compact series title Living Locally sets the tone for small press localism, encapsulating both localness as an ongoing process, an active (re)producing of place, and as something that you do, not that you be, in an attempt to counter hostile, conservative parochialism. Clifford and King’s definition also helpfully acknowledges ‘compound’, ‘messy’ localness, in a way that appeals to the serial, multimedia quality of many of the pieces at the heart of this chapter, and to the ongoing, practised nature of place as I understand it in this thesis. Their defence of smallness

212 Gedalof, ‘Taking (a) Place’, p. 106.
converses with the privileging of small-scale everyday forms, such as the postcard, by Coracle and across the small press. In adopting these forms, small press practitioners are not necessarily condensing, proposing an essence or simplifying, but rather formalising that fineness of grain.

Clifford and King argue that a locale is defined by those who live, work and play there (LD, p. 11), recalling the unity of work, leisure and play that Keith Snell ascribes to a now displaced mode of localness. Snell argues that historic models of rural localism are ‘increasingly jostled aside through the technology of modern travel and the separations of work, home and leisure.’ While avoiding the suggestion that home and work are ever truly separable (remembering Bevis’s sense of Coracle’s ‘reintegration’ of ‘living and working’, with its inherent elision of the continual unpaid maintenance work fundamental to living) these complementary accounts of local belonging as symptomatic of living, working and playing in the same area is particularly resonant in the small press context. Indeed, I have already demonstrated how the small press tenet of ‘production as a way of life’ understands work, home and leisure as indivisible. In light of this, the small press is ideally placed to engage deeply with questions around the local, its foregrounding of the intricate connections between home and work having implications beyond the domestic space. Moreover, the technology of modern travel is peripheral to small press practice, which strongly foregrounds walking.

Indeed, localness in the small press is overwhelmingly defined on foot, with repetitive walked routes building an accretive locale – as Rebecca Solnit writes, walking ‘is a mode of making the world as well as being in it’.\textsuperscript{215} The localness exhibited by the press is redolent of that captured in the Welsh \textit{milltir sgwâr}, meaning one’s local or familiar area, which translates literally as ‘square mile’.\textsuperscript{216} The term indicates a walked relationship with the local; recall that the mile originally connoted the length of one thousand paces.\textsuperscript{217} Pierre Mayol describes the neighbourhood as ‘the result of a walk, of a succession of steps on a road, conveyed little by little through the organic link to one’s lodgings.’\textsuperscript{218} Highlighting the organic nature of paced place takes us back to Massey’s refutation of firmly bordered place, while its sense of something growing slowly, little by little, stresses that localness emerges through time, routine and familiarity.

The language of localness is distinctly corporeal; we speak of the close at hand, of places that are in ‘easy reach’ of us or within walking distance. The ‘by hand’ sensibility of the press extends into tactile engagements with the close at hand, local place experienced through, to borrow Clark’s words, ‘all that your hands can reach’.\textsuperscript{219} Living locally might easily be taken to define a mode of living mediated \textit{locally}, in the sense of characterised by a particular area of the body. In the small press, this is performed through routes taken on foot and things gathered and carried in the hands.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{217} ‘Mile’ in \textit{The Oxford English Dictionary} [online], <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/118382?rskey=WeAtVG&result=1#eid> [accessed 30 July 2022].
\textsuperscript{218} Pierre Mayol, ‘The Neighbourhood’, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Living}, pp. 7-13 (p. 10).
\textsuperscript{219} Thomas A Clark, Generosity (Dundee: Poetry Beyond Text, 2010).
\end{flushright}
This chapter is concerned with three core elements of local place-based practice in the small press: finding, diarising and mapping. Each of these is an embodied practice, enabled by walking. Section One considers the incorporation of the found into small press work, but also focuses upon the processes of finding. I emphasise the tactility of finding, and consider expressions of the haptic in the work. Section Two examines the journal or diary in Corbel Stone and Coracle, as an incremental and sometimes handwritten form, charting linguistic localisms and local walking. Finally, Section Three complicates localness, conveying the complexities of defining local in relation to the domestic. I address maps as a form of extraction, while reflecting on more informal mappings in Richard Skelton’s practice.

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**Section One: Finding**

Small press practitioners are prodigious proponents of the found, cultivating that improvisatory, resourceful sensibility inherent in ‘adapting to each new set of circumstances and working with available resources’, to feel for the character of the local. My use of *found* is cautious; I am wary of the term’s anthropocentrism, and the passivity that it ascribes to more-than-human bodies. I reflect on this in more depth in Chapter Four, but for now, I continue to employ ‘found’, while working to shift focus to the processes of finding.

Nancy Kuhl has written about Van Horn’s ‘frequent recycling of materials left over from other projects or salvaged from daily life. “I have a long habit of not wasting anything”'
the artist writes, “[I have made] a great many books from the detritus of my own work process. For me, they retain all of the excitement and the imperative quality of the act of making.”

Here, Van Horn foregrounds the processual, but also highlights economical and ecological models of working, predicated upon thriftiness and re-use. The reappropriation of small press work is not solely enacted through the repurposed detritus of offcuts and half-used ideas. The common practice of finding material by returning to previously published texts reasserts the small press as an ongoing corpus, in which a concept or image might be extended across several decades. Returning to Freeman’s thoughts examined in the introduction, these forms of reuse and repetition carry with them a ‘history of attentiveness’, a depth of thought belied by the words or phrases in isolation. In some cases, these repetitions become like mantras of the press. Cutts describes this practice in relation to ‘I prefer the streams of the mountains to the sea’, a piece – itself originally ‘found’ in a version of the Cuban song Guantanamera – to which he has returned many times in different media and formats across the lifetime of Coracle. ‘The poem’, Cutts suggests, has ‘remained fallow at times, but always constant.’

His arable language evokes another frequently-quoted small press dictum, John Clare’s ‘I found the poems in the fields/ And only wrote them down’. In one of several iterations through his work, Cutts renders Clare’s words as a neon sign hanging in a stone barn in a field, powered by a wind turbine. The lines are incorporated verbatim into Jonathan

Williams’s ‘Symphony No.3, in D Minor’ (AF, p. 25), while Clark refers to them in an interview as an analogy for producing found poetry (SP, pp.62-3). As Tarbuck points out, Clark misquotes Clare: ‘I found the poems in the field and merely wrote them down’. This, Tarbuck argues, ‘indicates the differing aesthetic hierarchies at work in Clark and Clare’s respective poetics: his “merely” supersedes Clare’s less self-effacing “only”’, locating Clark as not inspired by ‘divinely ordered nature’, but as ‘merely a labourer who happens upon moments.’ (SP, pp. 62-3). In this, Tarbuck locates Clark within a more commonplace localness unmediated by the divine.

Clare’s lines again recall the small press’s dismantling of the genius poet figure, enacting an anti-Romantic distribution of agency that limits the poet to ‘merely’ writing down their found words. Yet, the modest presentation of these gleaned words is balanced by the sense of insight and connectedness to the local borne by the shared history of attention underpinning them. The lines become one of Hair’s ‘social texts’, locating them (appropriately) within the field of small press lore, field suggesting collective knowledge or expertise, shared tracts of knowledge and oral, gestural, non-textual forms of communication merely written down. Found words thereby embed a sense of the collective; Kotz observes this characteristic in numerous works of the mid-century, whose ‘extreme fragmentation of language seemed to divorce the utterance from the expression of any single speaker.’223 The randomness, the ‘happening-upon’, of finding also evokes

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223 Kotz, p. 138.
that Latourian sense of surprise, of a creation exceeding the actions of its producer, further dispelling the ‘mastery’ of the poet.

For Tarlo, working with found material ‘insists that language is never wholly one’s own in poetic practice’. She cites writers whose work instead ‘draws attention to the textual, material quality of poetry and, above all, to the fact that it exists in a sea’ – or might we say field – ‘of other textual, material language, rather than as a separate poetic discourse existing within its own rarefied tradition. Kerridge describes this refusal to occupy a “sheltered” poetic space as, in itself, a “recognition of interdependency and complicity”’. This sheltered poetic space converses with the secluded literary space of the book explored by Clark; found poetry becomes one way to wear away at a sense of the book as closed-off or isolated. The image of language as a shared field appeals to the small press as a sociable, networked community and, as Tarlo observes, ‘[i]t is notable that many poets who use found text also engage in collaborative practice.’ Clare’s (and Cutts’s, Clark’s and Williams’s) poems found in the field also recall Tarlo’s suggestion that ‘practice based within the landscape enables ‘a “finding” of text from a non-literary, material source.’ This certainly aligns with Coracle practice, as Cutts and Van Horn harvest material from the day-to-day of their surroundings – conversations, signs, the weather – for their text works, in doing so incorporating some of the textures of the local through a pronounced collage element.

225 Ibid., p. 126
226 Ibid., p. 126
227 Tarlo, cited in Richards, p. 34.
Found

The first book produced by Cutts and Van Horn in Ireland sets the tone for a suite of findings scattered through their Ballybeg field-lore. *14 Blackthorns* (1999), also known as *14 Blackthorns: A Fascicule*, responds to the finding of a bundle of blackthorn sticks in the soils of their barn. Van Horn’s silhouetted drawings of the sticks are interleaved with pieces of writing by Cutts, including another iteration of the ‘Perigordien’, which embeds domesticity at the centre of their newly-established place. The process of moving to Ballybeg is itself clothed in the unpredictability of finding. Caught in a rain shower while walking in Ireland at around the period of their second IMMA residency, Cutts and Van Horn were offered a lift by a local man, who then also offered to sell them the house.

The book tells of the bundle of sticks being ‘found/ in the soft floor/ of the barn/ tied with baling/ twine & bound/ for market’. The practitioners’ intervention redirects the sticks from the Market, their use value (as walking sticks or ‘cudgels’) overtaking their exchange value. Instead of being bound with twine they were drawn and bound into a book, exhibited in galleries, and now hang on the wall in Cutts and Van Horn’s home. The fact that the first find in their new home is an aid to the walking, an act that opens up and creates the local area, is particularly significant. The sticks also encode walks previously taken; Cutts’s poems term them ‘silhouettes/ of promenades/ taken after-dark’. The sticks describe (*trace*) walks past and to come, are shaped by them, symbolise them. Displayed

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228 Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn, *14 Blackthorns: A Fascicule* (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 1999), non-paginated.

on the wall of the house, they reach back to Coracle’s *On Loan* exhibition in Camberwell, as, ‘something related’ to their work that then becomes a piece in itself (*BL*, 8).

A ‘fascicule’, the book’s subtitle, can quite simply denote a bundle of sticks, but also carries resonant additional meanings. As a ‘part, number, ‘livraison’ (of a work published by instalments)’, the book asserts its place as an incremental work of the press; it is a self-proclaimed instalment in the press’s wider oeuvre. The word also describes bundles of connective tissue in the human body, which seems fitting given the connection between the sticks and the bodily activities of walking and carrying. Clark writes that ‘[a] stick of ash or blackthorn, through long use, will adjust itself to the palm’, evoking a sympathy between body and stick, nurtured by continued use.231

A table at the end of the book, entitled ‘Walks on the Howgills with Wainwright’, is left blank, to be filled in with the date, start and finish time of the walk, companions and weather. The sticks themselves are companions and aids to walking borne from the local land, and when Cutts speaks of Van Horn’s drawings, he remarks how the pair noticed that each stick ‘had a very distinct personality’ (*BL*, 21).

As well as yielding up its crop of cudgels, the soil around Cutts and Van Horn’s home is populated with rusting objects from the building’s previous life as a farm. Van Horn explores these in *Rusted* (2004) and *My Ironmongery* (2015), and on her blog, while drawings of the artefacts are dispersed through the pages of *Living Locally* (Uniform

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231 Clark, ‘In Praise of Walking’.
The items narrate a story of the place – they were components of farming machinery, they stopped being used, they rusted and were shaped by the weather and the soils of the area. They are the rusted remnants of local work, drawing attention to the story of the land, area and communities, narrating localness through histories of work. *Rusted* is a pamphlet depicting ‘Six Small Iron Articles Of Unknown Use Found & Drawn’. These ‘articles’ join the ‘fascicule’ in suggesting themselves as a distinct part in something wider. ‘Each metal piece was a part of something, a solution to a specific problem. That is all I know’, Van Horn acknowledges. Rusted speaks of a community, of the impress of hands on machinery and the rust and decline of skills left untended. Giard writes of gesture in this way, observing the erasing of commonplace ‘technical gestures’ from ‘common consciousness’, and of language requiring ‘an entire mobilization of the body, translated by the moving of the hand, of the arm, sometimes of the entire body swinging in cadence to the rhythm of successive efforts demanded by the task at hand.’ Van Horn’s rusted articles were a part of a wider network of skills and somatic knowledge, relationships with the land and rural labour, but now depict the corroding of previously ‘polished gestures’.

Beyond the title, Van Horn offers no exegesis within the pamphlet, but the items themselves narrate the story of different forms of writing and working, both in their previous lives and through their rewriting by the forces of the landscape. The articles allow

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Van Horn to tell stories that exceed her lived experience, as agency is dispersed in this shared story-telling. They present a hybrid, co-written account of place, human-made objects that are changed and made strange both through their interactions with the soil and with the change in land use and local knowledge. *‘Rusted’,* writes Kuhl, ‘exemplifies an interest in the unassuming articles and quotidian practices of daily work, be it domestic labor [sic] in and around her home and the surrounding land or in the work of making art.’ Kuhl’s ‘in and around her home’ captures the domesticity that underpins Coracle’s local work.

Van Horn’s two published responses to these found pieces, roughly ten years apart, bookend a decade in which she collected dozens of rusted articles from her locale. Charting some of the processes leading up to the creation of her ‘ironmongery on paper’, the artist describes her committed ‘drawing and re-drawing’ of the rusted items:

> Since everything I find here is usually agricultural in its initial use, the things are often repeats of the earlier found things. Now I am attempting to document the same things and the differences of the same things. It is often tedious as I am constantly feeling that my drawing has become a sort of stuttering.

Her account of the strangeness of repetition recalls Bennett’s thoughts on worrying at things until their liveliness surfaces, and this taps into some of the tensions that underlie Van Horn’s description of the articles in *Rusted* as ‘found’ – countered as this instantly is by her account of how they ‘appear regularly in the soil’. This tension helps to dislocate the anthropocentric ‘found’, through the surprise and randomness of the items emerging

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238 Kuhl, *The Book Remembers Everything*, p. 11
from the soil without her input. Van Horn recounts taking some of the rusted articles to the local blacksmith, who sanded them down to create a flat surface for printing. After Cutts mounted the objects onto wooden blocks, they attempted to print with them, but found that they wouldn’t work in the Adana, nor when Van Horn inked them up individually with a hand roller.239 The attempt to press an imprint of these found fragments into the page suggests the desire for a haptic trace, creating a legacy for them beyond their ‘functional’ lives.

**Finding**

Tarlo’s account of unearthing material from non-textual sources shifts emphasis away from the *found*, and towards a practice of *finding*. This approach feels a more comfortable fit for the work discussed in this chapter, stressing as it does the *processes* of finding and suggesting a more resonant afterlife than is offered by the resolutely past tense ‘found’; as Iain Sinclair would have it, ‘in the finding is the experience’.240 Walking in particular facilitates an openness to encountering ‘[t]he random, the unscreened, [and] allows you to find what you don’t know you are looking for’.241 Coracle has been described as ‘led by curiosity’242 – being ‘led’ a further instance of framing the creative process as collective, or minimising the control of the ‘genius poet’ – and this curiosity, coupled with the opportunities enmeshed in their daily walking practices, initiates a series of findings. The Coracle pamphlet *Led Astray by Language*, which records a ‘wandering interlude, a

242 Kirwan.
peregrination, towards a meeting with Jonathan Williams on his 77th birthday’ entrenches this receptivity towards the random.\textsuperscript{243} Sometimes appearing as the subtitle of the book, this account of wandering and peregrination makes even crossing the paratextual threshold into the main body of the book feel like a series of digressions. The use of ‘towards’ meanwhile is redolent of Cutts’s easy-going account of small press practitioners working ‘towards an accumulation’ that is their oeuvre.

Relocating focus from the passivity of the ‘found’ into a perspective that foregrounds finding as a process reaches out to Renu Bora’s differentiation between texture and texxture. Texture, he argues, is ‘the surface resonance or quality of an object or material […] its qualities [that] if touched, brushed, stroked, or mapped, would yield certain properties and sensations that can usually be anticipated by looking.’\textsuperscript{244} His coinage texxture meanwhile denotes ‘the stuffness of material structure’, something that ‘complicates the internal’ and that is more ‘narrative or temporal’ than texture.\textsuperscript{245} Eve Sedgwick glosses texxture as ‘the kind of texture that is dense with offered information about how, substantively, historically, materially, it came into being’.\textsuperscript{246} If regular texture is ‘performing “the willed erasure of its history”’, then texxture ‘is wrought with the materiality of its own becoming. Drawing attention to the writing processes that both reveal and conceal its own construction.’\textsuperscript{247} ‘Thinking about texxture and its internal

\textsuperscript{243} Simon Cutts, Richard Deming, Nancy Kuhl and Erica Van Horn, \textit{Led astray by language: a wandering interlude, a peregrination} (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2006).
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid. p. 99.
complications’, argues Sarah Jackson, ‘thus demands that we take into account the ways that a text’s own history shapes its surface.’\textsuperscript{248} I will use this model to think about findings and the found in the small press. If the found is about texture, finding is about texxture, in a way that continues the dialogue between the mix of deliberate concealment of the work involved in small press pieces, versus its exposure.

\textit{ARGO} is a richly tex(x)tured walking piece by Van Horn, which brings focus to the processes of finding, and the incorporation of the found into published work. \textit{ARGO} falls within Van Horn’s \textit{Italian Lessons} series (1989-1999), which charts the artist finding her place in a new locality.\textsuperscript{249} The series comprises 17 paper-based responses to living in Florence with Cutts in the early 1990s, and includes a number of found objects, photographs of Van Horn and handwritten excerpts from her journals and notebooks. \textit{Italian Lessons} is a blueprint for the models of attention seen in the later \textit{Living Locally} series, and is distinctly embodied. The first piece is postcard sized, bearing a black-and-white photograph of Van Horn, seated, arms spread wide, face in profile. Lessons 8, 9 and 10 are included in \textit{Companions & Menus}, and are again black-and-white photographs of Van Horn making hand gestures or facial expressions, perhaps some of the ‘abundant emblematic gestures’ used in Italy.\textsuperscript{250} Throughout \textit{Italian Lessons}, Van Horn decentres the linguistic and the textual, rendering them only part of understanding or relating to a
locale. The other elements are bodily, kinaesthetic, learned on foot or through hand gestures, or via what can be gathered and carried. For Van Horn, finding from non-textual sources also includes forms of kinesic inheritance, learning local gestures as non-linguistic forms of communication.

ARGO, Italian Lesson No. 6, narrates the story of its becoming. It is a work founded upon findings, charting both the artist’s discovery of a number of small identical printed pieces of paper in the street, and her journey into uncovering their origins. The title, taken from the company name printed onto the paper tickets, nods to the classical ship Argo, and the pieces of paper become the vessel that carries Van Horn on her voyage of discovery. The artist seeks not the authority of the golden fleece – indeed, the quest opposes authority in its incorporation of the ‘found’, its focus on finding and her ambiguous status as a learner – rather, she attempts to capture the meaning of small printed paper rectangles that litter the shopping streets of Florence.

Clark’s In Quest of the Ordinary (2020), the title printed onto a tote bag, effects a similar contrast between quest, as an arduous and challenging odyssean journey, and the desired end goal of that quest – the ordinary. The bag makes visual the process of gathering from a non-textual source; it is a receptacle for the ordinary, the stuff of the everyday, hinting at its role in ordinary maintenance tasks, such as shopping and gathering nourishment. Against the heightened language of the quest, or the heroic voyage, these forms of finding are enacted at the human, bodily scale, items gathered,

251 Thomas A Clark, In Quest of the Ordinary (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2020).
carried and taken home. A further flicker between the vernacular and the formal occurs in *ARGO*, the title a homophonic pun on ‘argot’, pitching slang against classical allusion. Argot also reacts against the formal language classes that come to mind when hearing the series title *Italian Lessons*, the type teaching a rigid ‘standard’ form of the Italian language. Indeed, the pamphlet challenges formal classes as a way of knowing a place. *Italian Lesson Number 4* anticipates this reaction against formality, with the artist creating an edition of 66 miniature booklets from exercise sheets and notes seemingly taken during language classes, chopped up and randomly re-assembled.

*ARGO*’s narrative is predicated upon a series of findings – initially of the pieces of paper, and then Van Horn’s search to understand why they have been left in the street. A small observation is stitched into a narrative that runs through the entire pamphlet, beginning with her assumption that the dropped papers are ‘just trash’, before moving onto different possibilities – perhaps they are receipts for purchases, prize coupons, health warnings from cigarette packets – before learning that they are left as receipts by nightwatchmen to confirm that a building has been checked overnight. The pamphlet cover features a copy of the ticket: a small rectangle printed with the word *ARGO*, several words of Italian and the company’s contact details. Copies of the *ARGO* label appear throughout the pamphlet, placed opposite pages of narrative in Van Horn’s handwriting, and an original label is glued into the final page. The narrative is paced both on foot and by hand, as reading is slowed by navigating the handwritten words and by the turning of pages. If the book is a ‘secluded literary space’, then the reader performs their own finding
process with each turn of the page, and a sense of walking alongside Van Horn is evoked by the regular appearance of the reproduced label.

