THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e. g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Eco-Ethical Composition: Contemporary Experimental Landscape Poetry in the UK

Fan Du

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2025

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Professor David Farrier and Professor Alex Thompson, for supporting me throughout this research with kindness and patience. Their guidance has been vital not only to the development of this thesis but also to my growth as a writer.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who have supported me over the past four years: Du Yuzhang, Du Mei, Oliver Bone, Alexandra Ye, among others. Your love means more than I can express.

Abstract

Situated within the field of ecocriticism and, more broadly, the environmental humanities, this thesis explores the practice of eco-ethics in experimental landscape poetry through the work of Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin, Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo.

The practice of eco-ethics, as a creative and critical mode of knowing through being in the environment, takes a different form in each poet's work. Yet they all actively deconstruct dominant ideologies that reinforce environmental and social violence in the modern world, while reconstituting relationships between humans and nature through poetic innovation, close attention and sustained dialogue.

Correspondingly, this thesis engages attentively and dialogically with the work of these four poets, presenting an open constellation of contemporary poetry that re-enacts an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being in the world, as embodied in what I term "experimental landscape poetry". Inspired by *The Ground Aslant*, edited by Harriet Tarlo, this term extends Tarlo's grouping of "radical landscape poetry" by including poets not featured in the anthology and introducing new ways in which contemporary poetry engages with 'place, locality and "nature"' (Tarlo 7). More specifically, by incorporating the work of Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo into this discussion of ecopoetics and eco-ethics, I highlight poetry that navigates multiple media and narratives, shifting the focus from optical and local perceptions of landscape to a trans-heuristic and trans-locational imagining of the earth, while maintaining an emphasis on the physical and phenomenal realms.

This thesis comprises four chapters, each examining one poet through textual analysis that interweaves literary and cultural studies, with a focus on innovative poetics, landscape phenomenology, feminist materialism and postcolonialism. By connecting and comparing the work of four poets within an interdisciplinary framework, I highlight the diversity of experimental landscape poetry and its potential to constitute, communicate and enact an inclusive and contextual eco-ethics amid ongoing ecological and social transitions.

Chapter One examines Harriet Tarlo's poetry and her collaboration with painter Judith Tucker, tracing their practice of eco-ethics from the outside field to the page-space and gallery exhibition. Responding to the changing environments at each stage of their work, the artists develop distinct methods—such as walking with others, open-form composition and innovative presentation—that enact an open, dialogical mode of artmaking and placemaking. Chapter Two examines Peter Larkin's poetry, which engages with the materiality of trees and landscapes shaped by both natural processes and anthropogenic interventions. Centring on his poetics of "scarcity", I argue that his work contemplates the inseverable yet delicate bond between humans and nature. Chapter Three explores Maggie O'Sullivan's poetry as a practice of weaving kinship among earthly beings, presenting both landscape and the page as sites of mutual constitution and transformation between human and nonhuman, verbal and nonverbal actors. The final chapter explores Anthony Vahni Capildeo's poetry, linking contemporary ecopoetics, rooted in postwar Anglo-American traditions, with postcolonial Caribbean thought, particularly Glissant's "poetics of relation" and Brathwaite's "tidalectics". Drawing on Capildeo's status as an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago to the UK, I highlight their

enactment of movements and relations among diverse subjects, landscapes and narratives, reintegrating “othered” forms of life—such as the animal, the foreign and the mad—into the presentation and discussion of the environment.

Lay Summary

This thesis investigates poetic innovation and the practice of eco-ethics in contemporary experimental poetry in the UK that creatively and critically engages with the environment—what I term "experimental landscape poetry", specifically extending the grouping "radical landscape poetry" proposed by Harriet Tarlo in the anthology *The Ground Aslant*. The thesis presents an interdisciplinary analysis of the work of four poets—Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin, Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo—as case studies to support my claim that experimental landscape poetry offers key insights into our relationship with each other and the natural world.

Facing the global challenge of climate change and its resulting ecological transformation and destruction, rethinking our relationship with nature and our ways of living has become an urgent task for both scholars and the public. Building on current studies in ecopoetics, ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, this thesis explores how experimental landscape poetry helps us rethink the environment and shape a more inclusive eco-ethics—one that foregrounds silenced actors in processes of worldmaking. By attending to the diverse material realities and lived experiences of the world, experimental landscape poetry enacts an open and dialogical reimagining of subjectivity and its becoming within the environment. Rather than limiting creative agency and authority to the individual subject, it emphasises the subject's ecological and social relations within place and includes others—both human and nonhuman—in the compositional process. It then re-enacts this process—as an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being in the world—in the place of the page through formal and linguistic experimentation, such as open-field

composition, the incorporation of nonverbal mediums and the layering of multiple narratives. Continually challenging traditional sensibilities of the human self and their emplacement in the more-than-human world, experimental landscape poetry thus provides a vital space for reflecting on the modern lifeworld and the drastic changes it is undergoing. Resonating with the intellectual openness of experimental landscape poetry, the findings presented in this thesis remain open-ended and invite further studies and alternative perspectives.

Table of Contents

Title p.1

Acknowledgements p.2

Abstract p.3

Lay Summary p.5

Table of Contents p.7

Introduction p.9

Eco-Ethical Beginnings: an Introduction to Eco-Ethical Composition and Experimental Landscape Poetry

Chapter One p.82

From Outside to Inside: The Practice of Eco-Ethics in the Work of Harriet Tarlo and Judith Tucker

Chapter Two p.154

Eco-Ethical Reflections and Speculations on Peter Larkin's Poetics of "Scarcity"

Chapter Three p.236

Weaving Kinship: The Sensuous, The Magical and The Eco-Political Threads of Maggie O'Sullivan's Poetry

Chapter Four p.315

The Act and Art of Relating: Reading Anthony Vahni Capildeo and Experimental Landscape Poetry

Conclusion p.391

Index of Figures p.401

Works Cited p.406

Eco-Ethical Beginnings: an Introduction to Eco-Ethical Composition and Experimental Landscape Poetry

Introduction Roadmap

This chapter introduces the thesis's subject and main inquiry: how experimental landscape poetry (hereafter ELP), as practised in the contemporary UK, reconfigures the relationship between human and more-than-human worlds through what I term eco-ethical composition. Sections One, Two and Three set out the theoretical framework and research methodology by clarifying three terms central to this inquiry: "eco-ethical composition", "radical and experimental landscape poetry" and "landscape".

Section One outlines my understanding of eco-ethics as a rethinking of human–nonhuman relations through the work of Val Plumwood. It then sets out the thesis's hybrid theoretical grounding, bringing together ethics, phenomenology and social and political critique in an interdisciplinary approach to ELP and ecocriticism. Finally, it clarifies a research methodology grounded in close reading and informed by the "performative turn" in literary studies and the humanities more broadly.

Section Two elaborates the radicalism of what Harriet Tarlo calls radical landscape poetry (hereafter RLP) in her anthology *The Ground Aslant*. Understanding this radicalism as resistance to formal and ideological closure rooted in the earth's materiality and transformability, the section argues that it lays the foundation for my expansion of Tarlo's term in this thesis. This expansion articulates an eco-ethical composition demonstrated by radical and experimental landscape poetry.

Section Three examines “landscape” as both perception and phenomenon, arguing for its significance as a relational term within interdisciplinary environmental thought. Drawing on John Wylie, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Tim Ingold, it situates landscape as a dynamic field of co-becoming that resists ontopological closure while holding subjective perception and material processes in tension. This framework informs the thesis’s account of ELP as an eco-ethical mode of composition that foregrounds relationality, materiality and the limits of representation.

Section Four traces the formal and eco-ethical roots of radical and experimental landscape poetry to Charles Olson’s open-field poetics in mid-century America, arguing that its commitment to annexing the human and subjective to the natural and objective anticipates an ecological and ethical foundation for contemporary landscape poetry. It then compares Olsonian open-field poetics with RLP in their cultural and geographical contexts to show how British open-field poetics diverges from Olson’s poetic innovation and environmental thinking.