The piece plays on the modes of attention experienced by the walker; a journey through the book is interrupted by the little tickets, re-enacting their disruption of Van Horn’s walks through the streets of Florence. Yet as the narrative progresses, they become less of a focus, their regularity making them predictable, the eye growing acclimatised, as it might on any walk through familiar streets. As the pamphlet nears its end, Van Horn reclaims the reader’s attention towards the labels, incorporating a copy of the ticket that shows both the front and the back, providing new information and momentarily breaking into the narrative.

Van Horn observes that the labels are rarely swept up, and so usually become ground into the street. She gathers a few to study, and ends up collecting over 200, which delimits the size of the edition. The book carries the imprint of her regular journeys, of things carried out on foot and collected by hand, containing a trace of the material place in the glued-in ticket. ‘If I hadn’t been going to Italian lessons every morning at 9 I never would have collected so many clean ones’, she notes.252 The content of these Italian lessons is not discussed in ARGO. Indeed, the series as a whole seems mainly to gather things peripheral to her formal lessons, which are side-lined by these digressions, or wandering interludes. In this way, her journey towards learning Italian (in whatever way

252 Van Horn, ARGO.
that means for her) starts to recall the sense of place evoked in Coracle’s change-of-address postcard; relational and more interested in things passed along the way.

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**Section Two: ‘observing daily detail’: small press diarising**

Coracle’s series *Living Locally* (2001-) began after Cutts and Van Horn’s move to Tipperary. Several dozen books, cards, an online journal and published ephemera contribute to what Van Horn calls ‘a translation of the vernacular speech of where I live’.

While Cutts and Van Horn occasionally collaborate on pieces for *Living Locally*, most are produced primarily by Van Horn. She expands her description of the series on her blog:

> From [the blog’s] beginning in 2007, the exercise has been to describe my life in rural Ireland. I do not make any claim that this life is the life of anyone else here. I simply note the things that I observe and learn in a quiet place where perhaps not very much happens. I will always be an outsider looking in, but I like to think that just by sticking around, I am at least Local Enough.

By labelling *Living Locally* as an exercise, Van Horn highlights the practised nature of her local experience, something carried out continually. With each description of the project, Van Horn directly addresses her outsider status. Here, she highlights the range of meaning conveyed by ‘local’ depending on its grammatical function. She does not claim to be a local (n.), but to be *local enough* (adj.). The adverbial series title, moreover,

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254 Erica Van Horn, *Above* (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2016), non-paginated.
situates Van Horn as doing rather than being local. Like domesticity, her localness is remade and reproduced, rather than innate.

Framing the local as a practice, an accretion of habit and pattern, also calls back to Felski’s thoughts around the everyday, particularly her assertion that ‘the quotidian is not an objectively given quality but a lived’ – or perhaps more appropriately living – ‘relationship’ (IEL, p. 95). Felski discerns the value of the ordinary and the everyday, in a way that converses with Van Horn’s appreciation of the rich details of a place ‘where perhaps not very much happens’, the same place that has nevertheless inspired a vast amount of writing and reflection for the artist. Accepting living locally as an exercise, a series of patterns and routines, also helpfully deflects potential criticism of the local as immanent, and thereby insular and exclusive, with Van Horn as outsider perhaps ideally placed to recognise local distinctiveness, depict localness as an experience of repetition and learning, and maintain awareness of larger-scale forces inflecting the local.

A central output of Living Locally is the online journal, with Van Horn typically recording events from her life over several days every week. The entries tend to distil a single event from the artist’s day, and primarily narrate situations encountered on foot during daily walks on the land around her home. Clark writes that ‘[d]aily walking, in all weathers, in every season, becomes a sort of ground or continuum upon which the least emphatic occurrences are registered clearly’; the journal is the ideal form through which to register such occurrences. The word ‘journal’ itself reverberates with many layers of

\[256\] Clark, \textit{In Praise of Walking}.\]
meaning – etymologically entwined with ‘journey’, it connotes the amount of travel that could take place in one day, or work achieved across the day (such as how much land could be ploughed). Journal was also historically ‘a measure of land’, and Living Locally works to get the measure of the land around Van Horn’s home.257

Susan Stewart argues that the journey ‘belongs to the moral universe of preindustrialism. It marks the passage of the sun through the sky, the concomitant passage of the body’s labor [sic] through the day, and the pilgrimage or passage of life’, and it connects ‘lived experience to the natural world’.258 The diary form, being slow and incremental, is apposite for thinking about the daily practices of living locally. While inheriting the nature diary tradition, Van Horn’s journals also give accounts of interactions with local people and local language, and explore the working process of the press. The online journal is one aspect of Living Locally, but the series as a whole is a kind of dispersed diary, comprising as it does informal stories of the area, some hand-written pieces and texts written with a conversational first-person tone. The journals record local speech, conversations, stories and customs, as well as accounts of Coracle’s working practices.

The journal takes its name from the first publication in the Living Locally series, Some Words for Living Locally (2001).259 In spite of the book’s titular emphasis upon adverbial localness, on the local as something that Van Horn is doing rather than being,

258 Stewart, On Longing, pp. 59-60.
259 Erica Van Horn, Some Words for Living Locally (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2001).
the series continually draws attention to markers of belonging and identity. The pamphlet replicates an old Irish passport in its form, a green folded card sleeve bearing the ‘Aliens Order, 1946’, over which is printed the title. The cover highlights Van Horn’s immigrant status, and the inside cover flaps bear her photograph, thumb print, signature and other personal details. The stamping of title onto document and Van Horn’s address onto her photo recount uneasily interlinked layers of identity and place, mediated by the state and manned borders.

The work’s form extends the press’s investigations into the relationship between simple printed paper pieces and their spaces – the secluded space of the book, the static standing card, the mobile postcard – and now a pamphlet that resembles a passport. Like the postcard, the passport symbolises movement through space, but without the former’s stealth informal quality. Rather, it is an enabling document that permits other people to move with it, but that also refuses access to others, a symbol of denial and control. Van Horn shows how much is shared formally by these travel documents and the small, modest paper pieces of the press, the apparently ephemeral carrying unexpected weight.

Within are eight words used locally, with definitions. If the work is a phrasebook or guide for how to live locally, it offers a particular representation of local life. Words for soil, hedges, damsons, kindling, the afternoon, shopping, and bidding someone farewell all speak to a particular mode of living, one that is communal, rural and cyclical: ‘Good-luck’ is employed as a phrase for parting, because ‘Goodbye is final, therefore rarely used’ (p.
‘Goodbye’ would work against the circularity of living locally. The definitions offer a loose diurnal cycle, moving from origins, growth and renewal, to fire, close of day and words for farewell. ‘Everyday life’, Felski argues, ‘is above all a temporal term. As such, it conveys the fact of repetition; it refers not to the singular or unique but to that which happens “day after day.” The activities of sleeping, eating, and working conform to regular diurnal rhythms that are in turn embedded within larger cycles of repetition: the weekend, the annual holiday’ (IEL, p. 81). Coracle’s way of life is folded into these temporal cycles. One of the first entries on the blog back in 2007, even before Van Horn had signposted the purpose or scope of the journal, opens: ‘We are still glueing and folding the small publication of FRENCH PASTRY by Cralan Kelder. It seems like it is taking forever to finish it, but that’s probably something we can blame, like everything else, on the weather.’ Beginning with how she and Cutts are ‘still’ carrying out this work, and not explaining the Kelder book, naturalises their work within the ongoing rhythms of their localness. The practices of production are also embedded within ‘larger cycles of repetition’, affected by the seasons and climate. Van Horn records Cutts moving the Adana press from the book barn into the printing shed:

He moved it down to the book barn in the first bitterly cold days of December. It was simply too cold to do any work up in the printing shed. By the time we got it ready for work with a halogen light to provide both heat and light, and extension leads coming from the window of the big room in the house and the ink left somewhere for at least an hour to allow it to warm and soften up, it was already getting dark and so much preparation work had been done that the work of printing seemed like one chore too many. Moving the press down to the book barn for a few months was an easier

260 Ibid. p. 8.
option. Now that spring is here the press has migrated back to its warm weather home. A form of transhumance.\textsuperscript{262}

Environmental rhythms seep into their working routines, and implicate Coracle in the rhythms of their locale, this ‘form of transhumance’ undoubtedly reflecting their own take on the seasonal movement of animals within the farms adjacent to their home.

Felski inserts repetition into the legitimising framework of tradition and routine, and argues that doing so is not to be considered a form of conservatism. Rather, she notes the way in which, over time, certain ‘activities have gained value precisely because they repeat what has gone before. Repetition, understood as ritual, provides a connection to ancestry and tradition; it situates the individual in an imagined community that spans historical time. It is thus not opposed to transcendence, but the means of transcending one’s historically limited existence’ (\textit{IEL}, p. 83). As an introduction to the \textit{Living Locally} series and the vernacular of Ballybeg, \textit{Some Words} fits comfortably into the realm of the everyday as evoked by Felski – that of mundane tasks, incidental encounters and work. In addition, by speaking to the repetitions of the everyday, Van Horn also locates herself in an imagined, temporally-distant community, connected to historic inhabitants and their customs. Any perceived limitations of the day are stretched out into deep connections across time.

Van Horn decided to begin the journal as a way to facilitate writing ‘a little bit each day, no matter how brief or inconsequential.’\textsuperscript{263} The repeated ritual of writing builds to a tradition, a sense of continuity, and as a result the artist is able to connect to issues on a


larger scale through the lens of domestic and localised minuitiae, the global refracted through the local. A journal entry that begins with her collecting a scatter of clothes pegs blown onto the lawn from their container moves into contemplating the rain-saturated grass and then expands out into reflecting on multiple months of persistent rain: ‘Early on, they said it was the worst summer in living memory. Then they said it was the worst summer since 1867. Now they say that this is the worst summer ever. They are right. My raincoat has lost its ability to keep out the wet.’ This reported speech, the introduction of the unknown ‘they’, suggests the collective voice of the community, or perhaps a more distant voice of authority (weather presenters or newsreaders) beyond Van Horn’s locale bringing tidings of unsettling changes. Unusual events are registered starkly against the baseline of dailiness and walking. Her account of tending the garden, and noticing the simultaneous appearance of daffodils, snowdrops and a Lenten Rose in early January speaks of larger-scale changes: ‘Once again, it is hard to know what season it is with so many mixed messages between the mild weather and the calendar telling me that it is early January.’ Two years later, the ‘not normal’ sound of nesting birds and their young, again in January, prompts the observation that ‘everything is a bit off’ – ‘[i]t sounds the way it usually sounds in the spring.’ The recession in Ireland, Covid-19, climate change, hunting, crime and rural neglect all intrude into the routines of Van Horn’s local life.

Walking

The daily walking advocated by Clark is essential to Van Horn’s practice of ‘observing daily detail.’267 ‘Paying attention to gather the detail of those things which are too normal to be thought about is what I enjoy’, she notes.268 Like the acclimatised attention depicted in ARGO, walking soon becomes routine: ‘Sometimes I feel like every day’s walk is blurring into the last walk, or into last week’s walk. I look at the same things but they really are never the same and always a little different.’269 This recalls the stuttering experience of drawing her rusted articles, those attempts to discern ‘the differences of the same things’. Walking is a form of investigation in the journals. Van Horn describes taking ‘a nice quiet and exploratory walk. Everything was familiar and everything, as always, was completely new.’270 Walking is the frame within which Van Horn’s dailiness is most frequently shaped, through the series of encounters and findings that take place on the paths, and upon that walked continuum.

The walk is a prelude to social interaction – bumping into neighbours, passing farmers in the field or meeting the postman. The social network of Cutts and Van Horn’s locale is distinctly different from their small press network. Where Cutts previously described Coracle being labelled ‘the people who send things to each other in the post’, the pair now recount being called “the people who make books”, “the people who walk”271

268 Ibid.
271 Kirwan, In rural Tipperary.
and ‘the people who live in the house with words on it’. The combination of these attributes is no coincidence, their interconnection being at the forefront of Coracle’s local practice. Van Horn records a walk with Cutts in the Knocklofty mountains, during which meeting a stranger reasserts their home place as vital to their local identities. The man ‘asked a lot of questions because he needed to know who we were and where we lived. Where we lived would help to explain who we were.’ The home is always the anchoring point of their local belonging.

Van Horn’s daily walking reiterates the home as the centre of their lives, and sometimes intersects with the routes of others living locally. She records meeting a woman walking her dog and assumes the woman must be new to the area.

We spoke a little and I found that she is not new, but that she has just taken to walking in a bigger loop from her house. I knew her family and their fields and it was interesting to put her into context. She knew me by sight and knew our house.

Her account speaks to the experience of localness written by Corbel Stone Press, Richardson and Skelton’s work having been likened to a kind of ‘vertical travel’. ‘[W]e tend to find places and stay there’, notes Skelton. ‘There isn’t much movement beyond a kind of circling around the same centre over and over.’ In much of Richardson and Skelton’s collaborative work, that centre point is also their home.

276 Ibid., p. 391.
Skelton has kept his own sporadic journals of living locally, and in a blog entry of 2014, recording life in the Duddon Valley in Cumbria, he writes of a track walked almost every day for more than 18 months, and of learning to acknowledge ‘the literal impact of my own footprint. I sometimes feel that I am solely responsible for keeping the path – a situation which makes me feel uneasy.’\textsuperscript{277} Just as Van Horn’s daily routines connect her to something beyond her immediate situation, the responsibility felt by Skelton resides in a broader framework of traditional rights of way in England. Olwig states that ‘there is a strong visceral element to customary law. When you continually walk and wear a path, and thereby maintain its appearance and structure as a path, you simultaneously maintain your prescriptive right to use that path. Legal systems rooted in customary law, like that of the English, accept worn paths and maintained hedges as evidence of use rights upheld through precedent of “time immemorial”.’\textsuperscript{278} Olwig’s ‘substantive landscape’ derives from the way that this form of maintenance draws together ‘the various croplands and grazing lands of a given area’.\textsuperscript{279} Skelton’s responsibility for keeping the path reaches over to common responsibilities bound up in customary law, and the real threat of their loss if repetitive practices are not maintained.

Charting a careful daily circling of home also connects Van Horn, Richardson and Skelton to the wider tradition of the natural history diary. For example, Pamela Woof reflects upon Dorothy Wordsworth’s diaries kept in Grasmere, and observes that for Wordsworth and her brother, ‘[l]iving in one place year by year, changing in themselves...

\textsuperscript{278} Olwig ‘Performing on the Landscape’, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., p. 87.
and seeing the valley change, meant that they were not just walking through space and place; they were walking through time as well. Levels of meaning began to cling, for example, to a wood that was by the road walked on locally most days.”

Pamela Woof reinforces the intertwined dwelling, walking and writing of the Wordsworths, evoking a form of vertical travel in their daily lives when citing the ways in which ‘Grasmere intensified the walking and intensified the poetry. Wordsworth and his sister were living there; it was home. They did not simply walk through it; they walked into it, deeply into it, so that they knew it, permanently. Their writing showed a richness of response to walking that was in the place that was home.”

Skelton responds to Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals in *I Know Not Where*, a pamphlet created to accompany his installations at the ‘Wordsworth & Basho: Walking Poets’ exhibition at the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere in 2014. The work foregrounds the dialogue between journal and journey, Skelton constructing a sequence of ten poems, or ‘word-paths’, from 200 words found in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Alfoxden journals. Each ‘haiku-like’ verse begins with the word ‘walked’, following the artist’s observation that most of the entries in Wordsworth’s journal start with ‘walked’, ‘before departing, linguistically and geographically.’ Skelton invites ‘the reader to wander through’ Wordsworth’s 200 words, ‘to find their own routes, and in so doing, to write their own topographical narratives.’

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281 Ibid., p. 35.
Performing the randomness and unpredictability of the found, *I Know Not Where* helps to draw out an ‘openness to the unexpected’ that Sarah Weiger discerns in Wordsworth’s journals.\(^{283}\) Weiger argues that this openness extends to the more-than-human, to ‘meetings with unexpected creatures, events, and turns in the weather.’\(^{284}\)

Skelton’s word-paths are infused with more-than-human presences:

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walked
the twisting tracks
the hollow roads:

fringed
with small life
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Skelton’s list of 200 found words is rich in natural imagery, while excluding subject pronouns and auxiliary verbs, which decentres the human subject in favour of the persistent peripheral company of ‘small life’. The word-paths are winding and opaque, the thick consonance of these first two lines supporting a sense of the twist and cling of navigating an overgrown path.

Van Horn’s encounters with the more-than-human profoundly shape her walked localness. Her journals often chart the subtle adjustments and adaptations that she makes to her routine when navigating the landscape at different times of the year, such as the circuitous routes taken across the garden around daffodils coming into bloom and the enjoyment of the surprise their arrival brings,\(^{285}\) or the Mass Path becoming overgrown, with branches appearing that she must step over or duck under: ‘Everything

\(^{283}\) Sarah Weiger, “‘A love for things that have no feeling’: Dorothy Wordsworth’s Significant Others”, *European Romantic Review*, 23:6 (2012), 651-669 (p. 653).

\(^{284}\) Ibid., p. 655.

is adjusting itself’ – including Van Horn.286 Like the Adana’s transhumance, some of the press’s production activities are again worked into the rhythms of the more-than-human, participating in these mutual adjustments. Van Horn describes putting leftover threads from sewing Coracle books onto the compost heap, after which they are worked into nests by garden birds: ‘I can recall different books when I look at spring nests’.287 This co-production with the more-than-human continues to stretch the bounds of Coracle’s hybridity.

As the walking stick and palm adjust to each other through ‘long use’, so the body adapts to its place, gaining a somaesthetic, sensory knowledge that accumulates over time, like the words that coalesce across the small press corpus. After spending prolonged periods at the source of the River Yarrow in Lancashire, Skelton asks: ‘If you placed me along its length, blindfolded, could I tell you/ where, just from its sound?’288 For Van Horn, the anxiety of crossing an icy field is tempered by feeling ‘glad that my feet know exactly how to move through it.’289 Ingold writes that ‘[a]s people, in the course of their everyday lives, make their way by foot around a familiar terrain, so its paths, textures and contours, variable through the seasons, are incorporated into their own embodied capacities of movement, awareness and response – or into what Gaston Bachelard calls their “muscular consciousness”’.290 Clark narrates a version of this muscular consciousness that is contingent upon trust and care: ‘you will find your way by trusting/

286 Erica Van Horn, ‘1 May Friday’ (2015), <http://somewordsforlivinglocally.com/2015/05/01/spring-stick/> [accessed 29 July 2022].
your feet to the path, feeling/ each new contact with the earth/ […] moving lightly, treading carefully’ – that closing line bespeaking an ethos written through the small press.²⁹¹

Weiger frames Dorothy Wordsworth’s diary keeping as a ‘careful and extended engagement’ with the more-than-human, symptomatic of a practice of care and love.²⁹² Clothing diarising in these terms reshapes Skelton’s ‘uneasy’ feeling of responsibility for keeping the path, his evident anxiety at being solely responsible for this act of maintenance perhaps entangled in Haraway’s notion of ‘response-ability’, her ‘praxis of care and response’.²⁹³ Van Horn’s diary is a careful record of extended time within her milltir sgwâr and, inflected by her outsider status, is not a jealous guarding of the place against others, but a record of care and affection, and an invitation to share her experiences. Quoting Macfarlane, Tarbuck captures this attitude to localness, writing that knowing a place ‘through “concentration within its perimeters” reclaims the local away from overtones of parochialism and toward a sense of dedication to a single patch of earth’ (SP, p. 92). The notion of concentration within perimeters speaks also to the aforementioned thickness of minimalist poetic forms in the small press, those intertwined Concrete legacies of deep concentration and attention held within the superficially small. Concentration within the (porous) perimeters of place converses with Woof’s account of the Wordsworths’ intense and deep relationship with ‘the place that was home’, and with a localness defined in relation to the warmth and care of the domestic.

²⁹¹ Thomas A Clark, At Dusk & At Dawn (Nailsworth: Moschatel, 1998), non-paginated.
²⁹² Weiger, p. 651.
²⁹³ Haraway, p. 105.
Section Three: Mapping Skelton’s complex localisms

Skelton stresses the importance of dwelling in a place in order to write about it, a desire that emerges in *Landings*, his work around Anglezarke Moor in Lancashire, ‘to connect – with footfall – the place where I resided and the place where I wished to be’ (*L6*, p. 133). His need to create this tactile walked connection between the home and the local area recalls Mayol’s incremental ‘organic link’, and also brings to mind Clark’s notion in *In Praise of Walking*, that ‘[w]e can walk between two places, and in so doing establish a link between them, bring them into a warmth of contact, like introducing two friends.’

This extends the conviviality of the domestic out into the local area, and makes the case for more informal place relations than those charted by the ‘distanced gaze of the cartographer’. *Landings* is a vast, ongoing multimedia project which has been in progress for more than a decade. The work, anchored around an expanding, shifting series of books, documents Skelton’s relationship with Anglezarke Moor, a place familiar to him from childhood. Skelton returned to the area following the death of his first wife, Louise.

Anglezarke covers roughly four miles at the western side of the West Pennine Moors, which Skelton translates into a vast-sounding acreage, the text overspilling its lines to highlight the enormity of charting this

spur of eastern hills, 1,000 ft
high projecting into the centre. The greater part of a high moorland, 2,792

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294 Clark, *In Praise of Walking*. 
acres (167 of inland water). 

\(L6\), p. 13

Skelton spent years exploring the area on foot, and recording the experiences through a mixture of poetry, prose, music, blogs and film. The textual component of \textit{Landings} contains extracts from Skelton’s diaries – written not from the comfort of home, but in the field, jotting down his thoughts into notebooks that he concealed about the moor.