Section Five maps the emergence of RLP amid postwar experimental poetry practices in the UK. By offering a rhizomatic mapping rather than lineage tracing, it argues that experimental poetry’s commitment to renewal anticipates RLP’s diversity and transformability, sustaining its ongoing challenge to dominant discourses.

Carrying forward the emphasis on experimentation and the transformation of discourse through attending to nonhuman and human others, Section Six situates the thesis in the environmental humanities by aligning practices of eco-ethical composition with broader cross-disciplinary inquiry into human-nonhuman relationships. The final section then provides a chapter summary.

I. Eco-Ethical Composition

Following Val Plumwood, I consider eco-ethics within environmental philosophy as a project of challenging nature–culture dualisms consolidated through Western-led modernisation and implicated in current social and ecological predicaments. Plumwood argues that the "hyper-separation" of human and nonhuman functions as an ontological structure of domination, assigning culture and reason to the dominator, and nature and irrationality to those rendered subordinate, a logic evident in hierarchies such as those between men and women, colonialists and Indigenous peoples (Plumwood, "Nature as Agency"; *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*). Such thinking sustains narratives of civilisation and progress founded on mastery of the nonhuman, denying interdependency, the situatedness of human activity within natural environment and the distinctive agency and intelligence of the nonhuman.

To counteract culture–nature dualisms, Plumwood proposes a "progressive naturalism" that exposes the tension between inherited concepts of "progress" and "nature", insofar as "progress" depends on the active, rational management of "nature" as passive objects. Rather than reestablishing nature as a new centrism or abandoning the term "nature", progressive naturalism involves 'a critical and partial affirmation of "nature"' that attends to cultural specificity in human–nonhuman relations and to the entangled strategies of naturalisation and denaturalisation through which dominant narratives operate, in alliance with other oppositional movements, including those for decolonialisation and racial and gender equality. On this account, eco-ethics is both philosophical and socio-political, committed to cross-contextual reflection on the human

subject's relations with natural environment and with others. It remains experimental and open, producing inclusive accounts of nature through practice and dialogue. It is this eco-ethics that I identify in the composition of "experimental landscape poetry" (ELP), in which formal and linguistic innovation cultivates readers' capacities to stay with uncertainty, ambiguity and contradictoriness as the poem unfolds, re-presenting and enacting the world's continual transformations.

Although this thesis examines ELP—particularly its reconfiguration of human–nonhuman relations—within a phenomenological and ethical framework, it also engages conversations around interspecies and interpersonal oppression and opposition, as such socio-political concerns cannot be disentangled from environmental discourses, a point anticipated in the entanglement of nature and culture. To outline a poetics and practice of eco-ethics in ELP—or an eco-ethical composition—this thesis adopts a cross-framework, comparative approach to ecocriticism that interweaves literary, environmental and cultural studies, while underlining their convergence in "landscape", a term further examined in Section Three.

As outlined by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, ecocriticism is less a unified methodology than a commitment to "environmentality", a stance that is material, ethical and sociopolitical (Buell 11). This reorientation towards the environment and the environmentality of texts not only signals the expansion of ecocriticism across genres, disciplines, languages and cultures, as proposed by Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster in *Beyond Nature Writing*, but also indicates a recognition of material agency in processes of meaning- and worldmaking, and a further

incorporation of the nonhuman into what were previously exclusionary human spheres of language and communication. As Buell writes,

> Once I thought it helpful to try to specify a subspecies of "environmental text," the first stipulation of which was that the nonhuman environment must be envisaged not merely as a framing device but as an active presence, suggesting human history's implication in natural history. Now, it seems to me more productive to think inclusively of environmentality as a property of any text – to maintain that all human artifacts bear such traces, and at several stages: in the composition, the embodiment, and the reception (25).

Recalling Plumwood's "progressive naturalism", Buell's commitment to "environmentality" suggests that 'the future of ecocriticism' also lies in an attentiveness to the interactions between nature and culture, outside and inside, and to the entangled material and discursive makings of both literary works and the world beyond.

Carrying this commitment to "environmentality", this thesis aims to demonstrate the practice of eco-ethics 'in the composition, the embodiment and the reception' of ELP (Buell 22). Adopting close reading as its research method, it advances an ecocriticism guided by the poem, attending to processes of meaning-making as they emerge through the poem's embodied form on the page and the contexts of its making. Close reading here is not a neutral analytical tool but a situated eco-ethical practice, enacted through an embodied and relational encounter between reader and text. Interpretation thus takes place as a 'singular act-event' of reading (Attridge 117): an exchange, or, in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's words, a 'mutual inhabitation', between the reading subject and the poem (*Phenomenology of Perception*).

Importantly, this experimental methodology is derived from the work it examines, which foregrounds an epistemological and ideological openness not dependent solely on subjective experience, but emerging from a critical and self-reflective engagement with each text and the discourses it exhibits or challenges (see Section Four; Bloomfield, "Landscaping the Page"). In line with ELP and with the "radical environmental humanities" outlined by Marco Armiero, this thesis seeks to practise '*other* ways of knowing, starting from experience, the body, and emotions [emphasis added]' (3). Through a 'methodological and experimental undiscipline' (3), it aims to re-enact the eco-ethical composition of ELP and, at the site of its reception, to continue challenging the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, as well as between the subjective and the objective, the affective and the analytical.

Such an experimental, practice-led approach to ecocriticism is underpinned by a theoretical framework that understands ethics, knowing and being as mutually constitutive, or, in Karen Barad's terms, an 'ethico-onto-epistemology'[1] shaped by feminist, queer, ecological and posthuman thought, as articulated by contemporary thinkers including Judith Butler, Timothy Morton, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 185). These perspectives understand the world as a processual (un)making of interpellated actors—subjects and objects, discourses and materials—giving rise to a "performative turn" in both innovative poetry (Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying*; Sparrow, "Performances of Technology"; Jarniewicz, "Concrete and

[1] Barad introduces the term 'ethico-onto-epistemology' in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* to argue that ethics, ontology and epistemology are not separate domains but are always already entangled. In other words, questions of what exists (ontology), how we know (epistemology) and how we ought to act (ethics) cannot be disentangled from one another. The term highlights an ethics-led, materially based way of knowing the world, or ecological thinking, that is central to the environmental humanities.

Performance Poetry") and landscape studies (Wylie, *Landscape*; Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape").

Notably, the "performative turn" in innovative poetry operates on two interrelated levels. The first arises when poetry is turned into performance, highlighting writing and composition as the "crafting" of the poem. In this case, the poem is understood as an event: a material-discursive process of meaning-making enacted not only by the poet—the authorial subject—but also by materials, the audience-reader and the place of composition and reception. For example, Maggie O'Sullivan's turning of poetry into performance leads to the dissolution of several boundaries—not only across art forms but also among artist, artwork, audience and the place of performance. As I examine in detail in Chapter Three, by 'deconstructing and reconstituting' language into marks and sounds, O'Sullivan turns composition into embodied expression—an expressing body—where to understand becomes to hear the poem (O'Sullivan-Olsen). By taking on the transformative power otherwise associated with the performative arts, innovative poetry incorporates the reader-audience into the event of the poem, making them active participants in art- and meaning-making rather than distant spectators (Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*). In other words, the performance of poetry—or poetry as performance—turns the poem into a process of meaning-making as worldmaking, one that involves actors beyond the poet and extends beyond the place and time of composition. In this way, it participates—rather than merely represents—in the world's unfolding.

This interweaving of poetic and real also heightens the ethical stakes of poetry. For instance, in *The Poethical Wager*, Joan Retallack advances a notion of "poethics",

grounded in complex realism—the idea that the reality of life can be "sensed", rather than defined, through imaginative and artistic engagement with the material complexity of the natural world. In Section Four, I will discuss such coinages of poetics and ethics—particularly ecological ethics in open-field poetry, a tradition to which ELP can be traced.

At its second level, the "performative turn" in innovative poetry entails a renewed, nonrepresentational conception of language and discourse alongside a nonessential and vitalist understanding of matter. Influenced by continental phenomenology and developments in modern physics, most notably theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, these understandings give rise to critical approaches that attend to the ongoing entanglement of the material and the discursive. For instance, in *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler examines the entanglement between sex and gender, and between the materiality of bodies and the performativity of identity. Countering the claim that the materiality of sexed bodies, particularly female bodies, is the "irreducible" ground of feminist and queer practice amid poststructuralist deconstructions of gender, Butler foregrounds the mutual constitution of matter and discourse. She argues that the very suggestion that the material realm functions as a matrix for cultural inscription remains embedded in culture–nature and male–female dualisms. As she writes:

> [Far from pure], matter is fully sedimented with discourses on sex and sexuality that prefigure and constrain the uses to which that term can be put. Moreover, we may seek recourse to matter in order to ground or to verify a set of injuries or violations only to find that matter itself is founded through a set of violations, ones which are unwittingly repeated in the contemporary invocation' (29).

Put simply, bodies matter, both materialised and made significant, through the reiteration of discourse, that is, through performance. In this view, the female body is not a pre-discursive substrate but is constituted through the reiterated regulation of discourse. Contrary to anthropocentric and androcentric assumptions that regard the material world as the productive ground of culture, as woman to man, Butler 'recast[s]… the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power' (Butler 2). In doing so, she unsettles the production of bodies according to heterosexual conventions and opens possibilities for "critically queer" thinking that attends to the provisionality and partiality of the subject, both body and sense of self, persistently asking who is defined against whom and what constitutes the other or outside to the norm.

Although this understanding of performance as the "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena [such as bodies] that it regulates and constrains" (2), and of the body as effect, seems to dissolve the bodily and the material into power and symbolic dynamics, it nevertheless opens each body as a site of democratic contestation through performance. As Butler concludes:

> [The reach and effects of discursive productions, or "performatives"], their signifiability, cannot be controlled by the one who utters or writes, since such productions are not owned by the one who utters them. They continue to signify in spite of their authors… This yielding of ownership over what one writes has important political corollaries, for the taking up, reforming [and] deforming of one's words opens a future terrain of community, one in which the hope of ever fully recognizing oneself in the terms by which one signifies is sure to be disappointed (241–42).

This task of 'taking up, reforming [and] deforming one's words' by situating them within broader cultural production is not only sociopolitical contestation but also critical and creative exploration, enabling alternative formulations of self and community attentive to the excluded other and the outside. This thesis argues that ELP is such a practice. It dissolves subjectivity and signifiability by situating them within entangled material-discursive relations, both in physical landscape and in poetic composition. By negotiating the boundaries between human and nonhuman, discursive and material making of the world—for instance, between the subject and the environment and between the physical landscape and the compositional page-field— ELP performs an eco-ethical practice, that is an open-ended reiteration of human subjectivity and symbolic signifiability in relation to their constitutive others and to the outside: the more-than-human worlds.

Through innovative form and language, ELP produces provisional and relational sensibilities that affectively situate the reader in ambiguity, at the threshold between symbolic understanding of the poem and embodied experience of being in the landscape. Eco-ethical practice is therefore re-enacted in the reader's encounter. Recalling Buell's argument that the "environmentality" of literary works can be traced in 'the composition, the embodiment and the reception' (Buell 22), ELP negotiates human–nonhuman boundaries on and beyond the page. By transforming readers and audiences into active participants in artmaking as worldmaking, it not only offers innovative imaginings of environment but also brings an eco-ethical practice to life through poetry. In other words, it embodies an eco-ethical composition. In Section Four, I return to this transformative capacity of ELP and relate it to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome.

Following the "performative turn" in literary and critical studies, this thesis thus performs an ecocriticism as an eco-ethical practice, rearticulating the human subject in relation to nonhuman others and environment. It takes ELP, a reiterative formulation after Tarlo's RLP, as its primary site of inquiry. Through close reading of four poets, and by situating their work in relation to each other and within the broader fields of ecopoetics and the environmental humanities, the thesis adopts ELP's epistemological openness to outline and perform an eco-ethical composition that seeks to transform the human–nature relationship and is transformative in itself. I elaborate on this goal in the next section.

II. Radical and Experimental Landscape Poetry

In 2011, Harriet Tarlo published an anthology of radical landscape poetry (RLP), *The Ground Aslant*, which brings together poets working in the UK whose work challenges traditional notions of landscape and landscape poetry. Contributors include Colin Simms, Peter Riley, Thomas A Clark, Wendy Mulford, Peter Larkin, Frances Presley, Tony Baker, Ian Davidson, Elisabeth Bletsoe, Carol Watts, Nicholas Johnson, Zoë Skoulding, Harriet Tarlo, Mark Goodwin, Helen Macdonald and Mark Dickinson. The anthology positions itself at the intersection of environmental and experimental poetries, foregrounding innovative approaches to landscape as both a dynamic space and a site of encounter between humans and nature at individual and collective levels. Building on this conception of landscape, RLP explores the relationship between human and more-than-human beings in both physical and philosophical terms.

Inspired by *The Ground Aslant*, the original aim of this thesis was to investigate how RLP contributes to the (re)constitution of environmental ethics in the

contemporary world. However, during my research I quickly realised the openness of RLP, both as a constellation of poetry and as a poetic practice. As Tarlo observes in her introduction to *The Ground Aslant*:

> Landscape is wide and broad; even "radical landscape" is still fairly open. It does not dictate, circumscribe, or limit the work overmuch, either in terms of form or politics, but it does assume a degree of radicalism. This is appropriate, not least because landscape poetry often challenges the divide between experimental or innovative and traditional or mainstream, which has haunted British poetry, in all its many guises, since the nineteen-thirties (7).

The divide between experimental and traditional poetry in the UK, which RLP challenges, refers specifically to the 'poetic wars' between the old and new "British" poetries after the Second World War (Barry). It also carries wider cultural and ecological implications, reflecting a shift in both the physical landscapes and people's valuing of them in the UK during its postwar reconstruction. The transition and contestation between traditional rural and cosmopolitan urban scenes entrenched the cultural debate, within and beyond poetry, over Britain's national identity (Matless, *Landscape and Englishness).*

As the nation underwent physical and ideological transformations driven by modernity, multifaceted tensions emerged in public discourse, including those between rural and urban, local and foreign, and conservatism and democratic socialism (Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*). As David Kennedy argues, the 'poetry wars' between traditional and experimental poetry, provoked by rival anthologies, 'are not really concerned with poetry per se but with poetry as a mirror of the nation and its

moral life' (Kennedy 63; Barry). Editors of these anthologies often emphasise the 'newness' and 'Britishness' of their content, aiming to shape a national profile for British poetry in response to the changes in the nation's cultural environment. For instance, in 1956, Robert Conquest compiled a representative collection of mainstream poetry, *New Lines*, featuring Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, Donald Davie, D.J. Enright, John Wain and Conquest himself—many of whom would later be associated with what came to be known as *The Movement*. When explaining his choice of poets, he writes:

> It will be seen at once that these poets do not have as much in common as they would if they were a group of doctrine-saddled writers forming a definite school complete with programme and rules. What they do have in common is perhaps, at its lowest, little more than a negative determination to avoid bad principles (xv).