\textit{Landings} begins to complicate the model of small press localness established in this chapter, that area that extends the domestic threshold on foot, carrying domestic values of warmth and care out beyond the home. Skelton’s desire to connect Anglezarke and his home on foot is thwarted by the cost of renting a house in the area. He describes a cottage becoming available to let, but with unaffordable rent, and ‘[w]ith so few dwellings in Anglezarke, it seemed that my desire to reside within that landscape – to simply dwell there – would never be fulfilled. This event, which seemed relatively insignificant at the time, in retrospect became a kind of turning point. If I couldn’t live there, I would forever be a visitor. An interloper.’ \(L6\), p. 135. Skelton’s thwarted dwelling rhymes with the overall pattern of human habitation of the moor. Mass land clearances took place on Anglezarke in the late 19th Century, with homes dismantled, graves relocated and families displaced by the Liverpool Corporation, which constructed a reservoir on the land.

Unable to dwell (reside) close to the moor, Skelton’s practice advances other facets of dwelling – ‘to spend time upon or linger over (a thing) in action or thought; to remain with the attention fixed on’, ‘to abide or continue for a time, in a place, state, or
condition’. He performs these alternative modes of dwelling through repetitive practices, including scouring textual records of Anglezarke and walking the moor. Probing the etymologies of the name Anglezarke, Skelton unearths a series of suggestive connotations, the name originally suggesting ‘Notice, regard, attention; thoughts, observation, watching’, ‘A pastoral life; tending cattle; the occupation of a shepherd; watchfulness’ \((L6, p. 135)\). Skelton’s model of dwelling, performed as repeated movement through and attention to the moor, sites him within a strange version of this ‘watchful’ pastoral life, becoming like an itinerant shepherd walking and tending to the moor.

Localness churns uneasily against Skelton’s unfulfilled desire for domesticity, narrated in the ruins of houses around the moor, visceral in decay; ‘the bones of old dwellings’ \((L6, p. 24)\) and farmhouses ‘that litter these moors like scar tissue’ \((L6, p. 25)\). Skelton walks alongside ‘a nameless archivist’, whose 1936 record of the moor he uncovers in the local library, reading accounts of the buildings in the early years of their disrepair, and feeling drawn to stories of neglected gardens at the edges of their land and former homes survived only by their fireplaces \((L6, p. 56)\). Returning to Pennell’s characterisation of the hearth as the spine of the house, the home’s ‘structural and psychological centre’, there is a potent symbolism to Skelton’s repeated interest in these remains upon the moor. Reflecting upon the archivist’s encounters with these dwellings shortly after their abandonment, Skelton argues that ‘there would surely have been a residual warmth, a lingering reminder of their last occupants.’ \((L6, p. 120)\). The metaphors

of warmth linger across *Landings*, a futile elemental talisman against the drowning of the nearby valley. He tries to recapture domestic warmth in the names of these last occupants, seeking ‘a flint for the memory’ (*L6*, p. 85), poring over the writings of another record-keeper of the mid-century, who ‘exchanged stories with the elderly sons and daughters of the last generation of farmers. Gently blowing over the embers of memory. Reviving that dwindling connection with the land itself.’ (*L6*, p. 87). But now, another 50 years on, he wonders ‘if the coals have permanently grown cold? Has that connection, born from word of mouth, and passed from person to person, become irrevocably severed?’ (*L6*, p. 87). The connections handed down, passed from person to person, share the tactile intimacy of small press poetry passed from hand to hand. Here, Skelton demonstrates how informal networks can easily be threatened when social connections are disrupted.

Skelton’s own record-keeping is paired with his ambivalent relationship with other textual records of the moor. He studies Ordnance Survey maps of different scales and time periods, which help him to recognise and confront the scale of lost dwellings and toponyms around the moor, proposing that the OS map ‘represents, in cartographic form, the collective, toponymic memory of the farms of Rivington and Anglezarke.’ (*L6*, p. 244). This form of collective memory is unstable, as shown in Skelton’s ‘Digest’ of farm names in the appendices, which lists side-by-side the names of farms appearing on the first edition 6-inch and 25-inch maps of Lancashire (1849 and 1894 respectively), and highlights those which appear in only one edition, or which feature but are left un-named. He also discerns possible errors on the map, leading to mis-namings (*L6*, pp. 240-244).
The omission of names from the map, Skelton acknowledges, is a natural side-effect of the constraints of the map-maker, but is nevertheless a loss: ‘If the name of a farm, stream or wood is forgotten, then the stock of words that we use to connect with the landscape is diminished’ (L6, p. 121). The collective memory is that of the tenant farmers cleared from the land, and this resides uneasily within the power structures shaping the work of the ‘lofty cartographer’.

Maps, Skelton argues, ‘enforce a mononymous relationship between name and place’, which ‘belies the complex relationship we have with our surroundings, and the many different ways in which we express our sense of belonging.’ (L6, p. 121). Skelton exposes further limitations and power structures behind maps, with their exclusion of ‘local names, folk-names and familial names; [...] narrative, personality and myth’ (L6, p. 121). He cites farm names and landmarks like bridges that don’t appear on contemporary maps (L6, p. 34) and a wooded area that he names ‘Noon Hill Wood, ‘but it isn’t marked on any map.’ (L6, p. 35). Skelton not only mourns historic losses, but worries for the remaining names of ruined farmhouses around the moor, wondering how long it will be before cartographers ‘lift’ them ‘from their charts and from our collective memory’ (L6, p. 26). The idea of things being lifted from maps reinforces a sense of cartographers as distanced, in Felski’s terms, and remind us that a map is an overview, not an objective representation.
Problematics of the map

Cutts and Van Horn highlight the extractive nature of cartography in their 1993 *Water of Recess*, created following a visit to the writer and map-maker Tim Robinson in Connemara. A booklet bound in a copy of a local map narrates how, while out walking, the pair noticed the unevocatively named River Recess. As for the surrounding land, Recess had been substituted for the gaelic [sic] *Srath Salach* – a riverside meadow of willows. It seems that it derived from a nearby farm called The Recess, where a Dublin alderman, William Andrews took his holidays from 1846 on. Later, his cottage was converted to The Recess Hotel.

The piece comprises a small cardboard box, containing both the booklet and a glass phial of water collected from the river. The phial is printed with the words ‘Water of Recess/

Figure 6 Water of Recess

River Recess, Connemara, Ireland/ April 1993’. Their account weaves together different forms of doing place – walking, mapping, naming, sampling and researching. The sample has much to say about its cartographic counterpart, highlighting the centrality of extraction to map-making. While the clear, droplet-shaped ampoule in which the water is stored suggests some of the river’s lively fluidity, it remains a stylised simulacrum of a water drop, the cool glass standing in for the tactual sensation of water. The droplet bottle relates to the river as the map relates to the landscape it depicts.

Water of Recess converses with Coracle’s change of address card in raising questions around metonymic engagements with place; here, a sample of river water evokes the river in its entirety. Rivers are a striking symbol of the local, as a gathering point and source of life within a community, a place of folklore and exchange, commerce and cleanliness, ritual and refreshment. But a river can also problematise questions of localness, firstly in that it continuously passes through an area and secondly because of the way in which rivers act as boundaries. A river can signify the hard boundary of a place, neatly demarcating a locale. However, it can also disrupt it, as exemplified by Clonmel. Bisected by the River Suir, the town becomes part of Counties Tipperary and Waterford, depending on which side of the river you live. Water of Recess’s hermetically-sealed fragment of river offers a vision of localism as sealed off or enclosed. This is complemented by the close-fitting box, every element of the piece small and neatly contained. Yet, as the complex tangle of places underpinning the address ‘Coracle Ballybeg Grange Clonmel Tipperary Ireland’ demonstrates, there is a chasm between
attempts to impose order on a place and its slippery realities. The clear glass speaks to the unseen forces working to maintain borders.

The artists use two maps within the booklet, narrating simultaneous localisms. The endpapers are a copy of a map which marks the river mononymously as ‘Recess’. Here, the power to ‘lift’ names from maps and wrench them from the collective memory connotes the violence of colonial erasure. There is a clear and uncomfortable power dynamic at work in this ‘substitution’, the Irish words being replaced by the English name of a second home owned by an urban establishment figure. J.B. Harley writes of how maps ‘as an impersonal type of knowledge tend to “desocialise” the territory they represent. They foster the notion of a socially empty space.’ 297 Harley critiques the perception of maps as dispassionate, scientific and factual, 298 when they have ‘impinged invisibly on the daily lives of ordinary people […] former commons […] subdivided and allotted, with the help of maps’. 299

At the centre of the Water of Recess booklet is a map made by Tim Robinson, which includes numerous Irish language names and uses Srath Salach as the primary name for the river, with ‘Recess’ bracketed beneath. Cutts and Van Horn describe Tim Robinson as a map-maker, highlighting this aspect of his work over his prose writing. Rejecting the more formal term ‘cartographer’ – and perhaps by association the

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298 Ibid. p. 287.
299 Ibid., p. 285.
‘distanced gaze’ of that profession – brings to the surface the web of political decisions that underpin maps, and draws out the making processes behind the finished product.

Maps formally crystallise locales through demarcated boundaries, but generally cannot convey the kinds of informal, relational localisms that connect Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary. Robinson’s mapping seeks to offer a more ‘personal’, ‘socialised’ view of landscape. His map-making practice began at the suggestion of a post mistress on Aran: ‘since I seemed to have a hand for the drawing, an ear for the placenames and legs for the boreens, why should I not make a map of the islands, for which endless summersful of visitors would thank and pay me?’

This blason-like enumeration of the qualities needed by the map-maker – drawing, listening, learning toponyms, walking – articulates the embodied making processes behind the map, not solely privileging the end result, and reveals the ways in which this practice converses productively with that of the small press.

Martyn Hudson describes Landings as a ‘profoundly deep mapping of a highly specific location.’ which accords with Skelton’s own description of the project as years spent ‘exploring and remapping Anglezarke’. What is being created is not ‘a map’, but ‘a mapping’. ‘A map’ is a finished product, something bounded and definite. The frequent references to mapping indicate something slippery, harder to define. A map is ‘made on a flat surface’, but a mapping moves over the land’s surface, feeling for its textures,

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and expressing the textures wrought within its making. A mapping brings together Skelton’s repetitive landscapes practices to work towards something less closed-off and two-dimensional than the map. A large part of Skelton’s ‘remapping’ process is undertaken on foot. He locates this mapping within space charted previously by the Ordnance Surveyors, but where the entire process of creating these early maps (from surveying to contouring, engraving, writing and ornamenting) took four years (L6, p. 235), his own mapping begins with five years of making connections on foot.

The ‘warmth of contact’ created by repeatedly walking the moor, moving between dwellings and treading the same paths over and over, creates what Hudson calls ‘the “deep” and “desire” maps that [humans] create through inhabitation, art, and performance.’ Hudson’s words are vital here, for their suggestion that inhabitation itself might be enough to create a map of an area. The network of lines that Skelton draws with his walks can be seen as a dual act of ‘creating’ and ‘enclosing’ places, ‘an informal topological pursuit which, as Macfarlane notes, recalls the beating of the bounds’, a practice glossed by Skelton as a proto-cartographic act whereby an imagined boundary line was ‘“willed into being by the walk itself”’. The many careful, tactile years that Skelton spent ‘skirting the threshold of Anglezarke’ (L6, p. 165) and ‘[limn[ing] the edges of its streams and rivers, […] the contours of its hills, the eaves of its woods’ (L6, p. 48) aligns him more closely with the traditions of land workers and tenants walking the boundaries of the land they worked as an informal claim of ‘ownership’, than with the

landowners scoring lines through their ‘desocialised territory’. Snell notes that the Ordnance Survey frequently employed as meresmen those who worked the land locally to advise on boundary locations for their mapping, ‘partly to prevent encroachments on commons or wastes’. The clearing of Anglezarke decimated the commons, but Skelton guards the imaginative commons in terms of the ‘collective memory’ through his mapping.

Beating the bounds blends the pragmatic and the ritualistic, as the perceived edges of a place are walked ‘to determine and record its boundaries, to preserve rights of possession, […] or to confer a blessing.’ Drawing out this sense of consecrating the land, Skelton concludes the second volume of Landings with a list of people who lived locally on Anglezarke, a ‘litany’ of ‘those who lived and died/ within its compass,/ who left their mark on the landscape/ or who were forgotten – / who passed by like ghosts.’ (L6, p. 172). The litany anticipates the list-poems that feature prominently in Richardson and Skelton’s collaborative practice, ‘at once an invocation and celebration of what is here, and also an elegy for what has disappeared.’ (L6, p. 278). Skelton’s ‘roll-call’ of names (L6, p. 276) also finds kinship in *AR’s gloss of beating the bounds as a ‘roll-call of the landmarks which fell along [the] edges’ of parishes and estates.

Olwig argues that through beating the bounds,

the weaving of the material existence of the landscape takes on a textual dimension through the repetition of passages walked, and passages recited, both having their origins in religion and folklore. These rituals also involve doing the landscape with feet, body and both eyes, to the extent that the sense of place was even reinforced through bodily pain.

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306 Snell, Parish and Belonging, p. 37.
perambulation of the village during the annual beating of the bounds thus involved various rituals in which pains were taken, for example, to assure that boys’ heads were knocked on a boundary marker and that their bodies otherwise experienced the pain of strong physical contact with important places, such as a ditch or wall, so that they would remember them later in life should a dispute arise.\(^{309}\)

The repetition of passages walked and recited is seen in the leitmotifs that recur within and across the many editions of *Landings* (rather like the repeated words dotted through the small press corpus) and the chant-like nature of Skelton’s dense, pages-long litany of names. *Doing* the landscape in these localised ways (through the feet, the eyes) evokes a form of practice aligned with Robinson’s, produced through his possessing the hand, the ear, the legs for mapping. Skelton too stresses the tactility of his practices, resoundingly hands-on (and legs-on), the moor felt from the ground up.

Skelton reflects that ‘the only way to know this place is through touch’ (*L6*, p. 58), and oddly, the sense of touch comes to the fore in *Names. Dates. Genealogies.*, the 2011 addition to the book, written when Skelton was working in Ireland, physically distant from the moor. He seeks to connect with the landscape metonymically, using items collected from around Anglezarke: ‘Phials of soil. Brook water. Alluvium from the river./ Bark and fragments of bone, shrouded in muslin./ A small box of feathers. A trove of leaves and seeds./ Husks. Shells. Sheddings.’ (*L6*, p.154). Touching a piece of stone evokes the memory of a stonechat calling, heard when walking the path between Hempshaws and Simms farms in the middle of winter 2007, tangled with his own footsteps scuffing the rough ground. He takes these flints for the memory, and lays them out over a map of the

moor, placing them where each was found, ‘*So as not to forget.*’ (*L6*, pp. 154-5). The map becomes textured with pieces of Anglezarke’s fabric, connecting Skelton back to his embodied experiences on the moor. The gesture performs an activation of the map akin to the installation of standing poems or responses to invitation pieces discussed in Chapter One. Bringing new textures to the map in this way also ushers in the map’s textures, these fragments of place recapitulating mapping as partial, and highlighting the processes of its production – and its inevitable exclusions.

Another attempt to remain in touch with the moor is explored in the poem ‘*Echo*’, also in *Names. Dates. Genealogies.* (*L6*, p. 163). Skelton asks, ‘Could the miniature landscape of my palm, with its myriad lines, channels and meridians, its shallow valley, mirror that of the moor?’ Distanced from the moor, he nevertheless attempts to make it close at hand, turning his palm’s creases into the River Yarrow and Green Withins Brook. Alternatively, he proposes an attempt to ‘mnemonise the landscape along the joints of my fingers’, and create new connections between places by, for example, bringing together thumb and forefinger, or crossing his index and second fingers, ‘rewriting the paths of Dean Brook and Cote Slack, as if they sprang from the same source’. An uncomfortable sense that Skelton seeks somehow to master the moor by grasping it in his hand is softened by his description of these actions as ‘[a] topology of touch. Of feeling. Calling upon the landscape through memory and gesture.’ Macfarlane responds to this recurrent phrase ‘calling upon’ in Skelton’s work, ‘with its two contrasting senses: one magical, grand, powerful (to summon the forces or spirits of); the other homely, intimate (to visit a
friend, to drop in or drop by).\textsuperscript{310} This strikes at a struggle in *Landings* between the unreachable forces of the landscape and the need to make connections, to touch, to feel, to find intimacy – in the sense of community, being in touch, dwelling. Citing both touch and feeling, Skelton foregrounds his emotional connection to the moor, its histories and its peoples, and the feelings that energise his repetitive, cathetic practices, removed from impulses of ownership or profit. Reflecting on his practices, on his desperate desire to dwell in Anglezarke, Skelton evokes ‘[a]n attempt to cling to a place in spite of circumstances. Acts of devotion. Of love.’ (*L6*, p. 135).

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which forms of localness in the small press are created relative to the home and the ‘experiencing self’, and examined how this is problematised by power structures written through the rural places inhabited by these practitioners. Localness is distinctly embodied, created on foot and characterised by what can be gathered in the hands and carried back home. Thinking about found objects and acts of finding introduced Bora’s useful distinction between ‘texture’ – surface resonance, and ‘texxture’ – the web of decisions and processes behind something’s becoming. The interplay between these concepts is particularly helpful for studying the small press, recalling the interplays between revealing and concealing labour discussed in Chapter One.

The diary or journal is an important vehicle for small press localness, situating the local in both the repetitive rhythms of the everyday, and connected to wider traditions that

\textsuperscript{310} Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, pp. 184-5.
help the individual to exceed their particular circumstances and create connections with communities across time. Both Van Horn and Skelton engage in different ways with the tradition of the natural history journal. ‘Recording daily detail’ allows Van Horn to observe the commonplace and routine, but also starkly reveals anything that deviates from the anticipated or expected, contextualising her localness within the larger scale forces of climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic and the national recession. The journal records a localness experienced on foot, and the development of a ‘muscular consciousness’, a deep knowledge of local textures.

Skelton’s desire to build a connection between his home and the landscapes that fascinate him is thwarted by his being priced out of Anglezarke, and a lack of housing due to the legacy of clearances. His repetitive walking and researching of the place as an alternative mode of dwelling connects him to traditions such as beating the bounds, a way of claiming informal ‘ownership’ of the commons. Skelton undertakes a walked ‘mapping’, a tactile engagement that stands in opposition to the aerial view presented by the cartographer.

Living locally is preferable to exploring being local – it is a living process, a practised activity, not a state of being. However, any practised activity must be maintained. Skelton feels a responsibility – and perhaps also a response-ability, given the tactile sense of care and stewardship running through his practice – for keeping the path, and for preserving memories of the area, his work bespeaking dedication to his adopted milltir sgwâr. This sense of care and stewardship carries us into the next chapter, which explores site-specific pieces in the public space of the hospital and in the garden.
CHAPTER THREE

‘A Place Apart’: site specific works – the hospital – the garden
‘A Place Apart’: site specific works – the hospital – the garden

The focus of this chapter is site-specific works produced by the small press. Having reflected upon the embodied and careful nature of small press work in the local area and in the home, I return to David Howes’s notion of ‘emplacement’, that ‘sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment’, and explore the ways in which site-specific pieces perform the intimate poetics of the small press on a large scale. While each press in this study has produced site-specific pieces, this chapter’s primary focus is Moschatel Press, with some recourse to the garden work of Wild Hawthorn Press. Both presses have produced pieces that will remain in-situ for a significant timespan, differing from the shorter-term exhibition pieces or performances more typical of Coracle and Corbel Stone.

How do public pieces create tactile connections when they are fixed, and cannot be passed from hand to hand? How is the smallness of the small press conveyed when enacted on a larger scale? This chapter explores those questions in places that speak revealingly to many small press themes explored so far. In particular, Clark’s 2009 gathering of commissioned works in the New Stobhill Hospital commands a substantial presence in this chapter. The hospital is a productive space for small press work to be situated, provoking questions around care, the pastoral and the body, and carrying forward thoughts around common or communal spaces, hosting and hospitality that are written through this thesis. Questions around attention, contemplation and care emerge through this chapter, moving the conversation into a brief reflection upon the press’s relationship to gardens and gardening, which is where the Finlays’ work at Little Sparta comes to the fore. The audience for pieces of this kind is different from those within the
‘great circulatory system’ that is the small press network. Attention bestowed upon them will therefore also be different. These pieces are not lived with, but are more likely to be glimpsed, glanced at, walked past.

What constitutes a public work in the small press is open to discussion. Recall, for example, Cutts’s interest in ‘hypothetical publishing’, and the overlaps that it highlights between the small press and the Conceptual Art movement. Cutts’s 1996 piece ‘The Postcard is a Public Work of Art’ recapitulates the form’s sphere of operation outside of the gallery, and its interventions into the everyday; ‘it was read by the postman, it was read by the recipient, it was read by officers and people on the way’.311 The small press brings an investigative energy to the gallery, witnessed in Coracle’s house-gallery and other hybrid, ‘ambiguous’ gallery spaces (BL, 5), in the Clarks’ Cairn Gallery, and in the experimental, museologically-inflected practices of *AR, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter Four. The book might also be a gallery in miniature ‘capable of circulating images and aesthetic ideas to a wide audience in an accessible and affordable form.’312 The gallery is therefore a site for challenge and experiment across the small press.