Conquest does not provide examples of poetry that illustrate the "bad principles" avoided by poets who are later considered traditional or mainstream. Instead, he draws on Aldous Huxley's list of bad music from *Texts and Pretexts* to underscore the public's corrupted and vicious taste, which includes 'the disgusting caterwaulings of Tziganes, Negroes and Cossacks, the noises of the Hawaiian guitar, the Russian balalaika, the Argentine saw and even the Wurlitzer organ' (xii). Used again more than twenty years later, this list reflects the enduring vigilance of conservative critics towards the perceived threats posed by foreign, lower-class and non-white populations in the postwar period. Reacting to the shifts in the poetic and broader artistic atmosphere of the UK brought about by cultural diversity, Conquest praises the

'integrity and judgement' of good artists who have not succumbed to what he describes as "the universal mess" and who create from a 'new and healthy general standpoint' founded on a 'reverence for the real person or event' and an 'empirical attitude' akin to that of modern philosophy (xiv). And on 'the more technical side', he commends those who refuse to 'abandon a rational structure and comprehensible language, even when the verse is most highly charged with sensuous or emotional intent' (xv).

The empirical attitude, formality and comprehensibility outlined by Conquest in *New Lines* not only are the key features of traditional poetry but also reflect the dominant, modern scientific worldview of the mid-20th century. The mainstream poetry advocates' emphasis on the "empirical", the "rational" and "the necessary intellectual component of the poetry" parallels the political scheme of the "rationalisation of settlement and population" in postwar Britain (Matless 296). As Matless observes, since the 1940s, the vision of a modern and ordered "England" promoted by planner-preservationists gained governmental influence. Their aim to establish a "rational and hierarchical order of places" and rebuild the nation with scientifically planned and managed landscapes across various geographic scales (local, regional, national and parochial) and sites (National Parks, urban spaces, road and railway networks, agricultural lands, etc.) positioned science as a cultural authority (255, 278).

On the other hand, advocates of experimental poetry positioned themselves not only against mainstream poetry but also against the conservative and anti-socialist sentiments reflected in it. For example, Al Alvarez criticises the 'academic-administrative verse' featured in *New Lines* in his introduction, "Beyond the Gentility

Principle," to the anthology *The New Poetry* (1962). In contrast to Conquest, Alvarez urges poets to abandon convention and adopt a less restrained, more authentic voice that resonates with the realities of the contemporary world. Thirty years later, Michael Hulse, David Kennedy and David Morley co-edited another anthology, also titled *The New Poetry* (1993), expanding the number of poets featured from twenty-eight in Alvarez's edition to fifty-five (Kennedy). Echoing Alvarez, Hulse, Kennedy and Morley challenge the cultural and political conservatism reflected in Robert Conquest's *New Lines* and, later, in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion. Like its predecessor, *The New Poetry* (1993) celebrates the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain both within and beyond the poetry scene.

The conflict between traditional and experimental poetry in Britain spanned the 20th century. However, the boundary between these poetic traditions and the poets themselves is neither as clear nor as definitive as claimed by their editors. The work and the identity of the poet are both distorted in the anthologising process. Poets directly expressed their dissatisfaction with the terms imposed on them by anthologies, which, as David Malcolm argues, are 'at best a press-generated category and, at worst, a phantom' (213–14). Among the so-called Movement poets[2], Donald Davie, Philip Larkin and Thom Gunn insisted they share little with the other writers with whom they were identified' in *New Lines* (Malcolm). Seamus Heaney also protested being

[2] The Movement poets were a loosely connected group of British poets in the 1950s who rejected modernist experimentation in favour of clarity, traditional forms and restrained language. Popularised by J.D. Scott in 1954, the Movement emphasised realism, scepticism and formal precision, distancing itself from the emotionalism of Romanticism and the complexity of modernism. Key figures include Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, Elizabeth Jennings and Robert Conquest, who edited the defining anthology *New Lines* (1956). Though praised for clarity, the Movement has been criticised for its narrow literary scope and resistance to diversity and experimentation.

categorised as a 'British' poet instead of Irish in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, edited by Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion (Herbert and Hollis). Such distortion and lack of justification are also a problem in anthologies of experimental poetry. For example, six poets—R. S. Thomas, Norman MacCaig, Christopher Middleton, Ted Hughes and David Halbrook—are included in both *New Lines* (1956) and *The New Poetry* (1962). Despite the contrasting views between the editors, Alvarez's anthology seems to be a 'repackaging' of Conquest's grouping rather than a new one (Hampson).

The categories imposed on poets and poetry by anthologies are often reductive and misleading. Having participated in this cultural movement propelled by anthologies himself, David Kennedy reflects:

> Anthologies… tell us [a] particular type of story about poetry and its relationship to the world… The story often has little to do with the poetry itself. Anthologies return again and again to [their] own arguments, assimilating and reacting against [their] abiding concerns and from [them] create new narratives of contemporary poetry (66).

In contrast, *The Ground Aslant* is an anthology that rejects the categorisation of poetry and poets as a means of asserting political or ideological stances, as well as the categorical thinking embedded in modern systems more generally. In assembling *The Ground Aslant*, Tarlo seeks to challenge the divide between traditional and experimental poetries in the UK as a result of categorical, oppositional thinking. As Tarlo explains, RLP 'does not dictate, circumscribe, or limit the work overmuch, either in terms of form or politics' (*The Ground Aslant* 7). Instead, RLP embodies a

dialogical way of reading poetry that understands poetic practices in relation to one another, forging innovative thinking through such interrelations. The term RLP brings forth a constellation of contemporary poetry that, on the one hand, adopts an experimental poetics rooted in American late modernism—particularly Olson's open-field poetics—and, on the other, engages with British pastoral traditions. While experimental in form, RLP 'does attempt to resist the sentimental attachment to landscape, even as it often acknowledges this as both legacy and temptation' (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant* 12).

In addition, RLP's resistance to categorisation and categorical thinking is anticipated in its framing within "landscape". As David Matless states in *Landscape and Englishness*, 'the relational hybridity of landscape, which is already both natural and cultural, deep and superficial, makes it an inherently deconstructive force' (29). Through looking at the English landscape and its emergence from entangled environmental and sociopolitical discourses (e.g., new naturalism, environmentalism, morality and citizenship), Matless conducts an interdisciplinary study on the mutual production between cultural and natural environments in the 20th century UK. Similarly, by framing itself within "landscape", RLP takes on its force of deconstruction, challenging not only the divide between traditional and experimental in British poetry but also between culture and nature. I will expand on the deconstructive force of "landscape" in Section Three, where I discuss the reformulation of the subject, subjectivity and the environment in landscape studies. In this section, I focus on the term RLP and its radicalism in bridging traditional and experimental landscape writing.

The divide between experimental and traditional is a recurrent theme not only in the conception of British poetry but also in the imagining of the British landscape. As mentioned above, the emphasis on the empirical, the rational and 'the necessarily intellectual' (Conquest xiv) in mainstream poetry parallels the envisioning of a modern, ordered England by planner-preservationists in the government, both reflecting the scientific worldview dominant in the mid-20th century. Later in the century, the traditional and mainstream perception of the landscape shifted from a rational, scientific perspective to a more melancholic view of England, seen through the eyes of an experienced observer who knows the local landscape more intimately than the distant Central Planning Authority (Matless 374). This view is exemplified in Philip Larkin's poem "Going, Going", first published in the Department of the Environment's 1972 report "How Do You Want to Live? A Report on the Human Habitat". The lyrical 'I' of the poem embodies a 'good' UK citizen with topographic literacy and the "right" aesthetic taste (Matless 374, 296), lamenting the loss of traditional English landscapes to modernity and urbanisation:

> I thought it would last my time –
> The sense that, beyond the town,
> There would always be fields and farms,
> Where the village louts could climb
> Such trees as were not cut down;
> ……
> And that will be England gone,
> The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,

The guildhalls, the carved choirs.

There'll be books; it will linger on

In galleries; but all that remains

For us will be concrete and tyres.