Clark has written extensively about the ideal gallery space, and he typically depicts places characterised by a particular quality of light, imagining ‘a quiet room where the light streams through a window’, so that ‘whatever it touches is raised to a luminous transient being’, an ‘image of undisturbed domestic order, brough to felicity by the transforming

312 Drucker, p. 320.
power of light or grace. It is an image which always comes before us as something unexpected, as a surprise or gift. Clark’s most extended textual reflection upon gallery spaces occurs in his essay in the catalogue of Salon d’Automne, Coracle’s exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in 1984, in which an ideal gallery is framed within the conceit of an autumn day, bright and ‘transitory’, capable of change and flux. Despite the ephemeral quality suggested by its seasonality, this is not a space of uncertainty and unease, but one ‘which induces the sense of ease and belonging’. Clark writes of such a place that ‘[w]e will come to think of it as a place apart, more collected and quiet than the places we usually frequent.’ The image of ‘a place apart’ is a recurrent one in Moschatel’s work, appearing in numerous poems, prints and proposals. Tarbuck chose the phrase as the title of her 2016 symposium on Clark’s work at the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh, which became a subsequent special issue of the Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry (2019).

Both Tarbuck and Hair have explored ‘a place apart’ through a pastoral lens. For Tarbuck, it evokes the pastoral sense of retreat, but from a distinctly Clarkian perspective; rather than escaping into a fantastical lost idyll, for Clark, the retreat is embedded in the everyday (SP, p. 56). It is therefore ‘enough to see a small flower, or a single bird, to unfold a small booklet or read a short poem. This sufficiency constitutes Clark’s miniaturisation of the pastoral retreat, [...] a temporary diversion from the main journey of

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313 Stacey, “Into the Order of Things”, p. 28.
life, whether via an individual poem or a moment of close observation in nature' (*SP*, p. 275). The miniaturised retreat still occupies an ‘alternate location’, but one that is ‘built in to the cycles of work and leisure of normal life, rather than existing as an idealised space of repose’ (*SP*, p. 34). In this sense, the retreat can be a moment of meditation or pause, and Hair describes the pause itself as a temporal place apart (*AF*, p. 184). He also argues that the suggestion of a retreat in ‘a place apart’ is not straightforward escapism, and that ‘set apart places also have social implications that adumbrate the values of Epicurean amity’ and can be home to “company” [that] can take many forms and is capable of encompassing the human and the non-human’ (*AF*, p. 184). Those Epicurean values evoke the convivial feasting and sharing in Coracle Press’s work, in a way that might suggest the kitchen table as itself ‘a place apart’. Crucially, Hair makes space here for an amity with the non-human, something that will come to the fore as this chapter develops. The image of a place apart recurs across this chapter, its pastoral notes refined or honed through its relationship to the two primary sites of interest: the hospital and the garden. Both are spaces of nurture and care, not lived in but adjoining the domestic as sites of waiting, walking or sleeping.

Clark’s pamphlet-length poem *The Hut in the Woods* (2001) builds an image of ‘a place apart’ that is infused with the pastoral. The titular hut is protected as ‘a place apart/ having the gravity of/ a place apart’, ‘set back in a clearing/ a space within a space’.

The ‘apart’ nature of this place is compounded by being ‘away from the world of man’.

Here, there is ‘no footstep on the path/ no throat cleared on the threshold’. It is a place of ‘silence’ and ‘clarity’, one that tangles the domesticity of a boiling kettle and a shelf of books with an othered wildness distilled in ‘trembling’ deer and elusive pine marten.

Clark emphasises the place apart as pastoral in the sense of nurturing, or providing spiritual care. This aspect of the pastoral abounds in his vision of the ideal gallery, and he notes that ‘in our present culture, the art gallery plays a far less pastoral role than the one I am outlining here’ (SdA). His foregrounding of this aspect of pastoral is helpful as we approach the hospital and the garden, both sites of nurture and care. Though not ‘published’ under the Moschatel name, I argue that these pieces must still be viewed within the Moschatel fold; some shift directly from paper into larger-scale media, and all of the works gather words, themes and imagery from the Moschatel oeuvre. Moreover, recall that the hybridity of the press extends to the practices of ‘gallery work’, and the ‘editing of physical space’. Finlay’s sculptural works at Little Sparta are also a continuation of his early experimental paper-based pieces produced at Wild Hawthorn, and as such should be considered within the framework of the small press (SP, pp. 180-181).

In the previous chapter I considered methods of engaging with place on foot, and embodied forms of understanding place. I develop some of that thinking in this chapter, examining attention as bodily. I continue to explore the role of care in small press work, and study the relationship between the place apart and the hospital, both of which are sites of temporary respite, and promise a return to the everyday feeling recuperated (SP, p. 46).
Section One centres upon an iteration of ‘A Place Apart’ installed in the hospital’s Spiritual Care Centre. The piece queries and unpicks the idea of separating the spiritual from the rest of the hospital. Tarbuck describes the work as ‘a third space’ and I pursue this to examine the hybrid, palimpsestic works that emerge around the hospital, at confluences between Clark’s works and the flow of the site. Section Two is concerned with different forms of attention and asks how the hospital pieces address the backgrounding of more-than-human nature. Section Three pays a visit to Little Sparta, approaching pieces from a ‘way of life’, textured perspective rarely applied to Finlay’s work. I think about the potential of the garden as a site for engaging with the more-than human, and from there move into an analysis of Clark’s garden-based sonnet sequence ‘At Dawn and At Dusk’.

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Section One: ‘A Place Apart’?

Entering The Grove

In 2009, Clark was commissioned by architects Reiach and Hall to be lead artist and curator for a series of site-specific installations at the New Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow. Clark took inspiration from trees around the hospital site to transfigure the entire building:

The new hospital is set within an apparently random planting of silver birch trees. Open courtyards are planted with larch trees and surfaced with natural larch boarding. The theme of woodland light and shade is continued within the building by means of installed painting, video and poetic texts.
It is a grove of larch in a forest of birch.\textsuperscript{318}

Clark’s synecdochic unfolding of a forest from a few trees speaks to that resourcefulness so characteristic of the small press. The sparse plantation carries the imprint of a whole forest, in a way that mirrors the fragmentary tree stump or twig residing in the old Scots ‘stob’ in New Stobhill.\textsuperscript{319} The woodland light and shade suggest a more nuanced space than might be expected in a brightly sterile hospital, performed through the diffuse nature of pieces across the site, which turns encountering them into a process of finding. Clark populates the building and courtyard with a poetic profusion of butterflies, trees and grasses, with pieces glimpsed across the floors of the hospital, some printed onto glass, installed in corridors to be viewed in passing, or half-hidden behind walls. The project recalls the broader Moschatel oeuvre – pieces can stand alone, but they accumulate with movement through the building into a greater whole that is the grove.

Clark’s installations include the names of twenty six native trees etched onto waiting room windows and a series of one-word and one-line poems – characteristically minimal poetic interventions. The relationship that Clark proposes between trees planted outside and in the centre of the hospital follows the building’s architecture, which works to draw the outdoors in. Large windows allow natural light to fill the common spaces and areas are clad in wooden panelling, visually continuing the larch boarding of the


\textsuperscript{319} ‘Stob, n.2’, Dictionaries of the Scots Language [online], <https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/stob_n_2> [accessed 10 July 2019].
courtyards. The hospital and its courtyards are differentiated from the wild encroaching forest of the outside world, ‘grove’ suggesting a more contained cluster of trees.

The grove connotes the olive groves of antiquity, sites of pagan worship, and in particular a Puckish note of carnivale, its sense of dappled enclosure speaking of some mythical other place of magical potential.\footnote{The OED notes that ‘Groves were commonly planted by heathen peoples in honour of deities to serve as places of worship or for the reception of images’. ‘Grove’ in The Oxford English Dictionary [online]. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81891?redirectedFrom=grove&> [accessed 27 March 2020].} Within the Moschatel oeuvre, the forest is a permissive or enabling site, and Clark includes it in his account of the ideal gallery space:

If we step out of the glare of the meadow into this gentler illumination of the wood, or if we take an analogous step, from the bustle of the street into the space of the gallery, we enter a precinct where a new relation pertains between things, a relation that is almost pastoral or utopian.

(SdA)

Crossing the forest threshold is framed as similarly transformative in texts such as Hazel Wood (2006): ‘you who hesitate on/ the skirts of the wood/ you are separate from/ delight by a step/ over hesitation’, and once within the woods, an undefined presence ‘lures you further’ in.\footnote{Thomas A Clark, Hazel Wood (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2006), non-paginated.} Clark channels this air of possibility and permission to enact his poetic transformation of the New Stobhill Hospital.

Poems installed in public spaces are subject to a similar form of involuntary attention to that which Clark describes in relation to the standing poem. Though Clark highlights the modesty of the standing poem by contrasting it with text printed onto walls, the glimpsed nature of the pieces in the hospital means that they do not necessarily proclaim themselves loudly. There is a quietness in the way that the pieces emerge in the

\footnote{Thomas A Clark, Hazel Wood (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2006), non-paginated.}
hospital, a sense of the *GROVE* unfolding, in a manner that reaches across to their papery lineage. These works contribute to a litany of the glimpsed and the almost-seen in Clark’s work, which frequently takes advantage of the dappled shadow of forest settings: ‘[n]either here nor there, always elsewhere, something wild and shy hesitates between presence and absence.’ Tarbuck argues that Clark crafts ‘indicative but fleeting glimpses of nature to create a sense of the whole’ (*SP*, p. 55). If the rhythm of the book is set by the turning of a page, the pace of the site-specific work is determined by the flow of moving through the building. The half-seen presences in the paper publications find new expression in the hospital; locating work in liminal spaces such as corridors enables those ‘fleeting glimpses’ to accumulate towards a different ‘sense of the whole’ depending on the route taken, or the rooms visited, changing the tone of the grove at each visit.

Tarbuck notes that Clark ‘places importance on the idea of a poem that can be “held in the mind”. If a poem can be recalled anywhere, then it is a permanent pastoral fragment stored within the brain, to be revisited at any time.’ (*SP*, p. 51). She likens these fragments to mental burrs hooked into the mind, following Clark’s imagery of ‘the “small barbs” of quiet that the mountain lodges in the reader’s mind in *Riasg Buidhe*’ and that can have a recuperative function when revisited mentally (*SP*, p. 51). The pieces at the New Stobhill operate in this way, a cling of glimpsed works accumulating in the mind from a walk through the hospital. Different routes can be taken between pieces, walking new connections between them.

If a lucid image is held in the mind, it can not only be revisited, but also carried with one, and brought to bear on other places. Clark’s 2015 wall-mounted enamel sign *Quiet* refers to ‘a place to which you can come to find a quiet you might take with you to other places’, lending a portability and kineticism to an apparently fixed piece, in a way that calls back to Moschatel’s pocket-sized paper works. Another enamel sign, from 1996, announces: ‘This space may be considered as a glade or clearing, an area open to a brightness which may be found again in other spaces.’ In this way, imaginative connections are created between places, recalling the ‘warmth of contact’ initiated through connecting sites on foot.

**A Place Apart**

![Figure 7 A Place Apart at the New Stobhill Hospital](image)

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In the hospital’s Spiritual Care Centre, Clark’s poem ‘A Place Apart’ hangs in yellow letters against a white wall:

A Place Apart  
Having The Brightness And Stillness  
Of A Woodland Glade\textsuperscript{326}

‘A Place Apart’ carries the simultaneous notes of permissive freedom and enclosed, removed safety contained within ‘grove’. In evoking a glade, the poem gathers imagery that persists across Moschatel Press’s oeuvre, evoking a catalogue of bright, still woodland glades that are written through the press’s work, and conversing with Clark’s ‘Glade’ enamel sign. Questioned about the prevalence of clearings and glades in his work, Clark argues that:

A glade is a space you find. A clearing is one you make or that has been made. It is a common perception of people now that they don’t have time and space, that life is taken up with making money, working, getting from here to there, rather than the primary process of leading a human life. So the clearings first of all make time and room for that to happen. They are little spaces of quiet where things can be seen clearly. Their function is, I hope, recuperative.\textsuperscript{327}

The hospital’s glade-like space joins the aforementioned strand of the glimpsed and encountered, pieces designed to be found, a ‘surprise or gift’ for those ‘led by curiosity’. Clark articulates a need for the delighted surprise of finding in this piece, as an antidote to the grimly capitalistic way of life envisaged.

\textsuperscript{326} Thomas A Clark, ‘A Place Apart’ (New Stobhill Hospital: Moschatel, 2009).
\textsuperscript{327} Herd, Making Spaces.
The Spiritual Care Centre is a non-denominational site of reflection, managed by the hospital Chaplaincy. The space, designed by Donald Urquhart, is also known as the Sanctuary. Tarbuck argues that the work ‘clearly [...] delineate[s] the chapel space as separate from the rest of the hospital.’ (SP, p. 11). ‘A Place Apart’ certainly differs stylistically from other pieces within GROVE, most of which are individual nouns or brief nominal phrases. These differences contribute to its apparent seclusion from the other hospital works. However, the piece resists its nominal separation from the rest of the hospital. As mentioned already, both the glade and the notion of ‘a place apart’ are motifs within Moschatel’s work, and thereby gesture to their counterparts outside of the Spiritual Care Centre. Indeed, elsewhere in the New Stobhill the wall-mounted one-word poem ‘a brightness in a stillness/ glade’, shares the same central cluster of images as ‘A Place Apart’, establishing a connection between the piece and the rest of the hospital.

‘A Place Apart’ critiques a separation of spiritual care, of matters pastoral, from the body of the hospital and, indeed, the bodily hospital. By setting the Spiritual Care Centre ‘apart’, the work rehearses a separation of mind and body that is antithetical to Clark’s perception of the world. As Simone Kotva observes, Clark’s worldview rejects a Cartesian mind/body dualism, and instead ‘imagines bodies and minds connected in a vast network of living things’, in a way that recalls David Howes’s socialised model of ‘emplacement’.328

Clark’s conception of the poetic image ‘held in the mind’ and carried with one insists upon thoughts as tactile and embodied, an idea reiterated elsewhere in his work.

‘Meadow’, a poem that appears in an early Moschatel collection, grounds Clark’s practice in the phenomenological:

Let light
loosen the mind’s
clenched fist,

the five senses
fit like fingers
into the warm glove
of the world\footnote{329 Thomas A Clark, ‘Meadow’, \textit{A Vase of Daffodils, A Patch of Sorrel}, Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark (Nailsworth: Moschatel, 1975), non-paginated.}

Here, the closed-off brutality of the fist is opposed by the delicacy of the individual senses. Clark also refers to ‘all that your thoughts can touch’, in ‘Generosity’ (2010).\footnote{330 Thomas A Clark, \textit{Generosity} (Dundee: Poetry Beyond Text, 2010).} Tactile, haptic language pervades Clark’s accounts of engagements with the world and its role in Moschatel’s poetics renders it a contextual frame for the pieces in the hospital, foregrounding touch in a site of gloved sterility and hand sanitiser.

Like many of the minimalistic pieces of the small press, ‘A Place Apart’ reaches out to the reader. Gavin Goodwin suggests of Clark’s New Stobhill pieces that ‘[t]he unobtrusive minimalism of the text is suggestive rather than prescriptive; it encourages collaboration’.\footnote{331 Gavin Goodwin, ‘Beyond the Page: The Formal Possibilities of Thomas A Clark’, \textit{Writing in Practice}, 5 (2019), non-paginated.} The piece evokes ‘a’ nonspecific place, a characteristic Clarkism, and patients can thereby imagine places ‘shaped by the textual materials on offer […] and interfused with personal memories of trees, leaves, sunlight.’\footnote{332} Figuring the piece in these ways appeals to Clark’s wider poetics, to the ongoing importance of reader
response to Moschatel work and to the press’s characteristic minimalism and linguistic economy. Goodwin’s comments also return us to Cutts’s thoughts on the reader finding their own space in an ambiguous work. Clark’s favouring of the ‘suggestive’ over the ‘prescriptive’ is particularly resonant in the hospital environment. Where the prescription is an instruction from somebody in authority, the suggestion is closer to Iser’s sense of the reader filling in the gaps in the work, and establishes a non-hierarchical dialogue between poet and reader.

Goodwin’s observations recall Clark’s own ‘teasing out’, from exhibitions he had attended at the Coracle Gallery, of an ‘ideal’, ‘undogmatic’ relationship ‘between works and the space they occupied, or between works and the viewer’, inviting them ‘to participate in the completion of the work’ (SdA). The invitational principle of these works recalls the invitation cards discussed in Chapter One, with their establishing of an ambiguous guest/ host relationship between poet and reader, a theory of hospitality that accumulates new layers of meaning in the hospital, and that will be developed later in this chapter.

**The Third Space**

‘A Place Apart’ differs from other Moschatel work around the imaginative transformation of space into glade, in its framing of the imagined glade. In this work, the place apart is one *having the qualities of* a glade. The piece begins to wear away at the imaginative transformation that is committed to more fully in other parts of the hospital through the ‘grove’ metaphor. In this case, the simile does not assert that this room *is* a glade, but instead suggests shared qualities. Tarbuck argues that the poem works to establish a
‘third space’ within the Spiritual Care Centre, ‘an imagined space, where a chapel (a place of prayer and communion) is also a woodland glade, a place of non-religious spirituality and natural beauty.’

Picking up Tarbuck’s notion of a ‘third space’, Goodwin suggests that in this room ‘we are not in a forest glade, nor are we in a hospital [...] in quite the same way as we would be if this installation wasn’t here.’

This, he contends, means that ‘the reader [...] is invited to co-exist paradoxically in the hospital and the forest’.

Both readings bring to mind Homi Bhabha’s work around third spaces, ‘innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation’ that reject hybridity as a fusing or merging, instead presenting a palimpsest ‘in which different versions or layers can coexist.’

The hospital pieces present other examples of third spaces, palimpsestic sites of collaboration facilitated by the interaction of work with the environment of the hospital.

In A Stargazey Pie, Bevis recalls the suggestive chiasmus facilitated by Coracle’s hybrid bookshop-gallery, which ‘allowed the playing out of a very direct conceptual exchange: gallery walls as pages, and the book as a pocket exhibition.’, evoking Kotz’s thoughts on the gallery-like page.

Tarbuck aligns the space of the page with the type of contemplative space that is ‘a place apart’, citing Clark’s instruction to “read the space as well as the words”’, and thereby ‘implicating the space of the page in poetic meaning’.

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334 Goodwin, *Beyond the Page*.

335 Ibid.


Moschatel’s site-specific work, that space becomes more forthright. Like the standing poem, pieces on the wall are ‘taking part in the world’, and the world is partaking of them. The interplay of light and shade on works in *GROVE*, enabled by the unusually airy and bright hospital, means that natural light can touch the works across the day. Light is able to pass through pieces printed or etched on glass, so that texts cast shadows onto the floor, rendering the floor a new page in *GROVE*. Areas that might otherwise be considered of the background, such as a wall or floor, are lively sites in these shifting palimpsests – these instances cast a renewed spotlight on the ‘background’ of paper pieces, on the apparently empty space of the page. As people move through the hospital, as the trees of the central courtyard are rustled by the wind and birds and insects pass the windows, all are implicated in the poems, becoming a part of the page in a kind of perpetual Cageian performance of the incidental.

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Section Two: Attending to the background

Backgrounding

In one of the hospital’s waiting rooms, the names of ‘Selected Grasses’ scroll continuously across an LED screen:

…Great Panicled Sedge… Sea Hard Grass… Meadow Soft Grass…

The imposed rhythms of the scrolling sign tangle with the repeated sibilant ‘s’ and insistent trimeter to evoke a walk through these tall, swishing grasses, made available from the waiting room chairs. Co-opting the institutional scrolling information screen, the piece

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surprises with this continuous list poem. The LED display recalls those seen on trains, and is a departure from Clark’s usual media. The institutional air of the white plastic surround and stark green rolling text is redeployed against itself – that is, it asks: if this apparent information screen is actually a poem, what of the other elements within the room? Clark’s subtle intervention into the space aligns the work visually with other elements of the waiting room vernacular: institutional chairs, notice board, CCTV camera. In this way, it picks at that spool of questions sewn through the press around where ‘the work’ begins and ends: ‘one cannot say on this side of this blade of grass, this is the work, and beyond is no longer the work’, to revisit Edeline’s reflections on Little Sparta. The installation reads as ‘hospital information screen’, but actually presents a stealth poetry. Such sleight-of-hand recalls other acts of poetic intervention by Moschatel, including the standing poem’s movement of poetry from the private to the ‘public realm’ and the circulation of poems either by post, permitting them entry into the domestic space, or tactiley ‘passed from hand to hand’.

The subtle presence of ‘Selected Grasses’ in the hospital space reminds us that the more-than-human will not be ignored or excluded. Vigorous grasses have taken over this official-looking sign, like plants cracking through pavements or lichens colonising road signs – in the words of a 2011 Moschatel card, ‘a flower can break a rock’. Yet the use of hospital infrastructure as medium suggests an attempt to ensure that the presence of the grasses blends in, that the piece is not automatically a central point of focus in the

340 Thomas A Clark and Laurie Clark, ‘a flower can break a rock’ (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2011).
room. This series of creative decisions that play with attention brings to mind Val Plumwood’s concept of ‘back grounding’. Backgrounding, Plumwood argues, is the treatment of women and of more-than-human nature as ‘the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognised achievement or causation’.\(^{341}\) Plumwood’s framework locates more-than-human nature as *subjected* to backgrounding; it is passively *backgrounded*. I suggest that ‘Selected Grasses’ is an instance of more active backgrounding, the purposeful creation of a work about nature that blends with its surroundings. It highlights what might be backgrounded in the hospital itself, particularly the ways in which the common areas of hospitals work to conceal or elide the realities of medical treatment.