Being a key figure of the Movement poets, Larkin's poem presents a mainstream yet mythic imagining of the English landscape, one that exists only as 'a tourist fantasy' and 'a conservative cultural icon' (Matless 374).

Notably, this shift in attitude towards modernity in late 20th-century UK is reflected in both narratives of landscape and poetry. While traditional and mainstream poetry was initially praised for its empirical approach and rational structure, being aligned with modern philosophy (Conquest xiv), it later came to represent a nostalgic and melancholic view of the English landscape lost to modernity, as seen in Larkin's poem "Going Going". The conception of poetry and the imagining of landscape are intertwined, both shaped by a broader and more complex divide between tradition and transformation in natural as well as cultural environments of the nation.

Anticipating Tarlo's anthology, Greg Garrard also explores the mediation between traditional and experimental landscape writing through his interrogation of "radical pastoral?". In *Ecocriticism*, he frames 'the progressive potential of the pastoral' beyond a poetic trope (Garrard 42). Echoing Jonathan Bate's argument in *Romantic Ecology*, Garrard argues that Romantic and pastoral poetry, particularly Wordsworth, already stage concerns central to contemporary ecopoetics, including the pathetic fallacy, nostalgia and the naturalisation of the subject in the lyric "I". Rather than being outdated, these concerns persist in different forms and remain critically

unresolved today. Similarly, in *Poetry & Commons*, Daniel Eltringham highlights the resonances between Romantic nature writing and late modernist open-field poetry in their search for fugitive voices, spaces and temporalities responsive to "old" and "new" forms of land enclosure.

Acknowledging crucial ecological inquiry in traditional poetry, Garrard shifts the pastoral away from a finished trope or ideology, insisting that 'If pastoral can be radical, if it has been so, it is not as a finished model, exhortation or ideology, but as a questioning, as itself a question', a reformulation he names 'radical pastoral?':

> With a new appreciation of the literal, a theory of the pathetic fallacy as an ontological problematic and a recognition of the special power of poetry to hold the undecidable in suspension, "radical pastoral?" appears as a political and poethical expression of belonging—of the rootedness of human being on this earth (186).

In short, this continuous questioning, of staying with the undecidable, is what renders the "radical pastoral" and "radical landscape poetry" radical.

The shift in ecopoetics and ecocriticism towards the uncertain and the radical reflects inquiry and innovation in poetic practice across traditional pastoral poetry and radical, experimental landscape poetry, and it also responds to modern environmental volatility. As Garrard suggests, post-equilibrium ecology, climate change and ecological precarity have unsettled older perceptions of a stable, even static, nature (65). Likewise, in *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, Timothy Clark argues that planetary-scale environmental crisis strains the adequacy of local, embodied environmental experience. What is often taken as a phenomenological perspective on nature and environment is culturally and

historically specific—an epiphenomenon or even a phantasm of the past. The English landscape evoked by Philip Larkin in "Going, Going," discussed above, therefore registers less a material reality than a nostalgic imagining of land and nation shaped by the cultural and material conditions of postwar Britain.

Figure 0.1 Earthrise[3]

In contrast to such 'epiphenomena' reflected and produced in traditional cultural discourses, such as Philip Larkin's poem (Clark, "Radical Pastoral?"; Matless), modern science and technology have enabled new ways of perceiving and inhabiting the world on planetary scales (Heise). Google Maps, DNA sequencing and satellite images, among others, have revealed planetary activities at unimaginable micro- and macro-scales, often in the absence of human life (Heise; Clark), such as the photograph of *Earthrise* (see Figure 0.1). These new perceptions and experiences of the earth prompt environmental scholars and writers to recognise the territoriality of human knowledge and to rethink the earth at non-tangible scales (Clark). This, in turn, demands new senses and sensibilities to

[3] The *Earthrise* photograph, taken by William Anders during the Apollo 8 mission on December 24, 1968, is preserved in NASA's archives and credited to the Apollo 8 mission. It was first unveiled to the public in *Life* magazine on January 10, 1969.

accommodate the multiplicities and contradictions of the contemporary environment, as well as our engagements with it (Clark).

Responding to both inherited perceptions and new realities of nature marked by fragility and fragmentation, contemporary environmental literature, such as RLP, and criticism, such as Garrard's inquiry into "radical pastoral?", become generative practices of eco-ethics. This radicalism mediates between tradition and transformation and redefines the self in relation to the other, seeking an inclusive and responsive imagining of the earth. In other words, it is eco-ethical composition, and it forms the foundation of this thesis.

Building on the radicalism manifested in radical landscape poetry (RLP), this thesis expands Tarlo's grouping by examining poets both included and not included in *The Ground Aslant*: Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin, Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo. Connecting and comparing their practices, which I refer to here as experimental landscape poetry (ELP), I explore how contemporary poetry engages environment and articulate, within an interdisciplinary framework, eco-ethical composition as a practice of reflecting on and reconstituting relationships between human and nonhuman, self and other, subjective and objective, and subject and environment. Differentiating Tarlo's RLP from the works I propose under ELP both branches out from RLP, opening new possibilities and connections, and unsettles the boundaries it implies, including geographical, cultural and racial limitations tied to the local, the British and the white. In Derrida's terms, this differentiation operates as différance: an expansion and reiteration that defers to what lies beyond the self and what already exists rather than establishing an alternative end.

More specifically, by including Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo—who are not featured in *The Ground Aslant*—I highlight poetries that navigate multiple media, subjectivities and cultures. Although both poets live and work in the UK, their work shifts emphasis from local, optical landscape perception towards a trans-heuristic and trans-cultural imagining of the earth, showing the variability of environment and environmental perception, while remaining grounded in materiality and embodied experience. I argue that this transformability in ELP cultivates the sensibilities required for living in a contemporary world shaped by divided, multiple bodies, narratives and geographies, offering dynamic reconnection without collapsing essential differences.

In choosing "experimental" rather than "radical", I foreground ELP's performativity and processuality, whose meanings take form and transform in the singular 'act-event' of the poem as composition, embodiment and reception (Buell 22; Attridge). The term draws on Mandy Bloomfield's "Landscaping the Page", where British open-field poetry engages landscape through 'experimentation with the spatiality of the poetic page [emphasis added].' Such "experimentation" signals a processual and empirical approach to landscape and landscape writing, resonant with the performative turn discussed in Section One. In both accounts, poetic composition crafts words and page space not to represent the "real" world but to participate in its material-discursive unfolding. The term "experimental" also resituates ELP within postwar Britain constellations of innovative poetry, which I map in Section Five.

To sum up, this section has elaborated RLP's radicalism as mediation between tradition and transformation, and as a necessary response to environmental volatility. It has also shown how this thesis develops Tarlo's grouping by widening RLP to include

O'Sullivan and Capildeo, and by articulating eco-ethics in contemporary landscape poetry as a negotiation of boundaries between the human subject and the natural environment. Reframing "radical" as "experimental" foregrounds the performativity and processuality of eco-ethical composition without abandoning RLP's resistance to categorical closure. In Section Four, I trace RLP from Olsonian open-field poetics and argue that its roots in both American modernism and the British pastoral tradition anticipate its ongoing transformation and expansion, including its reiteration as ELP in this thesis. Before proceeding, however, I clarify another key term of this thesis: landscape.

III. Landscape

In his 2016 essay *A Landscape Cannot Be a Homeland*, John Wylie revisits a question posed at a 2011 Uniscape meeting by European Commission research policy officer Karen Fabbri: '*What is the problem for which landscape is the answer?'* Having stayed with this question for five years, Wylie finally responds:

> The salience of landscape as a critical term, I have come to believe, involves modes of thinking and feeling that chafe against invocations of homeland as a site of existential inhabitation, as a locus of sentiment and attachment, as a wellspring of identity. A landscape cannot be a homeland, must not be confused with a home, a hearth, and so by extension, landscape writing must work to unsettle ideas about identifiable and unified communities, regions, nations and worlds (409).