The backgrounding of nature, Plumwood observes, is predicated upon ‘the denial of dependence on biospheric processes, and a view of humans as apart, outside of nature, which is treated as a limitless provider without needs of its own. Dominant western culture has systematically inferiorised, backgrounded and denied dependency on the whole sphere of reproduction and subsistence.’\(^{342}\) The denial of human dependence upon nature in the context of hospitals articulates a fraught ongoing human-nonhuman dialogue, underlining the assumed distinction between ‘human’ and ‘nature’, and in doing so contributing to the backgrounding of both human and nonhuman nature. Hospitals work loose perceived boundaries between humans and ‘nature’, recalling us to the strangeness of the human body, our vulnerability and susceptibility. The brutality of


\(^{342}\) Ibid., p. 21.
surgery and the mess of the body’s viscera are enfolded in the hospital’s functions, and the apparently bounded human body is breached and altered within its walls, ‘refuting the idea of boundaries between inside and outside at every level.’ Medicine broadly asserts a normative human body, but any journey towards that ‘normal’ state calls up the body’s strangeness; medical procedures open the body, remove parts of it, and sometimes augment it. The human becomes an entanglement of drugs, metal plates, plastic joints, and synthetic sutures that dissolve microplastics into the blood. Hospitals permit these hybrid human/more-than-human possibilities, while attempting to negate more-than-human presence through environmental controls. They also grapple with the existing hybridity, the texture, of the human body: ‘[w]ithin life-forms, all the way down to the DNA level, there are other life-forms – the fact of symbiosis’, while the minerality of bone attests to ‘the lithic within the corporeal’.

JJ Cohen confronts this strangeness, presenting it as justification for referring to the inhuman rather than the more-than-human or non-human. His adoption of the term ‘inhuman’ serves ‘to emphasize both difference (“in-” as negative prefix) and “intimacy (“in-” as indicator of estranged interiority)’. This pull between intimacy and strangeness recalls a Moschatel standing poem that exposes and begins to explore the semantic ambiguities of ‘apart’, published in the same year as Clark’s pastoral encoding of ‘a place apart’ in The Hut in the Woods. The white card frames a blue line of text, all internal

344 Ibid., p. 274.
346 Cohen, p. 10.
spacing removed: ‘apartapartapartapartapart’. This lack of spacing permits multiple readings. As a string of aparts, the text offers up the apparently paradoxical readings of apart:together or together:apart, producing an oxymoronic tug-of-war between companionship and estrangement. Alternatively, this textual thread might be approached as ten condensed words, five counts of a part. Each reading resists the other, proposing distance or entanglement, producing in the work a rub of that uncanny intimacy suggested by the inhuman. The piece helps to articulate the lively plurality of meaning in ‘a place apart’, unravelling its apparent simplicity to reveal tensions that underline the phrase across Clark’s work. The hospital is perhaps the ideal site for exploring this interchange, this pull between forces. Derrida has unpicked the concurrent meanings uneasily allied at the root of the word ‘hospitality’ – ‘hospes, the stranger or guest, but also the host or master.’ These carry also into ‘hospital’, and thereby highlight the experience of the patient – residing temporarily as a guest, but vulnerable to a creeping awareness of hosting the strange within.

The hospital works to conceal the uncanny strangeness within the human. While the work of medicine breaches human-nonhuman boundaries, the hospital simultaneously conceals its work, creating an environment that is immaculately clean, sanitary, screened-off, often pristinely white and scented with disinfectant. Flowers and plants are plastic, and food is processed and heavily packaged. Biospheric and biological processes are denied, to return to Plumwood, through the hospital’s sterile uniformity,

348 Derrida, ‘Hospitality, perfectibility, responsibility’, (p.96).
and its hiding and burning of ‘waste’. Following Kristeva, Morton argues that the exclusion of ‘pollution is part of performing Nature as pristine, wild, immediate, and pure.’ Yet, to ‘have subjects and objects, one must have abjects to vomit or excrete’. The hospital attempts to ‘define itself by excluding dirt and pollution in this way’, concealing and mitigating human vulnerability by full sensory concealment, and in doing so suggests a lack of dependence on or relationality with nonhuman nature in the form of animals, plants and even diurnal and seasonal rhythms. The formal backgrounding of ‘Selected Grasses’ exposes these methods by which ‘nature’ is sidelined by a veneer of human mastery and apparent independence from natural processes. Where pieces on card decontextualise the overlooked or ‘inconspicuous’ in nature, typically reframing it as a point of focus within white space, ‘Selected Grasses’ as a site-specific piece has the advantage of being in the waiting room. The background paradoxically becomes a point of focus, given the particular forms of attention that these sites create.

Waiting, pausing

The waiting room is an unusual example of a nominally prescriptive site used to frame Clark’s site-specific work. It is a place primed for attention, appealing to Clark’s poetics, which attest to an ‘understanding of attention as “waiting”’, in a manner that makes a virtue of waiting and calls back to the tangled etymologies of ‘attend’ as both ‘being

350 Ibid., p. 274.
351 Ibid., p. 274.
present’ and ‘waiting upon’, while also carrying the ministering echo of ‘tend’, which speaks to acts of care fundamental to the hospital.353

The interwoven acts of attending and waiting find expression in the recurrence of pauses, digressions and interludes within Clark’s work. Pausing places are thematically and formally profuse in Moschatel pieces, appealing to the careful slowness of the press’s ethos, while acting as a subtle reminder of the essential poetry of the pause, laid down in the etymology of stanza as a stopping place or dwelling room.354 Clark restates this interpretation through works such as his collection Of Woods & Water – the subtitle of which is ‘Forty Eight Delays’, and which comprises forty-eight stanzas.355 A series of pieces for the courtyard at the New Stobhill entitled ‘Eight Delays’ develops this motif, with eight short poems on metal plaques, each of which is attached to a bench, inviting the reader to sit, to linger.

For Hair, Clark’s frequent moments of pause ‘make it possible to digress from the straight path of habitual perception’.356 The theme of breaking through the habituated inattention of the day-to-day is an important one for Moschatel, with its focus on noticing the inconspicuous and small, or being surprised by work that exceeds one’s creation like the standing poem. From this perspective, a distinction is implicitly created between habit and practice – both are continuous and repetitive acts, but where practice is mindful, engaged and aware, habit might be considered unconscious pattern making. The small

356 AF, pp. 183-4. Emphasis on digress in original, which I have removed.
press engages closely with this tension, fundamentally reliant upon the rhythms and repetitions of habit, yet simultaneously drawing attention to them through its practice, recalling once more Felski’s paradox that ‘the everyday ceases to be everyday when it is subject to critical scrutiny.’

Clark extends the metaphor of stanzaic delay to the gaps between verses, calling once again upon the analogy of the woodland clearing when writing that

\[
\text{between stanzas} \\
\text{there is a small space} \\
\text{or clearing} \\
\text{in which to} \\
\text{linger for a moment} \\
\text{before moving on}\]

In the hospital, these interstices are enacted figuratively in the repeated imagery of glades and clearings, and spatially, given the lack of decoration to distract from work in the hospital’s rooms, which converses with Moschatel’s characteristic minimalism.

The courtyard is a stopping place, its openness suggesting another clearing, this one sited at the centre of the Grove. With its gravel floor and sparse planting, the courtyard resembles a Japanese Zen garden. ‘Eight Delays’ strengthens these connotations by carrying the influence of minimal image-led Japanese verse, in poems such as:

\[
\text{after the shower} \\
\text{it goes on raining} \\
\text{gently on the pond} \\
\text{under the willow}\]

\[357 \text{ Thomas A Clark, Little Poetics 2 (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2009).} \]
\[358 \text{ Thomas A Clark, ‘Eight Delays’ (New Stobhill: Moschatel, 2009).} \]
The syllabic verse builds the gentle rhythm of the raindrops and gestures towards the willow and pond so evocative of a Zen garden, a sense carried further by the uncluttered design of the courtyard, the type of environment described by John Beardsley as ‘radically simplified’ and thereby able to focus ‘attention on phenomenal experience’.359

Delay and attention entwine through the format and placement of the poems in ‘Eight Delays’: white text against a pale green background, coupled with small font, slows the reading process and prevents them from being read at a distance. Indeed, their position at the end of each bench means they can only be viewed by one seated person at a time. As such, the reader performs the posture of the solitary thinker, or somebody at prayer, seated alone, head bowed. Seen through the courtyard windows from other parts of the hospital, the reader becomes stilled and monumental, a layer in that palimpsestic mode of reading facilitated by the hospital’s windows and glass walls. The reader can be observed as they perform the kinesics of attention and contemplation, tacitly giving permission for others in the hospital to pause or wait, exemplifying the virtue of waiting and establishing it in the geographic heart of the hospital.

Clark describes how, to have an ideal gallery experience, ‘it is necessary for us to remain still and silent in the same spot for long enough to merge, emotionally at least, with the tenor of our surroundings’ (SdA). Pieces in waiting rooms and works incorporated into benches facilitate these forms of engagement. Recall for a moment Alec Finlay’s

thoughts on ‘the proprioception of the book’, performed by small press practitioners, in which ‘reading is absorbed through the body as much as the mind’. There is a form of merging at work here, requiring us to attend to the obverse of our earlier recognition of the tactility of thought. Accepting that thoughts are tactile, we must also allow that the body can think, and can engage in somatic forms of attention enabled by slowing and pausing. When describing looking out to the hospital courtyard, Clark starts to enact a form of merging between the components of the space, as a piece comprising descriptions of bird songs on glass looks ‘onto a courtyard planted with birch trees and benches’. The lack of an Oxford comma makes it seem as though both birches and benches are planted and recalls his belief that the ideal gallery space should ‘seem less a fabrication than a natural growth.’ (SdA) The benches call to mind the etymology of install as a sitting-, or standing-place. These installations allow the reader to sit with and attend to the work.

Kotva argues that ‘Clark experiments with different techniques of attention and presents us also with a practice of attention.’ In addition, she observes instances in which the artist compares attention to ‘a mode of sympathy’, recalling the kinesic readings of poems in the courtyard. Rebecca Krinke highlights the work of Robert Durback, a former Trappist monk, around the consequences of making contemplation a practice.

362 Kotva, p. 3. My emphasis.
363 Ibid., p. 5.
Durback’s model of attention goes further than Clark’s, figuring attentiveness as the conduit to a mode of *empathy*:

Contemplation may start from a definition of “fixed attention of one thing,” but it is not a fixed action or goal, instead it is developmental activity. Contemplation moves from “fixed attention” to “identification,” which he defines as becoming one with the object one is contemplating, until eventually, “identification deepens, and there is the sense of communion.”

I would contend that the idea of *becoming* one with the object of contemplation is more about becoming *aware* of parity with what might previously have been perceived as *other*. Through sustained noticing, what is apparently of the background may become a locus of identification. Identification with another draws out the parity between the *other* and the self, and in the hospital this can become a way of recognising the strange otherness of the human, and opening the self to a sense of communion with the more-than-human.

* 

**Section Three: The Garden**

In the garden created by Ian Hamilton Finlay and Sue Finlay at Little Sparta, a bench inscribed with the words ‘The Westering Sun Will Sometimes Reach This Bench’ stands against the west-facing gable end of the house. On some evenings, the sun moves across to collaborate with or help to complete or perform the piece, tactiley reaching out

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365 Ian Hamilton Finlay, ‘The Westering Sun Will Sometimes Reach This Bench’ (Dunsyre: Wild Hawthorn, 2009).
to the seat. This will happen *sometimes* – such a performance is avowedly unusual and special (particularly in the unforgiving climes of Dunsyre!) and there is a subtle sense that the bestowing of this light will be a rare gift. This interchange recalls Clark imagining light raising whatever it touches to ‘a luminous transient being’, that touch figured as a ‘surprise or gift’. Nigel Clark also frames sunlight as a gift, channelling Nietzsche and Georges Bataille to define ‘the excess of solar energy’ reaching Earth as a gift passed between bodies, ‘an overflowing’ of ‘warmth and light’ that ‘we are obliged’ to pass on and share.\(^{366}\)

The bench was originally conceived of as part of *Hortus Conclusus*, installed at Little Sparta in 2009, the final idea that Finlay brought to the Little Sparta Trust before his death. The *Hortus Conclusus* is a walled garden of gravel containing a sunken pool surrounded by slate tiles, which are inscribed with the names of clouds. The piece is closed off, deliberately inaccessible from the garden. The *Hortus Conclusus* was repurposed from an old barn that Finlay had initially proposed ‘should be allowed to decay into a ruin, thus becoming a domestic version of those larger eyecatchers so favoured by 18th-century landscape gardeners’, a parody of the ruined castle, chapel or grotto on the domestic scale.\(^{367}\) His vision aligns with the domesticity and humour of the small press, and engages with the generally anti-Romantic sensibility that displaces the solitary genius poet in favour of the collective, and privileges the small over the vast sublime. Both of the sites in which the bench has resided are shaped by their proximity to the domestic, and when the sun touches the bench, it sympathetically evokes a sense of domestic warmth.

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\(^{367}\) Eyres, ‘The Hortus Conclusus’, p. 27.
In Finlay’s initial desire to retain the barn as a domestic ruin, he prefigured the slow reclamation of the house by the garden, and the garden by the wider landscape. The sculptural pieces at Little Sparta are all written into the landscape through their ongoing decay, and the garden is unfinished in a way that speaks to my broader interest in the press as a suite of ongoing and accretive acts. The press’s in-situ works, perhaps more so than the paper pieces, speak to place as partial and unfinished. Site-specific pieces located outdoors make very visible the ways in which they are continually being altered and rewritten, even in the absence of their practitioners, through ongoing more-than-human collaboration, and intimately co-written by time.

The garden is a productive site for considering other-than-human engagements with site-specific pieces, like those that began to emerge in some of the hospital-based works. Like the hospital, the garden is a space of nurture and care, and also a site of backgrounding – Little Sparta is rarely considered in terms of its texture, of the repetitive labours that have facilitated its production, instead more commonly characterised in terms of its network of installations. And yet, the work of gardening mirrors the labours of the small press. For example, Franklin Ginn writes of tensions between the world of commercial gardening and the small-scale intimacy of gardening as a practice, suggesting that against the thriving gardening industry, ‘the experience of gardening elders shows that there are vestiges of gift networks, marginal economic exchange and old crafty practices’ – in short, akin to the alternative networks of the small press when
placed against the behemoth of commercial publishing.\textsuperscript{368} Notably, Ginn also describes gardening as ‘a certain way of life,’\textsuperscript{369} and argues for the role of the garden in retuning relationships of ‘intimacy’ between human and the more-than-human:

> It is clear that a renewed intimacy between humans, land and creatures is necessary. Gardening can provide some hope here, as an ethos and practice of everyday experiment in making and dwelling in landscape, a binding up of various inclinations, sensations and responses that join the gardener and the world.\textsuperscript{370}

Small press practice might just as easily be considered ‘an ethos and practice of everyday experiment in making and dwelling in landscape’ and a method of connecting the writer with the more-than-human world.

Sue Finlay undertook most of the gardening work in the early years at Stonypath, and has written about her experiences of tending the garden, and the incremental and cumulative nature of the slow-paced work.\textsuperscript{371} She recalls her ‘absorption in the process’ of this work,\textsuperscript{372} and cites Barry Stevens’s thoughts on making something outside of oneself, and how the process negates any sense of separation from what is made – rather that making facilitates a form of ‘inter-action’.\textsuperscript{373}

The garden, glossed as ‘the domestic wild’ by Ginn, resides at a threshold between domesticity and the wider landscape. The garden carries that domestic charge in its troubling of the threshold of the house, and there is an uneven merging of the human and

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\textsuperscript{369} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{372} Ibid., p. 24, emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., p. 24-5.
the more-than-human in this amalgamation of the domestic and the ‘wild’. Clark explores the garden’s troubling of thresholds in *At Dusk & At Dawn* (1998), a cycle of free-verse sonnets set in a garden, when he writes of a tree’s shadow that ‘it is not a part of the tree / it is not apart from the tree’. The sequence of poems uses the liminal temporalities of its title as a lens through which to study the possibilities of drawing together places that are both apart from, and a part of, the subject.

Twilight is a particularly apposite setting for such a study, as Hair attests when writing of the influence of Samuel Palmer’s 19th-century pastoral engravings on Clark’s work. Noting the ways in which Palmer’s crepuscular *Folding the Last Sheep* makes visual Clark’s description of evening as ‘a levelling of values’, Hair observes that ‘[a]ll clear distinctions between the natural and the human – between sheepfold and cottage, for example, the thatched roof and the surrounding trees, the sheep and the wattle fence enclosing them, and the hearth light and the glow of the full moon – dissolve in the etching’s tranquil, reconciliatory, vespertinal ambience’. I am interested in building upon this interpretation of the evening’s ‘levelling of values’ as a dissolution of perceived boundaries between the human and the more-than-human, and in considering the implications of such a levelling, ‘far out in the dusk/ where qualities mingle’. Hair also proposes dusk as an example of a temporal ‘place apart’, existing between two more definite times, neither one nor the other (*AF*, p. 184).

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375 Ross Hair, *Folding the Last Sheep* (Pittenweem: Moschatel, 2016), non-paginated.
At Dusk & At Dawn establishes both periods of half-light as sites of transformative potential which are able, like Palmer’s engravings, to mute clear distinctions between bodies. The pamphlet’s cover anticipates this, the title printed indistinctly in black on a navy jacket. Within, Clark paints twilight as ‘intervals/ densities of blue or grey/ when we stand on the brink/ of a different possibility.’ This ‘different possibility’ is mapped as a kind of metamorphosis that creeps through the poem, a state energised by the liminality of dawn and dusk, the pull between temporal opposites. That brink of possibility is the softening or evening that emerges. Clark builds up a blurring and altering of bounded bodies across the pamphlet, inviting the fluid ‘insistence’ of an assonant ‘clinging’ mist that ‘disperses and reassembles’, softening the edges of things. In these hazy crepuscular places apart, ‘the external and the internal are/ continuous with the evening air’.

This privileging of between-spaces and softening of boundaries builds to its zenith in the eleventh sonnet:

it is in order to be forgotten
that images assert themselves
in this partial
light in which
one thing merges with another
tree, weasel, fence post
one is as lively as the other
and obscures itself as soon
as it comes to recognise itself
nothing remains intact for long
before longing to exchange itself
for something else, something less
separate, firm or emphatic

377 Clark, At Dusk & At Dawn.
it is the full power of this light
to persuade forms to abdicate

This description of ‘partial’ light captures both the half-light of the crepuscular, and the
fondness of partiality, the latter recalling the gift of Nigel Clark’s generous ex-orbitant
sunlight. The lively tangle of tree, weasel and fence post also calls to mind Bennett’s
conception of vibrant or vital matter, explored briefly in the introduction to this thesis,
which seeks ‘to think slowly an idea that runs fast through modern heads: the idea of
matter as passive stuff, as raw, brute, or inert.’378 Within this framework, ‘the difference
between subjects and objects is minimized’ and ‘the status of the shared materiality of all
things is elevated. All bodies become more than mere objects’.379 Bennett argues that
‘encounters with lively matter can chasten […] fantasies of human mastery, highlight the
common materiality of all that is, expose a wider distribution of agency, and reshape the
self and its interests.’380 Here, all is equal in the half-light, both in its common liveliness,
but also in the recognition that ‘nothing remains intact for long’, that all matter belongs
within a wider cycle, enhanced by the sacrality of the powerful form-altering light. There
is a sense of the self as obscured, and striving to be absorbed within something greater,
which rhymes with that chastening of fantasies around human dominance.

Bennett’s sense of reshaping the self converses with a sequence in *At Dusk & At Dawn*
which invites the reader ‘to sit out in the air/ and take the shape of the air’:

to be one and no other
and at the same time discover

378 Bennett, p. vii
379 Ibid., p. 13.
380 Ibid., p. 122.
your shape as a mere integument
that is less a shape than a notion
let it blow or drop

Here, the apparently bounded self is dismantled, reduced to a ‘mere integument’. This verse speaks to the ‘a part/apart’ tension of being one and no other, of remaining anchored within a self, and yet, ‘at the same time’, gaining awareness of the expansive possibilities of awakening to otherness. This subtle interplay recalls Morton’s argument that recognising symbiosis does not negate difference, it ‘does not reduce everything to sameness; it raises everything to the level of wonder.’ Morton’s words might be read in defence of the object-oriented-ontologies that both he and Bennett have advanced, and which have been subjected to criticism as ‘flat ontology’. Though flattening suggests diminishing or reducing, Morton – like Clark – crucially speaks of raising up. That which has previously been backgrounded is placed on a more even footing: this does not mean that something ceases to be everyday (see Felski’s paradox), but rather that it is receiving necessary ethical, ecological attention. The over-compensation is about equality, re-asserting the more-than-human voice.

In one of the final sonnets of At Dawn & At Dusk, Clark writes of lying in a hammock and acknowledging the existence of ‘a world appropriate/ to the vertical and a discourse/ that holds that world in place’, a hierarchical world of ‘distinctions’. He sets himself apart from that discourse, giving in ‘to a breeze that shakes the stars’, the wonder of the air that elsewhere in the poem can dissolve his shape. He adds, ‘this evening I commit myself/

to the horizontal’, to an evening out or levelling of values, acknowledging the knotted worlds of which he is a part.