Wylie's critique of "landscape", where it converges with "homeland", is directed toward *ontopology*, or homeland thinking. Coined by Jacques Derrida to name the convergence

of existence and location, *ontopology*, Wylie argues, divides people of the land—and even invents—the categories of "original inhabitants" and "strangers". Distinguishing landscape from homeland, he urges scholars to move beyond such ontopological divisions while acknowledging 'the geographically specific welding of peoples and environments (410).

Building on Wylie's account, this thesis adopts "landscape" as an analytical focus to take the processual making of the human subject within the physical environment beyond homeland thinking. In contrast, it argues that the co-becoming of people and place points to ecological connectivity across subjects that transcends geopolitical borders and derives instead from their shared situatedness in the earth. As mentioned in Section Two, the deconstructive force of "landscape" is similarly marked by Matless in *Landscape and Englishness* as it reconnects cultural and natural realms of world-making. Following Tarlo's "radical landscape poetry", I thus retain the term "landscape" in my proposal of experimental landscape poetry (ELP); its 'relational hybridity' enables an interdisciplinary articulation of eco-ethical composition that foregrounds the co-constitution of human subjectivity and the world's materiality, attending to the environmental particularities of this process while linking it to the wider ecological becoming of the earth (Matless). Such transversal and deconstructive force of "landscape" lies in its significance as both a theoretical term and a natural phenomenon. In what follows, I elaborate on such boundary-crossing embedded in "landscape" and how it shapes this thesis.

This thesis's account of ELP is informed by landscape studies, including 1) a posthuman and phenomenological orientation towards the materiality, or givenness, of

the world; 2) an emphasis on the tensions and relations within composition as a poetic field; and 3) an interdisciplinary and cross-framework approach that connects literature, ecology and cultural studies in the wake of deconstructed culture–nature dualisms. Its understanding of landscape, both the physical and the poetic field, as a processual co-becoming among multiple subject-objects draws on phenomenology articulated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*; *The Visible and the Invisible*), as well as relational and vital materialism developed by Gilles Deleuze (*Difference and Repetition*; *A Thousand Plateaus* with Félix Guattari), Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*) and Karen Barad (*Meeting the Universe Halfway*), among others.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty challenges Cartesian mind–body dualism and foregrounds embodied perception, arguing that subjectivity is inseparable from and arises through the subject's bodily inhabitation and participation in the world. Although he did not write on "landscape" specifically, the term in his work denotes the mutual inhabitation of perceiving subject and perceived environment and refutes a conception of the natural environment as a static backdrop for human activity.

Such a phenomenological account of landscape is developed further by Tim Ingold in "The Temporality of Landscape" into what he calls "a dwelling perspective", where forms of landscape and the beings who dwell in it—human and nonhuman—emerge together:

> The forms of the landscape are not prepared in advance for creatures to occupy, nor are the bodily forms of those creatures independently specified in their genetic makeup. Both sets of forms are generated and sustained in and through the

> processual unfolding of a total field of relations that cuts across the emergent interface between organism and environment (156).

Echoing Merleau-Ponty, Ingold emphasises the continuity of form and activity, mind and matter, meaning and substance. In their view, landscape and body, as environment and organism, are generated through the rhythmic activities of the world's life-processes, within which human activities are nested rather than dominating. As he writes,

> the landscape takes on its forms through a process of incorporation, not of inscription… for the forms of the landscape arise alongside those of the taskscape, within the same current of activity (162).

Nonetheless, although Merleau-Ponty and Ingold both denote landscape as a dynamic field of co-becoming, Ingold's focus on temporality signals a move beyond Merleau-Ponty's account centred on individual subjects, situating human perceptions and activities within broader ecological processes. In Ingold's account, landscape denotes the given rather than the perceived environment. This shift from a human-centred, subjective focus to a material and ecological one is highlighted by Wylie in his book *Landscape*, which traces the development of landscape studies from cultural geography through phenomenology, the performative turn and vital materialism. Drawing on Deleuze, Wylie describes the emergence of vital materialism as offering a 'radically non-subjective account of life' in which 'the circulation of vital non-personal and non-human affects, forces and singularities' displaces the phenomenological anchoring of a perceiving subject (202). In short, vitalist ontology is not merely a supplement but a strong corrective—perhaps even a replacement—for landscape phenomenology reliant on unexamined assumptions about subjectivity, perception and knowledge (202).

Challenging the opposition between phenomenological and vitalist–materialist approaches—often framed as a difference between orientations centred on the human and the subjective and those centred on the ecological and the material—this section offers a possible reconciliation between these views of "landscape", as demonstrated in Ingold's simultaneous emphasis on phenomenology and ecology, and re-evaluates the position and participation of the human subject within landscape. Through bridging the subjective and the 'radically nonsubjective' (Wylie) accounts of landscape, I aim to present an eco-ethical way of seeing which operates at the threshold of different—even oppositional—perspectives, practising reconnection without collapsing them onto the common ground of the earth. It is this re-presentation of landscape, reconnecting the human within the nonhuman by resituating the former in the latter, that takes place in ELP.

To begin, critiques of phenomenology centre on its presupposition of a "natural" body subject as the anchoring of perception and, consequently, of the senses and sensibility of the outside world. This orientation to the subjective also links phenomenology—particularly that of Heidegger—to Romanticism in its advocacy of an "authentic dwelling" in the world through a return to a premodern, pretechnological society (Wylie, *Landscape*; Heidegger, *Being and Time*; *Poetry, Language and Thought*).

However, such critique of phenomenology subverts its radicality, which lies precisely in its return to the phenomena—the body of perception enfolded in the environment—to the materiality and givenness of the world that precedes and exceeds the subject and is originary of consciousness. This point is stressed by both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty: anchoring in the body subject is not meant to limit what's visible to the finite subject but to highlight the finitude of the subject and of subjective perception in

contrast to the invisible, infinite nature. In short, the subject is produced—body as well as mind—within the environment that it inhabits; the act of perception is part of the subject's participation in the environment.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces phenomenology as a way of knowing and being in the world that remains close to the things themselves. As its name suggests, phenomenology is a logos grounded in phenomena rather than in interpretation; it is an inquiry into the nature of being through an authentic dwelling within nature (Heidegger, *Being and Time*). Notably, in insisting on the distinction between the phenomenological and the phenomenal, Heidegger understands the former as a philosophical "possibility" rather than an "actuality" of the latter (Heidegger, *Being and Time*). Since 'it is possible for every phenomenological concept and proposition from genuine origin to degenerate when communicating as a statement' (34), Heideggerian phenomenology emphasises the need for logos to remain radically open in order to avoid appropriating the things themselves. His critique of ideological and technological impositions on nature paved the way for ecological thought and ethics.

Similarly, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes on the necessity of reflection: the philosopher believes neither that 'vision is of the thing itself nor that vision is simply "in me"' (29). He must abandon both views and instead reflect on the thing perceived and on the correlation between our seeing and the thing itself. As Merleau-Ponty explains:

> It is indeed true that we perceive the thing itself, since the thing is nothing but what we see—not by the occult power of our eyes, for our eyes are no longer the subjects of vision; they have joined the number of things seen (29).

[…]

> It is therefore essential to the philosophy of reflection that it bring us back, this side of our *de facto* situation, to a centre of things from which we proceeded but from which we were decentered; that it retravel this time starting from us, a route already traced out from that centre to us (33)

To explain, phenomenology does not adopt perceptual faith uncritically—that what we see is the thing itself—but addresses it through the act of reflection. This return to the thing itself is not a "romantic" return to a pre-reflective state of mind or a naïve relation with the world, nor a Kantian return to oneself that confines perception to the mind's imagination. Rather, this reflection on perception and return to the thing itself is a 'reconstitution or re-establishment which comes second [and] cannot, by principle, be the *mirror* image of its internal constitution and its establishment [emphasis added]' (33). Put simply, the thing given enables one's perception, and through reflection one may return this perception to the thing itself, but only as a mindful reconstitution that is not the same as the given but is correlated with it.