Morton’s sense of recognising interdependence as raising up has some resonance for thinking about the implications of a Bennetitian reading of Clark. Accepting that flatness brings certain limitations, Bennett’s levelling ontology is nevertheless useful in the pastoral contexts that infuse the garden and that have been written through this chapter. A vital materialist reading of Clark’s pastoral starts to express ways in which it might align with post-pastoralism, of the kind advanced by Gifford. Gifford critiques the ‘classic pastoral of the absence of labor [sic]’383 and despite pastoralism’s presentation as a genre of ‘close encounters with nature’, the labour of human and inhuman actants is rarely, if ever, to the fore.384 Yet when things are levelled, shared labours start to be exposed. Thinking about the expanded self of Bennett and the dissolved sense of self in At Dusk & At Dawn offers a new perspective when returning, for example, to ‘the tree, weasel, fence post’, each ‘as lively as the other’ (as lively as The Other…). Though the vertical tree and fence post create a frame for this scene, thereby retaining a human perspective, the shared liveliness of these more-than-human actants, in and of itself, offers a corrective to the sense in classical pastoral that liveliness in nature exists purely for the benefit of reducing the labour of humans. As Peter Gratton notes, ‘Bennett grants that her work risks a “touch of anthropocentrism” but she argues that without this risk of exporting what was previously considered human onto a supposedly mechanized nature, “

384 Ibid., p. 18
we can never pull off descriptions that render animals and things not merely as “behaving,” but rather as acting’.\textsuperscript{385} Moreover, read as individual assemblages, each exposes different forms of labour, the tree and fence post in their framing of the vignette articulating a series of processes and transformations: the tangling of DNA, seeds, soil microbes, climate, time, nurture, shelter, deforestation, carpentry, tools, human labour and decisions that manifested first as tree and then through lively transformations as wooden fence post. It may be a little reductive to apply a seemingly ‘flat’ ontology to these processes, suggesting that each is of equal importance or force, and implying the apparent abnegation of human responsibility in these tangled agencies, but this over-compensation provides a helpful corrective to the more overtly anthropocentric classic pastoral by recognising legitimacy outside of a human framework. Ciphers of that genre are rounded by suggesting all the tangled backgrounded forces at work in their production.

As Bennett suggests, becoming attentive to the liveliness of matter beyond the human subject might promote a ‘new self-interest’,\textsuperscript{386} which entails an awareness that in ‘a knotted world of vibrant matter, to harm one section of the web may very well be to harm oneself’.\textsuperscript{387} This promotes a greater equality within the pastoral; the genre usually suggests a mode of equality that places shepherds alongside princes, levelling human (male) values. Here, Bennett envisages a wider kinship beyond narrow human hierarchies, that nevertheless chimes with the pastoral mode of care and tending. The

\textsuperscript{385} Gratton, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{386} Bennett, \textit{Vibrant Matter}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., p. 13.
pastoral society is, after all, purportedly one of companionship and care. Hair suggests the sense of community in the pastoral as emblematic of the wider small press network of relationships, drawing attention to Pastoral, Clark’s 2010 enamel plaque, which bears the words ‘Loyal Order Of Ancient Shepherds Friendly Society’ (AF, p. 184). Hair sees the potential for a ‘more-than-human’ amity in the pastoral, and I suggest that the compensatory vital reading of Clark’s pastoral facilitates this amity and moves towards redressing some of the backgrounding of both women and the more-than-human from both the social order of traditional pastoral, and from the hierarchies that relegate the more-than-human to the background.

In this chapter, I have explored the emplaced nature of site-specific pieces created by the small press, loosely anchored around the idea of ‘a place apart’, and the pastoral inflections of both the phrase and the sites of the hospital and the garden. Clark has reflected on the ideal gallery space, and the works in the hospital channel some of its features, such as welcoming the play of natural light and being a pastoral (in the sense of caring and careful) space. The diffuse placement of pieces around the hospital allows innovative writings of the GROVE, contingent on a route walked around the site, and the connections walked between words. The lucid, potent imagery installed around the hospital is sufficiently compact to be ‘held in mind’, and carried with one. The tactile, phenomenological nature of Clark’s writing, with these images held in mind and sense of how thoughts might be able to ‘touch’, poses a challenge to the position of ‘A Place Apart’ in the hospital’s Spiritual Care Centre, its rehearsal of a mind-body separation at odds with Clark’s worldview. Translating Moschatel’s small-scale forms – the pocket-sized card
or pamphlet – over to the large scale brings a greater level of attention to the materiality of the page, one that might be recalled and brought to bear when returning to the works on paper. Meanwhile, works printed on glass enable the page to be continually rewritten according to movement round the hospital.

Clark experiments with different forms of attention in the hospital, creating ‘Selected Grasses’ in a vernacular medium that brings focus to attempts to background the more-than human in the hospital and conceal the strangeness of the (in)human body, exposing the tension laid down in the etymology of ‘hospital’ that simultaneously connotes stranger and guest. Pieces are placed in waiting rooms, spaces of prescribed attention, and prolonged attention can shift into identification, and a sense of kinship with other patients and with the more-than-human nature within the body.

Moving over to the garden allows the continuation of thinking around the more-than-human, and around the backgrounded labours of gardening so commonly overlooked in connection to Little Sparta. There is a clear affinity between the slow, anti-capitalist practice of gardening, and small press practice, and a more prolonged reflection on these interconnections would be particularly fruitful, although that is outside the scope of this present study. Examining the garden as a site that troubles distinctions between the human and more-than-human, the domestic and the wild, allows a study of the play of evening light that reduces distinctions between separate bodies and enables a sense of merging. Gardens reside within a formalising tradition contextualised by frameworks of
the pastoral and ‘the garden mythologies of Abrahamic lore’. Yet the garden site pulls between the human and the more-than-human, the domestic and the wild. The desired domesticity of the garden represents a formalising impulse, one that I explore in more detail in the next chapter, which examines the mediation of landscape through the ‘canonical artefact’ of the book, and continues to uncover ways in which the hybrid, expansive practices of the small press find methods of connecting and relating to the more-than-human.
CHAPTER FOUR

‘Something Unresolved’: small press landscapes
In this chapter, I explore engagements with landscapes in small press practice. I focus upon Corbel Stone Press, Richardson and Skelton’s ‘deep travel’ accumulating new significance in light of Skelton’s experimental practices of burial and exhumation. Having already examined the walking and mapping practices of Corbel Stone, in this chapter I actively incorporate a range of the press’s hybrid media, forms and practices, including formally radical landscape poetry, blogging, prose, acts of burial and exhumation, music, filmmaking and curation.

Although I have previously written at length about *Landings*, including exploring it as the site of walked knowledge and contested mappings in Chapter Two, its shadow clings to this chapter as it does to the Corbel Stone Press oeuvre, not just in its complete editions, but also through the reworking of its textual matter into new pieces.\(^{389}\) These reworkings reassert the press as a site of ongoing, repetitive practice, and extend the commonplace finding of poetry and objects from the close at hand that I examined in Chapter Two.

Revisiting *Landings* in this chapter recapitulates the prominence of the ongoing, the continuous and the unfinished in small press practice. My return to Anglezarke as a text mirrors Skelton’s own returns to the moor, through the ongoing editioning of the text and its offshoots. Each new edition of the text since the third (2011) has brought additional verse and prose passages, but also long sections of exegesis, with Skelton interrogating

\(^{389}\) See Richards, ‘From *Landings* to *Beyond The Fell Wall*’. 

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his earlier practice. The preface to the first of these additions, *Names. Dates. Genealogies*., opens with a section of notes titled ‘Something Unresolved’, which draws attention to the problematics of the preceding editions. The significance of ‘Something Unresolved’ as a phrase resounds across Corbel Stone Press’s practice, which embodies an uneasy relationship with resolution, shifting between the impulse towards a kind of archival completism, and a preoccupation with the uncertainty and elusiveness of both landscapes, and ways to tell and remember them. Even while this thesis approaches its conclusion, the disruptive presence of Corbel Stone Press invites us to linger with the innate possibilities of embracing the incomplete.

It is difficult to conceive of *Landings* as anything other than ‘unresolved’, given its significant timespan, generic hybridity and the personal grief at its heart. Indeed, the project seems less finished, less resolved as time goes on, the multitude of editions and additions announcing by their very existence the unattainability of resolution. ‘Something Unresolved’ is disruptive, pulling the rug from under attempts to find connection and intimacy in earlier editions of *Landings*. Skelton locates himself as physically and temporally removed from the moor, opening with: ‘[i]t has been a long time since I last ventured there’ (*L6*, p. 133). In the preface, he reflects on his final months on Anglezarke, a period in which his relationship with the moor had become ‘increasingly elaborate, demanding, oblique,’ part of his unfulfilled attempts to live there (*L6*, p. 133). He recounts spending a night there, an unsettling and inconclusive experience, and questions the purpose of encounters with the landscape that ‘felt like a test which I was bound to fail, or a show in which there was no revelation, no dénouement. If I was searching for an
epiphany, a conclusion, then it was too subtle for my senses to apprehend.’ (L6, p. 134). Although the lack of dénouement is framed as a personal failing, the acknowledgement of ways in which landscape works subtly beyond human senses indicates its resistance to the neatness of a teleological narrative. I suggest that as Skelton’s work has grown increasingly attuned to the more-than-human, it engages more with the energising power and fascination of the unresolved – of things beyond the senses and beyond human understanding. The small press is ideally situated to explore this; as established, the small press corpus shies away from resolution, keeping texts in a continual dialogue across time, which is expanded through intertextual sites, those ‘social texts’ examined by Hair, and the practice of using found materials that is common to the presses in this study.

In Section One, I examine how the impulse to revisit older work prevents a sense of closure in many small press works and contributes to an interrogation of the fixed book form. Radical poetic forms further test the written word as a vehicle for landscape. In Section Two, I explore the imagery and practices of burial and excavation in Corbel Stone Press work, mapping a shift towards more tentative interventions across the press’s corpus, via Skelton’s studies of bog bodies as unresolved human presences. My final section begins with Skelton’s 2014 and 2016 residencies in Iceland, exposing presences within the landscape and acts of co-curation. I return to questions of the found, unpacking the multiple forces acting upon a ‘found’ object. I conclude by considering productive forms of the unresolved, following Marcel Mauss and Georges Davy to focus on the gift as a necessarily incomplete act, whose resolution creates a connection across time.

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Richardson and Skelton return to their own work more than any of the practitioners in this study, with Skelton in particular treading a persistent line of self-interrogation and exegesis. The textual component of *Landings* was first published in 2009 through Skelton’s Sustain-Release Private Press (2005-2011), while the most recent edition – by now three times longer, having been supplemented with notes, appendices and more poems – was released in 2019 as a tenth-anniversary edition by the Corbel Stone imprint Xylem Books.

Skelton’s work is steeped in self-commentary and critique. He questions the motivations for, and success of, aspects of his practice in interviews, blogposts and in print. This in part arises from a change in his priorities over the past decade. What I term a ‘pronounced’ shift ‘towards alterity and more-than-human ontologies’ in Corbel Stone’s practice is evident in Skelton’s responses to earlier work, which begin to open up space for other-than-human voices. *Landings*, layered with commentaries and self-evaluation within and across its editions, is the blueprint for Corbel Stone Press’s self-questioning practice. The book’s structure contributes to the overwhelming sense of Anglezarke’s scale, opening with its inventory of the moor’s acres and feet, and closing with pages of detailed notes which chart the evolution of the name Anglezarke, explore changing land-use and pore over maps of the area. By the tenth-anniversary edition, the book has gained

391 Richards, pp. 6 and 12.
more than 100 pages of appendices, including glossaries and census data. Framing his time on Anglezarke as ‘unresolved’ establishes an exegetic mode that is sustained by the publication of later editions, each containing more self-reflexive texts and additional wordlists, glossaries and notes.

Skelton’s repeated returns to these landscapes and their texts is facilitated by his co-running of Corbel Stone with Richardson, which gives him the freedom to print multiple new editions. Skelton likens the many editions of Landings to the oral storytelling tradition, in which

the material is constantly reworked in its retelling. It’s not fixed, it’s mutable. Traditional publishing works against this – it’s all about creating canonical artefacts. But one of the joys of being a self-publisher is that you can continually revise and reprint. The book becomes more fluid – an interim report, a work-in-progress. So, with Landings it was originally 96 pages, and at the last telling [2019] it was about 326. And there is new material added, obviously, but also that new material cannibalises the old, reworks it, and re-presents it. I think of those bodily metaphors, those landscape processes, of things being eroded and then accumulated elsewhere. It’s all about recycling and repurposing. I find it a fascinating process, and it could go on, endlessly.392

Recalling Drucker’s thoughts on the intermedial, mutable artist’s book, Skelton frames the self-published book as a potent medium for coming to terms with lively, ever-shifting landscape. Likening editioning to the oral tradition also continues the press’s destabilising of the object. The interplay between tellings and canonical artefacts is a prominent one for Corbel Stone Press; the press explores and critiques methods of resolving unwieldy landscapes in print, and takes advantage of the small press privilege of potentially

392 Pettinger, 'Interview', p. 396.
continuous revisions. In this chapter, *Landings* and some of its offshoots provide fertile territory for exploring examples of the book becoming ‘more fluid’.

In the opening pages of *Landings*, Skelton worries against different ways of telling. He lays out the difficulties of capturing the song of a robin, and the ‘constant polyphony’ of landscape, culminating in: ‘I ask myself – could any film, recording or photograph tell you this?’ (*L6*, p. 19). Here, Skelton struggles against the adequacy of a film, recording or photograph to *tell*. This section also queries the role of writing in this process of telling opening by, asking ‘[h]ow to begin writing this down?’ (*L6*, p. 19).

One method by which Skelton navigates this uncertainty is through taking a multimedia and hybrid approach typical of the small press, rendering Anglezarke in photographs, art objects, musical recordings, relics and in print. Yet of all these aspects of *Landings*, it is to the book that he most frequently returns. The last musical recording from *Landings* was released in 2011, but the work’s texts continue to be rewritten and reworked. The 2015 edition returns to the problem of ‘how to come to terms with the sheer volume of experience, the clamour of voices’ (*L6*, p. 275). Skelton observes that:

> When faced with the scale of such a task, the mind attempts to distill [sic], to rarefy, to simplify. The archivist becomes one of Meikle’s threshing contraptions, trying to separate the wheat from the chaff. But it is useless, and by the end the endeavour has devolved into list-making.

(*L6*, p. 276)

Despite confronting the futility of this list-making, Skelton persists in his textual responses to the vast and unresolvable phenomena of landscape in, and beyond, *Landings*.

The book is a formalising constraint on the *Landings* project, and its limitations and difficulties are evident across the many editions. However, although Skelton argues that
Corbel Stone’s reworkings are more ‘fluid’ than traditional publishing, taken individually, each textual edition of *Landings* is an outwardly conventional, perfect-bound book. Corbel Stone Press produce some smaller handmade editions within their practice, but their core texts are more uniform in appearance than any of the other presses explored in this study. Yet this central strand of perfect-bound books cumulatively interrogates the authority of the book form, with book-knowledge a contested site in *Landings*. Indeed, *Landings* is in many ways a book about books, its scavenged accounts of the moor’s written pasts as much in evidence as Skelton’s own fieldwork.

Skelton’s key written source is *Miscellaneous Notes on Rivington and District Farms and Other Buildings* (1936), a text found in the Bolton Library Local Studies Unit, which is reverentially referred to in *Landings* as ‘The Book’. The second time *Miscellaneous Notes* is mentioned, it is afforded a further degree of reverence through italicisation into *the book*, which strengthens the biblical connotations invited by the synecdoche. *The book* mediates Skelton’s experience of the moor, many of its words recuring as leitmotifs throughout *Landings*. Skelton questions the influence of *the book* on his perception of Anglezarke: ‘Why do the words of this nameless archivist persist in my thoughts? A restless voice from the past. Why am I drawn to follow in the same footsteps? Becoming complicit in something I don’t understand. A reluctant successor.’ (*L6*, p. 33). In the 2015 edition, Skelton transcribes *the book*, revealing it to be not a bound edition, but something much more piecemeal and informal. He also describes it, ‘a loose-leaf collection of 22 unnumbered, roughly A4-sized pages, with a 23rd written in pencil on a folded-out envelope. Most of the pages are type-written, but there are also pencilled
additions [...] Bracketed ellipses (...) have been used to indicate portions of text where the handwriting is illegible.’ (L6, p. 247). The lack of uniformity is clear – the non-standard page sizes, the mixture of typewriting and handwriting, the use of an unfolded envelope as the final page. The unnumbered and unbound pages could be rearranged, while the near-illegible handwriting is fallibly scribed in pencil. This is an unstable and incomplete foundation upon which to build, and yet Skelton works to concretise it as the book. In doing so, he draws attention to the inconsistencies and pitfalls of his archival practice, and that of the ‘nameless archivist’. By glossing these informally labelled ‘Miscellaneous Notes’ as the book, he highlights the authority invested in the written word, in the word ‘book’, and the status of the auctor,\(^\text{393}\) bestowing authority upon ‘something I don’t understand’. The book resembles an artist’s book, a unique manuscript that Skelton is formalising and editioning into the perfect-bound Landings. In doing so, he is obscuring its fragmentary materiality.

Throughout Landings, the book’s influence grows, until Skelton casts it as having a voice: ‘[m]ore and more, words from the book come to me, unbidden. Fragments. Unconnected. Untethered.’ (L6, p. 71). His own writings are further complicated, when asking, ‘[w]ho wrote Anglezarke?’ (L6, p. 61). The question alludes to the anonymous author of the book, while seeming to play down Skelton’s own role in writing Anglezarke, given that by later editions, the early Landings texts have also become a source for Skelton. He quotes from his own editions, and although he is critical and self-questioning,

the books do not recount new experiences of visiting Anglezarke. Instead, they return to the texts, alongside artefacts and photos of the moor gathered from that period of exploration. In the 2015 edition of *Landings*, he reflects that, even as his life continued to change after the first publications, ‘the lure of Anglezarke remained. It spoke across vast distances. Through memory and maps, through books and documents in the public record.’ (*L6*, p. 137). Skelton often metonymises the moor through its relics, as a way to mitigate his physical absence from it, or extend it beyond its boundaries, as explored in the textured mappings of Chapter Two. But as the editions progress, the texts themselves become the Anglezarke to which he returns.

Skelton’s questioning of who wrote Anglezarke turns attention towards ‘the material surfaces of the land itself’ as a written site, and to the shaping forces of landscape. Building on Mitchell’s proposal to ‘approach landscape as a verb rather than a noun’, Matless suggests that ‘one could argue that the relational hybridity of the term [landscape], which is already both natural and cultural, deep and superficial, makes it an inherently deconstructive force.’ Matless seems to indicate that the innate hybridity of the term is deconstructive, perhaps because of its pull between these two poles. The word ‘landings’ shares some of this productive ambiguity, transforming ‘land’ from noun to continuous verb, while also indicating multiplicity and plurality; this is not passive scaping. Landscape’s deconstructive nature renders Skelton’s increasing attempts to

394 See also Richards, ‘From Landings to Beyond The Fell Wall’.
textualise it ever more complicated. Corbel Stone harnesses this to challenge literary and artistic institutions – including the book.

The flow of text from Landings

Martyn Hudson responds to Skelton’s question of who wrote Anglezarke by highlighting the wordiness of the moor, bearing as it does its ‘multiple namings, reshaped and reworked through the succession of languages, power-relations, and land use that have shaped the moor and the social relationships which have left their presence on our cartographies. Enquiry about who wrote Anglezarke is therefore not rhetorical’, he suggests.\(^{397}\) In drawing attention to the formalised powers that have written the moor, he highlights the clamour of human presences that not only parcelled up its lands under a series of names, but also worked to demarcate and create boundaries within it, to buy and sell it. Hudson’s remarks are a vital reminder of the layers of power through which Skelton’s book- and map-mediated knowledge of Anglezarke has been sifted. He helpfully highlights the power structures of land-use and ownership, and the ways in which these are legitimised through maps and books. The idea of landscape as written draws further attention to the power and authority of writing, and in doing so also raises the question of how Skelton is contributing to ‘the public record’ (and how the ‘making available’ of publishing itself creates a public record). As Miles Ogborn notes, ‘there is a danger in putting too much emphasis on the power of the official written record. There are too many counter-archives and alternative archives for that to be an adequate account of the

\(^{397}\) Hudson, ‘Archive, Sound and Landscape’, p. 69.
relationships between knowledge and power. Asking who wrote Anglezarke is clearly not as straightforward a question as the neat past tense might indicate. How many editions would it take, how many added pages and commentaries, to write Anglezarke? The project is energised by these (im)possibilities, and both Skelton and Anglezarke enact an ongoing series of rewritings, disrupting the neat prospect of the moor as something that someone ‘wrote’.

Part of a series of offerings left within the landscape, Skelton secreted notebooks around the moor, returning them after each addition. On one occasion, returning to one of these books, he discovers that it was caught in the rain, and is now ‘Sodden. Bloated. Obscene.’, ‘as if the book is taking on the form of its surroundings’, the writing within its pages having become a series of ‘oblique scriptures’, overwritten by rain and the rust of its container (L6, p. 75). Its formerly ‘rectilinear proportions are bowed and warped’, the landscape rewriting and testing the book form (L6, p. 75). Later, Skelton reflects on this discovery: ‘Over time, pages became fused together with water and earth; their contents rendered unreadable. Ultimately, I could only observe, reflect and simply bear witness to the process of decay.’ (L6, p. 121). The moor’s collusion obfuscates Skelton’s writing, complicating his reading of its landscapes. Here, Skelton continues the small press’s challenge to the genius poet by opening his work to this co-writing, rejecting traditional composition in favour of decomposition that invites participation from the landscape itself, while the poet is left simply to ‘bear witness’.