To review the position and perspective of the subject thus becomes essential in this process of reconstitution, for it is only when the presence and particularity of the seeing subject, or the subjectivity of perception, are acknowledged and examined that we may begin to construct not an objective but a plural-focal image of the world. The perceptual faith outlined by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in the physical world that precedes and enables the subject and subjective perception provides a common ground for different perspectives within the world that is the world itself, given in its materiality:

> It is the same world that contains our bodies and our minds, provided that we understand by world not only the sum of things that fall or could fall under our eyes, but also the locus of their compossibility, the invariable style they observe, which connects our perspectives, permits transition from one to the other, and—whether in describing a detail of the landscape or in coming to agreement about an invisible truth—makes us feel we are two witnesses capable of hovering over the same true object, or at least of exchanging our situations relative to it, as we can exchange our standpoints in the visible world in the strict sense (13).

"Landscape" supports the return to materiality and is a source of reconnection not because of its sameness but because of its variability in the perception of different subjects from various viewpoints. It is a site of connection and openness as well as one of differentiation and occultation. Put simply, the phenomenological approach to landscape does not presume a "natural" subject as the anchoring of human knowledge of the world and of themselves but enacts an anchoring of the subject and their perception of landscape in materiality, whose viewpoint and subjectivity are finite and situated and processually and mutually constituted in the environment they inhabit and are exchangeable with another's.

In this sense, the phenomenological approach to landscape and lifeworlds does not necessarily contradict the vital materialist one. Both deem it necessary to reformulate subjectivity beyond inherited binaries such as mind and body or human and nonhuman and to resituate subjective perception within the material environment, which is in co-presence and co-becoming with others. The dual significance of "landscape" as both

subjective and material makes it a site of reconciliation and cross-examination that recognises the mutual constitution of human subjectivity and the world's materiality.

This resituating of the subject within the environment is not only a philosophical speculation but also carries implications for social and political criticism. To deconstruct the subject and dominant models of subjectivity is not to negate their existence but to reflect on their constitutive outside or other and to bring additional models of subjectivity into dialogue (Butler). For example, we must first recognise how ideas such as gender and race produce social subject formation and acknowledge their real-world effects before we can deconstruct such subjectivities and the androcentric, colonial and imperial logics of mastery behind them (Hames-García; Plumwood). The world is not a contesting ground between men and women, Western/modern and indigenous/premodern, or human and nonhuman, but a place of cohabitation and a process of co-becoming. These subject-bodies and models of subjectivity co-exist, and their interactions shape the world—in reality and imagination. In this way, otherwise excluded women, indigenous and nonhuman beings, together with the views they hold, can enter environmental imaginations and social dialogues as another point of view rather than an alternative other.

So, phenomenology's attention to embodied perception and vital materialism's emphasis on material agency converge in an aim to resituate the human and subjective within more-than-human natures by foregrounding the subject's partiality and relationality to others. On this ground, I argue that these approaches can be reconciled and brought into dialogue in ELP.

Through interrupting traditional linguistic orders and flows, ELP enacts a relational mode of meaning-making; its field of composition becomes a landscape whose form and significance are shaped by the intra-activity among words as actors in the page space. The reader is also incorporated into and participates in the process of meaning-making as they actively draw relations within the composition. Yet this challenge to linguistic and formal conventions, which necessitates the reader's participation in the poem, also prevents their total absorption, highlighting both the connection and disconnection between the poetic and the physical field. In this way, ELP invites the reader to participate in the poem as a material-discursive making of multiple actors—including words, the page space and the reader—and to reflect on its limits as a "reconstitution" of the given landscape (Merleau-Ponty). On the one hand, the reader is enfolded within the compositional field as a body subject in the natural landscape; on the other, they are made aware of their distance and disconnection from it.

ELP's capacity to hold in tension both an embodied experience of being outside and a critically distant view of that very experience is evident, for example, in Tarlo's poetry. As David Kennedy and Christine Kennedy observe, Tarlo's writing creates a simultaneous sense of immediacy and ambiguity. Spanning the entire page, her open-form composition transforms the poem into a lived experience rather than a static object, allowing the reader to 'directly share the poet's intense experience of a place due to the dispersed attention among external conditions' (117). Tarlo's minimal language 'withholds' the experience (117), suspending the reader between language and landscape.

Similarly, Bloomfield, in her essay "Landscaping the Page", draws on Tarlo's composition to argue that radical and experimental landscape poetry, or British open-field

poetry, engages with 'place, locality and "nature"' both intimately and critically (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant* 7). It enacts what Morton calls "critical ecomimesis" (*Ecology without Nature*): a poetic rendering critically aware of its own operation, signifying the ambiguous relationship between the body subject and the environment as well as between the discursive (poetic) and material (real) compositions of "field". I elaborate on this ambiguous sensibility enacted in Tarlo's poetry and how it contributes to eco-ethical composition in Chapter One. Here, I aim to point out the possibility of withholding both phenomenological and vital materialist views in ELP, highlighting the embodied perception of the subject without reducing the natural landscape to subjective perception.

To sum up, this section has shown that "landscape" is a productive site of eco-ethical thinking. From Wylie's critique of ontopology to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Ingold's dwelling perspective and experimental landscape poetry, "landscape" emerges as a dynamic field where various bodies and modes of thought meet and interact. Informed by such relationality and hybridity of landscape as a theoretical frame as well as a natural phenomenon (Matless), this thesis develops an account of eco-ethical composition through an interdisciplinary, cross-framework examination of contemporary poetry and its engagement with the environment and environmental discourses.

In addition, the term "landscape", through both its affinity with and difference from "field", contextualises experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and distinguishes it from open-field poetry associated with late US modernism, particularly Charles Olson. Like Tarlo's RLP, ELP can be traced to this experimental lineage yet extends beyond it. The "field of composition"—the textual environment enacted on the page—remains a

useful analytical concept here. Yet radical and experimental landscape poetry, though sharing certain eco-poetical and eco-ethical concerns with open-field poetics, attunes itself to British landscapes and histories in practice. Its "eco-ethical composition" is thus culturally and geographically specific, marking its divergence from US antecedents. The next section traces these points of (dis)connection.

IV. The Eco-Ethical and Rhizomatic Roots of Radical and Experimental Landscape Poetry

In this thesis, I trace the development of open-field poetics in radical and experimental landscape poetry back to Charles Olson. Open-field poetry emerges from wide-ranging modernist and philosophical traditions in the US and beyond, including Ezra Pound's emphasis on spatial arrangement and the ideogrammic method, William Carlos Williams's variable foot and objectivist attention to form, Gertrude Stein's syntactic experimentation and the breath-driven, processual poetics shared with Robert Creeley and anticipated by Walt Whitman. These compositional approaches inform Olson's "Projective Verse", in which lines are shaped by the kinetics of perception, breath and field.

Because this thesis develops from British open-field poetry in the modern and contemporary UK, this section concentrates on how radical and experimental landscape poetry reworks Olsonian open-field poetics. The relationship is frequently acknowledged, particularly through shared attention to the spatiality of page and landscape, and to embodied subjectivity and composition within physical environment, as in Tarlo's introduction to *The Ground Aslant*, Bloomfield's "Landscaping the Page" and, more

recently, Eltringham's *Poetry & Commons*. Read alongside its divergences, this relationship between Olsonian and British open-field poetries helps explain RLP's compositional style and philosophy and demonstrates the rhizomatic relations among poetic practices that underpin eco-ethical composition.