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The fact that the notebook contains a diary further emphasises the disruption of linearity and order, the moor making swift mulch of Skelton’s brief interventions into its deep histories. Meanwhile, the moor’s own unreliable and volatile rewritings continue:

The archive that is Anglezarke has an unspeakably complex order of interrelations – its index is constantly being extended and recompiled. Each object is a nexus for multiple experiences, lives, energies – both consecutively and simultaneously. The land is in continual flux, from hay meadow to moor, valley to reservoir, hill-side to plantation. Buildings reconfigure themselves as walls, bridges and feeder conduits, or else they are assimilated into the bloated body of the moor itself, whose very name shifts over the centuries – Andelesvesarewe, Anlauesargh, Anlewesearche. There is no rest.

(L6, p. 275)

Here, Anglezarke becomes one of Ogborn’s ‘alternative’ ‘counter-archives’, proposing its own public record of the moor’s histories. The exploded, decaying notebook, written through with this sense of ‘continual flux’, illustrates the futility of trying to contain Anglezarke in the pages of a book, and anticipates the ongoing sprawl of works emanating from Landings.

The restlessness of the landscape extends into the multivalent writings spawned from the first text. ‘There is always more to add,’ writes Skelton, ‘and, like the stonework of Anglezarke, its materials are endlessly reused. Over the subsequent years there are addenda: Moor Glisk, a book which uses Landings as its source, amongst other texts, to retell the landscape history of the county of Lancashire during the Industrial Revolution. The grids and columns of Landings have now disappeared as the text is scattered across the page, imitative of the violence of the period’ (L6, p. 276). Skelton follows this with Limnology, ‘whose words are hurled with even more violence, this time suggestive of
riverine processes, cascading down the book’s valley and into its crevices and recesses’ (L6, p. 277).

The first pages of *Limnology* bear scatters of phonemes and punctuation marks, loosely organised around the book’s gutter. As the book progresses, these letter clouds recur, expand and shift, incorporate new material and change course. The oblique tangle of letters carries a sense of precarity and movement that refutes the apparent fixity of print. Macfarlane describes Skelton’s writing as ‘appalled by amnesia, by the torrent of daily forgetting – the black noise that pours always over the world’s edge’.399 That precarious edge is made visible in Limnology, animating the book form.

Where *Landings* interrogates the book through its content (exploring ‘the book’ and its adequacy as a record) and associated practices (the concealing of notebooks around

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399 Macfarlane, p. 183.
the moor, and their subsequent unintended weathering), the pools and streams of words in *Limnology* propose an alternative approach to critiquing the book as a form for recording landscapes. Indeed, *Limnology* speaks to Mandy Bloomfield’s notion of the page itself as ‘a place or a landscape.’\(^{400}\) The mimetic riverine form of much of the text might be read as a form of ‘critical ecomimesis’, a term that Bloomfield adapts from Morton to reflect upon the ethical and aesthetic implications of poetry’s ‘mimetic relations to landscape’.\(^{401}\) Bloomfield argues that works engaged in a critical ecomimesis ‘problematise any easy mimetic relation between text and land, if only because they draw attention to their own presence as printed language, as material paper and ink.’\(^{402}\) The perfect-bound book helps to enact the slow accretive processes of the valley sides building and shifting through each turn of the page and the progress of texts towards and away from the gutter. This is not simply an ‘easy’ mimesis, partly due to the attention drawn to the solid physicality of the book, weightier than the typical small press pamphlet or postcard, through the turning of the pages that facilitate the riverine processes. Any sense of the work as a tangle of random letters working to mimic the flow of water is complicated by notes given at the end of the book, which gloss the fragmentary letter clusters. The poem, which initially seems the mimetic evocation of a river’s formation, a narrative of composition and decomposition, is revealed to be assembled from found water words. A glossary of riverine words is included, which reveals, amongst others, that ‘eá’ is an Anglo-Saxon word for a river, while ‘òb’ is a Gaelic word for a ‘bay, creek,

\(^{400}\) Bloomfield, p. 121.
\(^{401}\) Ibid., p. 121.
\(^{402}\) Ibid., p. 123.
harbour’ or ‘shallow pool’. As such, the fragments flecking the pages denote a series of river features, which builds across the work. This demands a reassessment of the fundamental component of language, the grapheme, when even ‘a’ is a Manx word for ‘a ford, a shallow place in a river’, while ‘á’ is from Icelandic, meaning ‘a river’. Reunited with their definitions, the work is revealed to be not a random representation of destructive creation, but the macaronic confluence of historic language carefully building to form something new. Recalling the Concrete experiments of Clark, Cutts and Mills, here the most basic components of written language are challenged and reduced down, so that space can be made for building a new kind of poetry (SP, p. 170).

_Limnology_ epitomises the ‘overflow of the book’, funnelling text from _Landings_ out into a series of more formally experimental and fluid pieces. Skelton has produced a series of works with similarly radical page layouts that relate back to the churning, watery processes of _Limnology_. _LASTGLACIALMAXIMUM_ (2020), is described by Skelton as ‘a belated follow-up to _Limnology_’, and also spawned _Moraine_ (2020) an experimental pamphlet and a series of cards, while _Limnology_’s glossary acted as the appropriately watery source for _Become a Ford_ (2013).

Contrasted against the formal and meticulous list poems of pieces such as Richardson and Skelton’s _Field Notes_ (2012), _Limnology_ performs an ‘open field’

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approach that promotes novel ways of reading the text.\textsuperscript{404} The ‘open field page layout’ Bloomfield writes, ‘invites a process of reading as “field-work”, as Lyn Hejinian calls it.’\textsuperscript{405}

“[a]ny reading of these works is an improvisation; one moves through the work not in straight lines but in curves, swirls, and across intersections, to words that catch the eye or attract attention repeatedly”. Reading becomes a spatial practice whose parameters are elastic and expansive; “[t]he implication (correct) is that the words and the ideas (thoughts, perceptions, etc. – the materials) continue beyond the work. One has simply stopped because one has run out of units or minutes, and not because a conclusion has been reached nor “everything” said.”\textsuperscript{406}

Seen in this light, the experimental form of \textit{Limnology} suggests a way of acknowledging that “everything” has not been recorded, of becoming more accepting of ‘something unresolved’. The small press demonstrates ways in which work can exceed its creation, and Corbel Stone Press’s radical forms align with this, gesturing beyond themselves to larger-scale forces. The book does not need to record everything, and rely upon formal lists as an attempt at completion, but can instead draw attention to material beyond itself, through the ‘elastic’ and multiple readings that lend an additional momentum to the texts – and that are another example of that ambiguity, or lack of resolution, in small press works that leaves them open to collaboration, participation and response.

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\textsuperscript{404} Bloomfield, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., p. 132.
\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., p. 132.
Section Two: Burial

Skelton works with the churning, continuous forces of landscape that inspire the ongoing, unresolved texts of Landings, as part of his attempts to find ways to connect with the land and invite new forms of collaboration. Methods of dissolving boundaries between the human and the more-than-human, redolent of those observed in the evening works of Clark and Finlay, are made literal in Skelton’s telluric experiments, enacted through (literal and textual) burials across his practice. As part of the processes of Landings, he buried a violin in the soils of Anglezarke, before exhuming and recording himself playing it. A piece from Names. Dates. Genealogies, marks the burial:

As the instrument has partaken of the landscape – its body bequeathed to soil, and later exhumed – so, a bond is made.

(L6, p. 170)

Through the violin’s funereal partaking of the landscape, it takes on some of the landscape’s qualities, and Skelton’s refusal to name it, calling it instead, more ambiguously, ‘the instrument’, gestures towards its new status as a conduit or means by which Skelton might connect to some of the unseen forces of the landscape. This renaming also raises questions as to its loyalties – is the violin Skelton’s musical instrument, or is it now the instrument (or tool) of the landscape? The violin has partaken of Anglezarke, taken part of Anglezarke, taken part in or participated in, and become part of Anglezarke, through its temporary burial. Skelton describes this practice as ‘simply one of a number of methods that I used in order to dissolve the boundaries between human
and non-human agencies.\textsuperscript{407} The soil enables this, having the power to dissolve physical boundaries.

One of the ways in which the bond between place and instrument is forged, Skelton suggests, is through a form of contagion, foregrounding the haptic nature of his practice:

\begin{quote}
whilst researching the folklore of East Anglia, I came across this definition of “contagious magic” which perfectly encapsulates the main impulse behind such gestures – the idea of a connection through touch: “contagious or touching magic – things that have once been in contact will always be linked however distant from one another they become.”\textsuperscript{408}
\end{quote}

The tactility of contagious magic can help us to think about the small press network, the warmth and charge created by passing work ‘from hand to hand’ and that domestic trace that lingers in home-produced pieces. The notion that items that have once been in contact are forever linked can have illuminating implications for the ‘found’ within the small press, and in the case of Corbel Stone restates the influence of texts flowing out from \textit{Landings}.

Several years later, Skelton reflects on these processes, and reveals that his opinion of music’s contagious element has shifted: ‘I used to make music en plein air because I believed that physically situating my musical instruments in the landscape would create a connection and that a kind of contagious magic would occur. More recently, I’ve been drawn to the idea of sympathetic magic, and I think of the vibration of a string that is resonating in sympathy with the hidden, inaudible music of the


landscape. His comments indicate a lightness of touch, which reflects a less interventionist approach to landscapes, growing from a concern that such practices might ‘do little more than supplant the sounds that would have already been there’. Becoming attuned to what is already there recalls that shift of attention to the background in Clark’s hospital works, and speaks to the more widespread small press trait of attending to the overlooked. Skelton’s sense of the dissolving of boundaries between agencies ‘gives voice to the moor, casting the violin’ – and surely also himself – ‘as a mere conduit’.

Skelton’s experiments with sympathetic magic emerge through comparisons between his practices and dowsing, which chime with the foregrounding of the small and overlooked in small press practice:

There’s a to-and-fro between landscape and instrumental music; a shared resonance. For me, they readily conjure one another. Of course, landscapes are already full of sound, but there is something else, something inaudible; a hidden melody. I often liken it to an underground stream, and I take it upon myself to try to bring it to the surface, or find those places where it might spontaneously rupture forth. You could say it is music as a form of auditory dowsing.

If Skelton’s music is a form of dowsing, the musical instrument, as a ‘conduit’, is the dowsing rod. The dowsing rod can be considered an example of sympathetic magic, ‘involving correspondence between spatially separated objects’. Historically, it was believed that the effectiveness of dowsing rods could be improved through a form of

411 Richards, p. 10.
412 Bemrose, Richard Skelton.
material bolstering, either by smearing them with minerals akin to iron pyrite, or adding metal to the rod itself ‘to increase its attractive virtue’ and effect ‘a more natural correspondence between metal and rod’.

Burying the violin similarly enhances its powers of dowsing for the ‘inaudible music of the landscape’. Through burial, the violin increases its attractive virtue. Its warped body and soil-encrusted strings are shaped by the moor and evoke it, attuned to resonate in sympathy, bringing to the surface the ‘undersong’ that eludes Skelton’s senses. In the tenth-anniversary edition of *Landings*, Skelton acknowledges an ongoing interest in amplifying the ‘residual sounds’ of the landscape and wonders if he could share that sympathetic connection with the land: ‘could I become a string, resonating in sympathy with the landscape’s inaudible melodies?’ The artist works to decentre his own presence, becoming just one force out of those that co-write the landscape.

In 2014, Skelton buried and exhumed a violin in Ouseburn, Newcastle, as part of a commission for AV Festival. The exhumed violin was displayed against a backdrop of music created upon it, entitled ‘Inter/Disinter for Violin’. The name of the resultant musical piece already suggests the playing out of interment and disinterment on the instrument. The violin’s burial and exhumation is a de-composition, in the sense that, like the co-writing invited by the partial burial of his notebooks, it works against the implicit neatness of composition; it opens the instrument up to different agencies which share in and shape its playing. The recording vocalises Skelton’s “extracting” of its sounds, a process of

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415 Rosell.
‘violence’ that he likens to ‘interrogating the dead.’ He employs corporeal language, referring to the violin’s ‘body’, and the funereal setting of the display at Brinkburn Abbey in Northumberland, the instrument laid out on a cloth-covered table. The violin’s response to its interrogation is a rusting roar of sound, the visceral scratch of strings underscored by a pulsing murk that evokes underground water currents, interspersed with high-pitched notes. Skelton describes the exhumation as an act of ‘surrender to telluric energies’ and these lurking energies are expressed in this rusted lament.

Reflecting on his inhumation practices in 2016, Skelton examines ways in which his perspective has been inflected by his research into bodies preserved in peat bogs. He draws a parallel between his treatment of the interred violin and the exhumation of bog bodies:

The violin-corpse, like so many archaeological artefacts, is now carefully shelved in an archive; not a living “storeroom in the peat” but a dry, climate-controlled repository, clearly labelled for future reference. But for what purpose?

Twelve months later I released the album Belated Movements for an Unsanctioned Exhumation, August 1st 1984. The first composition, ‘Petition for Reinterment’, expresses an ambivalence about the exhumation, preservation and exhibition of bog bodies such as Lindow, Grauballe and Tollund Man. Do we have a right to discontinue their centuries-old, crushing embrace with the soil?

416 Skelton, ‘Inter/Disinter for Violin’
417 Ibid.
If burial is a process by which humans ‘achieve closure and effect a separation from the dead’, that closure is complicated by the bog body’s preservation.\textsuperscript{419} The bog offers a different form of decomposition, a watery breach of the body, which does not allow the person to ‘disappear’ into dust. Again, Skelton returns to the theme of frustrated closure, and to the strange and productive things that it provokes Here, he contrasts the lively bog-stored body with the uncanny permanence of the archive. Yet we have already acknowledged the potential for counter-archives, epitomised by the comparison of the relentlessly churning Anglezarke to an archive. ‘Studies of the past’ Ogborn notes, have come to be ‘built upon archival foundations’\textsuperscript{420}; as such, new ways of knowing place can emerge if they are built upon a lively alternative foundation.

Written language is only one form of archive. Ogborn asks whether ‘stories remembered and retold [can] be an archive or […] need to be written down or otherwise recorded? Does their mutability have to be stilled in order for them to be effectively archived?’\textsuperscript{421} Yet the written archive is unstable, as Skelton’s reliance on the book illustrates, and his co-written buried notebooks affirm. Even within a carefully-controlled archival environment, ‘supposedly durable and immutable contents rot and change according to the different time-scale of biological and chemical processes’\textsuperscript{422}

Skelton challenges the archive’s attempts to still mutability by stressing the embodied nature and vulnerability of the living storeroom. For example, he emphasises

\textsuperscript{420} Ogborn, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{421} Ogborn, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{422} Ogborn, p. 4.
the liveliness and the humanity of one bog body, the Scaleby Moss man, in the pamphlet *The Cult Revived I*, with photographs showing details of the body, including the man’s individual fingers, nails intact, which sparks a haptic jolt of connection across millennia. *The Cult Revived* continues in *Reliquiae Volume 8 No 1*, with the poem ‘The Body from Scaleby Moss’, which articulates the unsettling hybridity of the human body joining with the other. For bog burials, this process of incorporation is even slower and stranger. A woman preserved in peat is incrementally taking on the forms of the land – ‘her skin daubed a river’s colour’, ‘the almost neck/ the spine body’, ‘the corrupted wood’. The body’s slow incorporation rhymes with the origins of the peat itself, ‘formed from decaying plants/ combined with humic and fulvic acids/ and the residues of insects algae fungi’. The peat is formed from insects and the woman becomes insectile, in a strangely sympathetic act, a transformation and a transition, a thread of reactions. The soil is ‘pupal earth’, ‘the soil her chrysalis’ and in her process of *becoming*, her body is ‘pharate’. Her form challenges what it is to be human. Here, hybridity is something that is co-produced over time, arising from the denial of culturally-determined forms of closure. Corbel Stone’s burial practices reframe the idea of the ongoing small press oeuvre within deep timescales, and highlight landscape as a collaborative social text, co-written across millennia.

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424 Ibid., p. 132.  
425 Ibid., p. 133.
Section Three: Curation, the found, the gift

In 2014 and 2016, Skelton spent several weeks in Skaftfell, Seyðisfjörður, in the east of Iceland, as part of a residency for the Frontiers in Retreat programme. The five-year collaborative project (2013-2018) between artists across Europe explored pressing ecological questions through creative practice. Skelton recorded his investigations of the area in a daily blog, ‘Towards a Frontier’, a photographic and poetic journal of encounter. He also created an album of the same name and Corbel Stone Press produced two 15-minute films, In Pursuit of the Eleventh Measure (2016) and No Frontier (2017). In 2017, the press published Towards A Frontier, a perfect-bound book containing some of Skelton’s photographs of Skaftfell and reproductions of collages from the residency. In this section, my focus is the curatorial works recorded on Skelton’s blog – ‘tidings of the littoral’, A Museum of the Littoral’ and ‘The Stranded Museum’ – and how they continue the small press’s challenging of the museum or gallery as institution.

During the 2014 residency, Skelton curated ‘tidings of the littoral’, a photo gallery of items including plastics, plantlife, and the decaying remains of animals set against a stony beach. The images are glossed by lists of Gaelic and old Icelandic words relating to objects washed in with the tide. The words speak of a nuanced relationship arising from living near and with the sea, and are distinct from the emphasis on goods discarded by humans inherent in the words flotsam and jetsam, augmented by a greater sense of specificity and lived knowledge. The old Icelandic words describe the best piece of wood

in a washed-up selection: kjör-tré, and the ‘expectation of a whale being drifted ashore’: hvals ván.\textsuperscript{427} Gaelic words include those for the practice of walking the shore in order to beachcomb, cuairt-cladaich, and muir-thàcar, with which Skelton pairs the translations ‘sea-spoil, jetsam, what “over goods” are found on the sea-shore’.\textsuperscript{428} The artist uses the first translation of muir-thàcar from \textit{Am Faclair Beag} but notably, the second translation in the dictionary is ‘Sea-chance’.\textsuperscript{429} Showing the items separately, in individual photos, emphasises the randomness, the disparate nature of the shore-stranded objects. The piece begins to offer a rejoinder to the anthropocentrism of the found objects and texts that litter Corbel Stone Press’s practice – and small press practice more generally.

In ‘A Museum of the Littoral’ and ‘The Stranded Museum’, items are not shown in-situ, but recontextualised by the artist, creating tension between the apparently random strandings and their deliberate placement against a plank of driftwood. The Stranded Museum foregrounds some of the violence inherent to creation and curation, this particular museum curated from things thrown against the shore. Other suggestions of violence emerge, in the smashed fragments of bone and wood, chipped plastic and the severed twisted limbs of an unidentified crustacean, the results of processes like those behind \textit{Limnology}, with its ‘hurled’ words. There is no written explanation as to why this combination of objects is gathered – that is explained by the forces of the shore and of global currents. But each object is unlabelled, and some are unidentifiable. These forms

\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid.
of co-writing or co-creation suggest a collaboration between different forces acting on the object, including the ocean currents and the stones of the shore which capture the items, Skelton’s arrangement of them and the returning rush of the tide. This is a complex, multiple collaboration of agencies.

When Skelton returned to Skaftfell in 2016, he also returned to his curation of the found, this time photographing ‘found’ objects firstly in-situ, and then against a plain white backdrop as might be seen in a white cube gallery, naming them ‘Temporary Exhibits’. The first of these, four tarnished – possibly lichened – links in a chain, look initially like tangled slowworms against the mosses and grasses of their found site, a reading that is diminished in the white space. The second, an indeterminate pair of antlers or piece of driftwood loses its dark sunlit shadow and seems to change colour when relocated indoors. The work raises the question: what things are lost in these practices of finding?

Each of the pieces that Skelton recorded under the tag of ‘curation’ during ‘Towards A Frontier’ interrogates curatorial practice, in particular by calling attention to the relationship between the curated and the ‘found’. In doing so, new perspectives on found objects emerge, building upon those explored in Chapter Two. In his Icelandic exhibits, Skelton presents an ontological challenge to the museum. He calls more attention to the ‘finding’ process, both by raising questions around what might be considered ‘found’ and exploring the consequences of the inherent transformation of the found. Objects that became flotsam and jetsam through being discarded or lost are transformed again, this time into exhibits. The abject once again becomes object within the legitimising frame of the museum.
Skelton’s tide-washed exhibits query the anthropocentrism of ‘finding’ by drawing attention to the multiple agencies (including the moon, currents and tides, the movement of animals, the passage of ships, waste disposal systems) colluding to result in this particular collection of things being beached in Skaftfell. This aligns with a shift in museum studies around how the role of curator is framed. Citing anthropologist Nicolas Thomas, Kirsten Wehne asserts that ‘[c]urators certainly “choose” or “select” objects for collection and display, but “these terms imply operations more rational than might be apt.” Thomas argues that we should consequently see curatorial engagement with objects as a process of “discovery”—a process involving encounter and distraction, and as a method that is “powerful because it is unpredictable.”’

Wehne notes Thomas’s emphasis upon the value of ‘happening upon’ things: ‘a preparedness to encounter things and consider them amounts to a responsiveness to forms of material evidence beneath or at odds with canonical ethnographies, national histories, reifications of local heritage – and subaltern narratives’ In arguing for the ‘ecologizing’ of the museum, Wehne acknowledges that the framework of the traditional institution would typically ‘reward performances of rationality and suppress validation of curiosity, instinct and emotion as integral elements of practices of collection and exhibition.’ This vocabulary of ‘discovery’, ‘happening upon' and ‘responsiveness’ to ‘encounter’ is invaluable for contemplating Skelton’s practice and its interest in a materiality that is often ‘beneath or at odds’, and for thinking

\[\text{430} \quad \text{Kirsten Wehner, ‘Towards an Ecological Museology: Responding to the animal-objects of the Australian Institute of Anatomy collection’, in Curating the Future: Museums, Communities and Climate Change, edited by Jennifer Newell, Libby Robin and Kirsten Wehner, pp. 85–100, (p. 88).}\]

\[\text{431} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 88.}\]

\[\text{432} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 88.}\]
about the broader small press interest in responding to encounters with the overlooked or ‘beneath’.

A growing interest in alterity in Skelton’s recent work suggests the cultivation of responsiveness to encounter (perhaps also aligned with Haraway’s ‘response-ability’), of the kind centred within Bennett’s thinking around ‘the power of bodies-in-encounter, using “power” in Spinoza’s sense of the capacity to affect (to make a difference upon other bodies) and to be affected (to be receptive to the affections of other bodies)’.433 Also clearly implicated here is the Deleuzian sense of encounter, “something in the world [that] forces us to think”,434 recalling Latour’s ‘slight surprise’, and neatly glossed by Rob St John as ‘an affective force that causes a break or rupture in our habitual ways of interacting with the world, and forces us to undergo reflection or reconfiguration of these interactions’.435 A more active and affective materiality, which is ‘receptive’ and ‘responsive’ to the liveliness of things and their environment can be discerned in Skelton’s littoral encounterings.

In his post for ‘Temporary exhibit #1’, Skelton asks

How do our perceptions of objects change when they are removed from their original contexts? Can curation be defined in terms of movement? From the beach as an ever-changing ‘exhibition space’ […], to an improvised, temporary ‘Museum of the Littoral’, devised in one of the abandoned, shore-side buildings […], to a distant position in one of the town’s designated art-spaces.

435 Ibid., p. 162.
What are the implications of removal, and what happens when the exhibition is over?436

The items have been in contact and will remain forever connected. This kinetic perspective upon the exhibits puts an emphasis on the narrative of the museum, upon the post-life of an item transformed as museum object. How and why did it come to be in a museum, or in one of these ‘designated art-spaces’? Skelton’s equation of designated art spaces with distance speaks compellingly to the small press’s interrogation of the ‘secluded literary space’, performed through pieces that seek proximity and tactility, that challenge the museum by confronting it with domesticity, and that propose the ideal gallery as a space of warmth and hospitality.

Thomas’s thoughts around ‘histories and their residues’ converse helpfully with the different shoreline curations. When Skelton asks of his white wall exhibits, ‘What are the implications of removal, and what happens when the exhibition is over?’, he embeds a sense of loss at their removal, which could apply to both their original change of context and the return of the item to the landscape. Since the days of seeking out traces of his own passage through Anglezarke Moor in Landings, Skelton is more reluctant to leave a footprint in the sites of his practice, but the residue of human histories is tangible in his linear curations, and will remain even when the exhibition is over. These shore-thrown tangles of items coalesce for a short period of time, as temporary exhibitions, but aspects of them will linger for hundreds of years, in particular the plastic detritus, and all are

connected through contagion. The temporary exhibit confronts the permanence of the human residue.

The recontextualisation innate to the curation of these ‘happened-upon’ things may act as a way to facilitate a fuller engagement with their lively possibilities. Recall that Godfrey perceives Conceptual interventions to be instances ‘in which some image, text or thing is placed in an unexpected context, thus drawing attention to that context: eg the museum or the street’. Such interventions can also reach out to the original contexts of these objects, and the processes that brought them to their new location. Derek McCormack acknowledges the possibilities of awakening to the more-than-human through these changes of context, “‘turning things around: defamiliarizing them; placing them in generative juxta-positionings that allow thinking to grasp a sense of liveliness of the worlds of things anew, however modestly’”. The transformation of flotsam and jetsam into museum specimens infuses them with a renewed sense of aura, the suggestion that this matter really matters. Here, rather than framing aura as something purely sensed or perceived by human bodies, the aura of the museological object can be considered the manifestation of its affective liveliness. This speaks to Bennett’s argument recognising the power (again in the Spinozan sense) of art, beyond human pathological responses to it such as Stendhal syndrome:

The theme of a culturally-constructed psychosomatic illness obeys the taboo against animism. But, as already noted, it also thus tends, both at the register of theory and in the regime of the sensible, to exaggerate the scope and efficacy of human agency and to minimize that of nonhuman bodies.

437 Cited in St John, p. 157.
Can we offer another account of the event and uncover a different etiology of its affectivity?438

Instead of pathologising affective engagements with art, we can think of art as facilitating receptivity towards more-than-human ontologies. In a 2015 interview, Skelton describes how his practice enables him to express this receptivity, speaking of animism and how:

[O]ur rationalist mindset won't permit us to engage meaningfully with the non-human or the “inanimate”. […] With music, art and writing I'm trying to express something of that extended sense of self, to establish a connection with the “others” in my life. Paradoxically, I'm also trying to acknowledge their distinctness from me; to express the tenets of non-anthropocentric ecology – their inherent right to exist beyond any purpose or usefulness they might have for me. Music is a powerful tool to communicate this idea, because it too has an inherent “life”, an ineluctable power and presence that is greater than the musician who plays it.439

Exploring forms of receptivity, Skelton traces a recurrent trope of propitiatory offerings in found stories, which overspill into an eerie sense of needing to appease the landscape. Making offerings suggests respect and deference, but also a tang of fear, and a sense of the landscape as an uncertain presence. Skelton turns to Graham Harvey, to ascribe the practice with the character of a reciprocal gift: “Not only might gifts be given to the tree or trees, but gifts may be received from them. This is not considered mere metaphor, to be used when a human takes something (a leaf, flower, sap, firewood, wand or staff) from a tree. Exchanges are made and relationships established, maintained and celebrated. A strand of wool, a drop of blood from a finger, a libation of mead or ale, or some other gift

439 Bland.
may express admiration and gratitude from the relating human."\textsuperscript{440} Here, propitiation is a step towards awakening to receptivity, and is an acknowledgement of gifts received and shared with the more-than-human.

In \textit{Landings}, he explores historical practices of hiding objects and offerings within holes in walls, inside hollow trees or beneath stones. These things are wish tokens. Petitions. Elements within private rituals. Despite the manifold intentions behind such gestures, the recipients of these gifts are rarely, if ever, other human beings. Instead they are exchanges with the genius loci. A communion with the land itself, through its supernatural agencies.

\textit{(L6, p. 125)}

This framing of the offering as a site of reciprocity speaks to Marcel Mauss’s influential theory of ‘exchange-through-gift’.\textsuperscript{441} His foundational question ‘\textit{What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?}’ recalls once again the Spinozan sense of reciprocal ‘power’ between affective bodies, and paves the way for a sensitive appreciation of lively nonhuman presences.\textsuperscript{442} Indeed, a persistent thread of animism is woven through Mauss’s study, which describes various nonhuman bodies as ‘animate’ ‘living beings’, which possess a ‘soul’.\textsuperscript{443} The \textit{obligatory} nature of the exchange, which necessitates reciprocal giving, poses the problem of a timeframe for return. A gift ‘cannot be reciprocated immediately. Time is needed in order to perform any counter-service.’\textsuperscript{444} This instigates the need for a credit system, Mauss suggests, to impose a time limit on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{442} Ibid., p. 4. Original emphasis.
\item \textsuperscript{443} Ibid., passim.
\item \textsuperscript{444} Ibid., pp.45-6.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the gift’s reciprocation. This is a key problematic in Georges Davy’s study of the contract, which worries at ‘how to postpone the fulfilment of an obligation to a time subsequent to its creation’. Mauss styles his question as ‘the problem of the two “moments in time” that are brought together in the contract’.

The idea of ‘two moments in time’ connected through a form of contract is a helpful way to think about the gift in relation to Skelton. The bringing together of moments within the loose contract of the reciprocal gift allows for two or more separate moments in time to be united. It suggests a form of contagious magic between moments ‘brought together’, ‘however distant from one another they become’. Skelton frames his interest in offerings within Harvey’s model of mutual exchange, gifts given and received between the nonhuman and the ‘relating human’. During *Towards A Frontier*, Skelton offered multiple oblations at stones around Skaftfell, including a scattering of salt crystals and a cube of butter. He explores the idea of sacrifice and oblation stones in relation to the old Scottish practice of *taghairm*, typically involving the sacrifice of an animal in a wild place to gain insight from invisible forces residing within that place. He argues that the *taghairm* ‘is intended as a communication – the receiving of wisdom from the “invisible”. In this respect, at least, it implies an acknowledgement of the other, an attribution of personhood, and a certain amount of respect.’ In choosing rocks as the site of his oblatory gifts,

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446 Mauss, p. 47.
Skelton connects the present ‘moment in time’ to moments in deep lithic histories, articulating the affective power of stone.

Skelton’s series of exhibits can be re-framed as offerings, lined up as though on an altar (like Van Horn’s rusted objects on her bench). There is a tang of the almery, or perhaps more fittingly for Corbel Stone Press the reliquary, in the pieces of bone and splinters of nonhuman bodies. The theme of animal sacrifice also prevails, not only in the propitiatory stories elsewhere in the Icelandic journal, but also the unrecognisable decomposing animal decaying into the beach at the end of one of the films and the mineralising bird’s head and eviscerated wings in ‘Tidings from the Littoral’. These snapshots of decay differ from the uncanny preservations of taxidermy and pickling in the traditional museum, and speak to those recurrent telluric forces in the work of Corbel Stone Press and their slow muddling of agency and authorial control. Skelton’s museological offerings belong more with the spirituality buried within the museum’s etymological sediments, ‘in the ancient Greek word for cult sites devoted to the muses (mouseion)’.448 The lingering idea that there might be a sacred resonance to the museum chimes with a more general sacrality in Corbel Stone Press’s practice, a further recognition of nonhuman and nonvisible presences within the landscape.

In this chapter, I have explored the way that Corbel Stone Press’s practice engages with landscapes as a series of unresolved, ongoing forces. Skelton compares the churning processes of the landscape to the continual reworking of his texts. Self-

publishing provides the freedom to continually revisit older works, and his published record of Anglezarke has shifted over the course of a decade as his interests move to alterity and the more-than-human. *Landings* becomes the version of Anglezarke that he revisits, his perfect-bound books asserting an authority in relation to these accounts of the place that belies the self-doubt and uncertainty written through the works. Prefigured by the warping seep of landscape into a notebook left on the moor, *Landings* overflows into a vast number of new texts, a chain of rewritings and revisitings. Experimenting with open-field poetic forms, Skelton responds to the archivist’s desire for completion in *Landings* with texts that refer beyond the page and indicate the continuation of landscape processes out of sight of the reader, negating the need to try and say ‘everything’ or find a conclusion.

Another method of challenging the institution of the archive arises in Skelton’s burial practices, which work towards a dissolving of boundaries that allows a merging between his musical instruments and the landscape, giving voice to Anglezarke, and drawing attention to the forces at work beneath the surface of the land. In light of his work around bog burials and the exhumation of bog bodies, Skelton questions his own practices, indicating an increased lightness of touch in his shift from perceiving burial as a contagious act determined by touch, to pursuing more sympathetic relationships with landscapes, and expressing a desire to resonate in sympathy with the landscape, to become its instrument. The exhumation of bog bodies moves them from their ‘living storeroom in the peat’ to a carefully controlled archive, and Skelton questions the ethics
of this practice, in doing so offering an implicit critique of the archive as an institution of control over the more-than-human.

This questioning of the role of archives and the canonical artefact of the book in documenting living, vital landscapes is transferred over to Skelton’s residencies in Iceland, which return us to questions around the found, moving to frame finding in the Deleuzian sense of encounter, a more affective response-ability towards the more-than-human. Skelton examines the textures of the museum, framing curation as a kinetic act and questioning where exhibited objects go after they have been displayed.

Skelton examines stories of propitiatory offerings in Iceland, continuing a thread that began in *Landings*. Characterised as a form of gift, these offerings create a connection or contract with the landscape across time, bringing together moments over deep timescales.
CONCLUSION

They returned home tired but happy

- Ian Hamilton Finlay\textsuperscript{449}

\textsuperscript{449} Ian Hamilton Finlay (with Ian Gardner), \textit{They Returned Home Tired But Happy} (Dunsyre: Wild Hawthorn Press, 1972).
CONCLUSION

This study has sought to establish small press practice as intimately bound up in practices that (re)produce place. Sharing the common ground of collaborative partnership working, generosity and ‘resourceful attention’ (SdA) towards the places they inhabit and spend time in, a dialogue has emerged between the presses in this thesis that bespeaks an economics of care and attentiveness to the more-than-human.

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In my first chapter, I demonstrated some of the ways in which the small presses of this study are profoundly shaped by domesticity, establishing the home as a site of production, and exploring the ways in which thinking through small press labour in the home permits a concomitant appraisal of wider structures of labour associated with domesticity. Bringing creative practice into the home blurs distinctions between the reproduction of the home, and the production of the press, conveying the breadth of the small press ‘way of life’. I located the work of Coracle and Moschatel within traditions of kitchen production, centred largely around the table as a site of intertextual sociability. Hospitality, and the relationship between the guest and the host, were prominent factors in shaping domestic intimacy, and were facilitated by the postal service, which carries work across the domestic threshold, allowing pieces into the home by stealth, from whence they can ‘take part in the occasion’. Carrying domestic values into the space of the gallery brings attention to different forms of labour in the home, and to the work of art. Grounding this thesis in domesticity emphasises the processual practice of the small press, and
establishes a set of values that are sustained into the rest of the work: intimacy, sharing, the collective, the small, the familiar.

Chapter Two foregrounded the embodied quality of small press engagements with local place. Walking was central to this, creating the ‘ground or continuum’ over which the chapter moved. I examined the found and practices of finding within the opposition of ‘texture’ and ‘texxture’, and explored the finding of non-textual materials as a method of decentring the linguistic, in a way that unfolded a more textured, felt localness. I approached diarising practices as forms of attentive care and as temporal frameworks that situate small press modes of localness in the rhythms of the everyday, creating a continuum upon which to observe the large-scale forces that shape the local, repudiating a sense of localness as closed-off or parochial. Finally, I explored forms of mapping and sampling place, and problematised the domestic core of small press localness by acknowledging the intersecting forces that precluded Skelton from living locally.

Chapter Three turned to site-specific installations, focusing upon Thomas A Clark’s responses to the hospital site at the New Stobhill in Glasgow. Translating intimate small-press poetics onto a larger scale led to explorations of bodily attention, and demonstrated how Clark’s use of vernacular forms backgrounds ‘Selected Grasses’, and in doing so calls attention to other forms of backgrounding in the hospital that work to conceal the inhuman. Translating the small press interest in the small and overlooked onto a larger scale opened up new forms of space, including the ‘third space’ (following Tarbuck via Bhabha), the waiting room as a site of attention, and large scale performance of the shifting unstable space of the page. The chapter began to make more room for more-
than-human presences, and moved over to Little Sparta to establish the small press garden as a place of labour, a site of continuous co-production that helps to cultivate relationships between the human and the more-than-human.

The fourth chapter intentionally turned the thesis further towards contemplations of the more-than-human, via the texxtured landscapes of Corbel Stone Press. The chapter was focused upon engagement with different landscapes via canonical sites such as the perfect-bound book, archive and museum. I questioned Skelton’s reliance upon the book as an artefact, and the use of conventional perfect-bound books by Corbel Stone Press, countered by attending to Skelton’s experiments with the page as a playful space of kinetic reading through open-field forms. I examined burial practices carried out by Skelton, and explored an emphasis on dowsing and ritual in his work, which attempts to decentre human agency. The section continues to interrogate productive unresolved forms, epitomised by the hybridising bog body that blends the human with the more-than-human and resists the closure of burial. The chapter closed by considering surfaced and tide-washed objects, with findings examined from a more vibrant perspective, within the framework of ‘encounter’. I concluded by studying offerings made to the land(scape), and examined the implications of the gift for creating connections between bodies (human and more-than-human), between places and across time.

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Returning to the gift in this way feels appropriate, given that my initial interest in the activities of the small press was sparked by the gift of Moschatel’s *Territory*. This project has also been shaped and strengthened by the generosity imprinted into the small press
network. The recurrence of gift across each of these presses speaks to an anti-capitalist thread woven through this thesis – to values of smallness, generosity and care that are not aligned with market forces, exponential growth and individualism. The gift as a form of exchange proposes a different form of *exchange value*, characterised by the creation of relationships across time and place.

*The future critic responding to this thesis may want to pursue the notion of exchange-through-gift a little further. The haptic quality of connecting moments through time via the gift is symptomatic of the general tactility of small press practice, that need expressed by Van Horn ‘to make things that we can touch and that can be touched by others as they read and look at them.’ Each of the presses in this study examines and tests the tactile artefact – books, pamphlets, postcards. However, fruitful connections might be uncovered between the small press ethos and emergent small publishers exploring radical forms through digital media. Examining the intersection of new media and technologies with the embodied, tactile small press may well lead down some compelling avenues. A more in-depth examination of the importance of generosity and the gift in the small press is needed – I invite the future critic to be my guest!

Bringing in additional presses for comparison may also prove enlightening for the future critic. Moschatel and Coracle are particularly closely aligned, and I hope that the presence of Corbel Stone Press, as a more contemporary offshoot run by practitioners who consider themselves peripheral to the small press ‘tradition’, has cast new light onto
presses that emerged from the mid-century model. Future studies may frame Corbel Stone Press as an ancestor and inspiration, and it will be fascinating to explore the press’s direction and influence, given the broad scope of hybrid, challenging work produced in the first ten years of its existence. Moschatel Press celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2023 – what will the next forty years look like for Corbel Stone?

Future investigators of the press would do well to reassert the role of the women of the small press, and study these collaborative partnerships more keenly. Not enough attention has been given to Autumn Richardson’s work in this thesis, and a comparative study of Richardson and Skelton’s respective practices would help to round out the textures of Corbel Stone Press a little more.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the pandemic has affected access to pieces held within archives. Covid has prevented me from spending time in the places in which these artists dwell, and so I have approached them firmly on their own terms, and with the flawed assistance of technology like Google Maps. I also acknowledge that closeness to the practitioners may be a limitation of the thesis: that entering into research on the small press inevitably renders one a node within its network.

None of the questions raised across the course of this thesis can be fully resolved – these presses are, after all, ongoing continuous projects. The presses and their work continue to change over time, ‘adapting to each new set of circumstances and working with available resources’. In addition, there will always be an air of the unresolved about them given their informal channels of distribution, limited print runs and the tendency for the work to be kept in archives, preventing an entirely holistic view of their varied practice.
Future critics would also benefit from taking a longer-term perspective when approaching the unresolved small press corpus. In challenging the traditional archive, Corbel Stone Press indirectly poses a challenge to the small press ‘canon’. As acknowledged in the introduction to this project, many small press pieces – as a result of their ephemerality and fragility – are held in archives and are thereby protected from being handled and exposed to unstable, changing environments. But how might these objects change and shift over time, even within their carefully-controlled conditions? What new forms of co-writing are possible for the small press?

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Felski, via Paula Trichler, has remarked upon a tendency within cultural studies to pay ‘little attention to the daily life of academics, as if everyday life were something that only others experience’ (*IEL*, p. 92). Writing a thesis about place, everyday life, domesticity, touch, connections across temporal and spatial distance, and localness during a global pandemic has mapped onto the routines of my daily life in ways I could not have foreseen. Spending over two years at my kitchen table, working, cooking and eating in the same space has brought home (!) some of the problematics of the small press model in unexpected ways, including equipping me with a more nuanced appreciation of the absolute commitment of something as all-consuming as the small press way of life.

Lockdowns have also highlighted the sense of care at the heart of Hair’s notion of the small press as networked, particularly in his citation of Williams’s argument that ‘it is the small press publication that has most emphatically and consistently reaffirmed the significance “of one-to-one relationships, of things made by the hands and talents of
persons with a feeling of kinship for you,” however remote in space or time those persons might be’ (AF, p. 248). The primacy of the postal service for the network came to the fore, with something as simple as a card sent through the post possessing a heightened tactile resonance, creating a sense of connection at a time of forbidden touch. Small press pieces were part of the sporadic arrivals across the letterbox threshold during lockdowns, including the gift of Christmas/ New Year offerings from Moschatel and Coracle. It is hard to overstate the delight at being thought of, the joyful sight of ‘Coracle Ballybeg Grange Clonmel Tipperary Ireland’ stamped onto the front of an envelope, the arrival of burgundy-tissue-wrapped books from Corbel Stone, or their handmade incense to burn at the summer solstice.450

The limitations of lockdown brought a new kind of living locally, an enforced domesticity and the routine of the same walk every day. This sudden concentration of place complemented my readings of these practitioners, teaching me to practise new forms of attention, and consequently to gain a deeper understanding of my mittir sgwâr

450 This calls to mind Van Horn’s Gifts from the Government (Living Locally Number 11) (Ballybeg, Grange, Clonmel, Tipperary: Coracle, 2007), with its reference to a candle posted to all Irish households at the millennium to burn on the windowsill, so that ‘[e]veryone in the country, no matter how isolated, would thus be joined together, welcoming in the New Year and the new Millennium.’
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**A note on bibliographic decisions:**
As the purpose of this thesis has been to explore small press practice as 1) enmeshed in place and 2) capacious hybrid, I include more granular detail of publication place than convention might expect, and gather more disparate work by these practitioners (such as Thomas A Clark’s hospital-based pieces) under the name of their associated press. These are deliberate decisions to advocate for a nuanced perspective of the places of the small press and an expansive definition of publication.

Dividing these works into primary and secondary sources is complicated by the amount of critical work about the small press written by those within its network, therefore these categories are applied a little loosely.

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