In his canonical essay "Projective Verse", Olson proposes a "new" poetry whose 'form is, in contrast to the inherited line, stanza and overall enclosed form of traditional poetry, never more than an extension of content'. This new poetry is composed through the direct transfer of energy, through the poet's body, from the field "outside" to the page. Eschewing subjective and symbolic elements of composition, it seeks to "re-present"—rather than represent—the environment, with the tensions and relations among words on the page mirroring those among objects in the natural world. It is thus, in Olson's terms, a composition by field.

Beyond formal innovation, "Projective Verse" also brings forth a new perception of poetry and the process of its composition that aligns them with objects and natural creation, which Olson calls "objectism"[4]. As he explains,

> Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects ("Projective Verse").

Challenging the presumed division between the 'western man' and 'other creations of nature', Charles Olson's objectism, or open-field poetics, is founded on a

[4] Distinctive from "objectivism" developed by poets like Louis Zukofsky and Ezra Pound, which considers the poem to be an "object" – a crafted and self-contained artefact, Olson's idea of "objectism" signifies the realness (as opposed to artificiality) of the poem as a natural creation itself.

principle of phenomenal continuity between the poetic field of composition and the physical environment, encompassing human subjects and natural objects alike. As Val Plumwood's argue, the core principle of eco-ethics is to reconnect human and nonhuman beings, self and other (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*). By reconnecting poetic composition and the human subject with natural objects on the basis of phenomenal continuity and philosophical equality, Olson's open-field poetics can thus be understood as engaging with the principles of eco-ethics.

The poetic innovations and eco-ethics of Olson's open-field poetry are mutually reinforcing. As he writes in "Projective Verse", 'the degree to which the projective involves a stance toward reality outside a poem as well as a new stance towards the reality of a poem itself'. The convergence of ecological aesthetics and ethics in Olson's open-field poetics is not coincidental but embedded within a broader ideological transition in the mid-20th-century US and UK, which prompted a rethinking of nature and its relationship with humans. As Mark Byers argues, the turn to 'space'—the physical environment—in Olson's "Projective Verse" reflects the late modernist pursuit of integrating artistic work with the natural world (66). Simultaneously, it advances an ethical stance that challenges hierarchical relationships between maker and materials, as well as between subjects and objects (Byers 68). The late modernist movement, in which Olson was an active participant, emerged alongside the first wave of environmentalism, led by thinkers such as John Muir, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson, who advocated an ecocentric rather than anthropocentric worldview and emphasised the intrinsic rather than instrumental value of nature.

Moreover, both late modernism and environmentalism coincided with the spread of continental phenomenology in the Anglo-American world. In particular, Martin Heidegger's critique of ideological and technological impositions on nature by humans paved the way for ecological thought and ethics. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger introduces phenomenology as a way of knowing and being in the world that remains close to 'the things themselves'. As its name suggests, phenomenology is a "logos" grounded in phenomena rather than interpretation; it is an inquiry into the nature of being through an authentic dwelling within nature (Heidegger, *Being and Time*). Notably, in insisting on the distinction between the phenomenological and the phenomenal, Heidegger understands the former as a philosophical 'possibility' rather than an 'actuality' of the latter (*Being and Time*). Since 'it is possible for every phenomenological concept and proposition from genuine origin to degenerate when communicating as a statement' (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 34), Heideggerian phenomenology emphasises the need for *logos* to remain open in order to avoid appropriating the things themselves. Heidegger's call for an authentic dwelling within the world as a mode of knowing resonates with Olson's proposal in "Projective Verse" for a new poetry that emphasises the 'freshness' of speech and the direct transfer of energy, through the poet's body, from field to page as the way of composing.

Furthermore, while Heideggerian phenomenology was received in the Anglo-American world in the mid-20th century, Heidegger himself was writing in early 20th-century Germany, where the scientific worldview had fostered a general appreciation for functionality and uniformity in forestry, leading to the proliferation of plantations around the world. As James Scott argues in *Seeing Like a State*, the 'success' of German forestry

science in boosting short-term economic returns by reducing forests to a single commodity through technoscience made it widely adopted (19). Monocultural fields, or plantations, were established and replicated globally not only for economic gain but also as instruments of bureaucratic control and colonial expansion by imperial powers. Writing at this time, Heidegger repeatedly spoke against the technoscientific exploitation of nature in the modern world, as seen in *Discourse on Thinking* and *The Question Concerning Technology*.

In concurrence with the spread of phenomenology, German forestry science gained popularity in the Anglo-American world in mid-20th century, amid the first wave of environmentalism. A scientific and economic approach was adopted for the management and valuation of nature. For example, Gifford Pinchot, who played an important role in shaping early environmental policy in US, particularly through his emphasis on resource efficiency and sustainable use, 'was trained at the French forestry school at Nancy, which followed a German-style curriculum, as did most US and European forestry schools' (Scott 19). Aligned with Scott, Matless observes that British academic and administrative geographers had 'joined the quest for a rational and hierarchical order of places' under Germany's influence during the postwar reconstruction of the UK:

> we find [in settlement planning projects] the first British use of the work of the German geographer Walther Christaller, whose theoretical hexagonal patterns of service centres on an isotropic plain will be lodged in the memory of many former school geographers. The irony is that Christaller and his ideas were then being

employed in the Reichs Office for Spatial Planning, where plans were being formed to 'rationalise' settlement and population in occupied Eastern lands (296). As discussed in Section Two, a cultural divide emerged in the UK public toward modernity and the changes it brought after WWII, manifesting in the divide between experimental and mainstream poetry. The emphasis on the empirical, rational and intellectual in mainstream poetry in the mid-20th century echoes both the hostility of conservatives toward cultural diversity and the administration's plan to 'rationalise settlement and population' (Matless 296). Meanwhile, objections to such narratives of hegemony and rationality are embodied in the advocacy of experimental poetry. Closely associated with American late modernism, led by figures such as Charles Olson and the Black Mountain poets, experimental poetry in mid-20th-century UK defines itself in opposition to traditional, mainstream poetry and the ideologies reflected in it.

So, resonating with the ethics and aesthetics of environmentalism and late modernism, Olson challenges the formal and subjective imposition of humans onto the natural world and proposes a new kind of poetry in which poetic composition and the human subject are interconnected with, and equal to, natural objects. The "field" in Olson's open-field poetics aligns more closely with a phenomenological and vital materialist view of landscape, as outlined in Section Three, where the subjective and the human are situated and entangled within the ecological and material realms of worldmaking, rather than with a scientifically and economically managed "field", such as a plantation. Given the connection of radical and experimental landscape poetry to Olson's open-field poetics, this thesis also adopts a phenomenological and vital

materialist view of landscape as 'a processual unfolding of a total field of relations' among subject-objects (Ingold, "Temporality of the Landscape" 156; see Section Three).

That said, the open-field poetics adopted by radical and experimental landscape poets in the UK diverged from their Olsonian origins in the ways they re-present the environment and the human subject within it. Later in this section, I explain the connections and divergences between Olsonian and British open-field poetries and, through these, outline the poetics and practice of eco-ethics embodied in radical and experimental landscape poetry. Here, I wish to highlight the convergence of late modernist aesthetics and eco-ethics in Olson's open-field poetics, together with its affinities with phenomenology and environmentalism in prompting a rethinking of the human–nature relationship.

Dialogues 'between ecology and ethics, as well as between the natural sciences and cultural and literary studies' (Zapf 853) are evident in Olsonian open-field poetics and later in ecocriticism. They reflect the necessary mediation between nature and culture, as we become increasingly aware that the ecological wellbeing of the world is vital to both human and nonhuman lives. As discussed in Section Two, Garrard's account of the progressive potential of the pastoral tradition in *Ecocriticism*, and his term "radical pastoral?" as a mode of questioning, signal a shift in ecopoetics and ecocriticism towards uncertainty in response to the increasingly volatile environments of the contemporary world (Garrard, *Ecocriticism*; "Green Studies"). This responsiveness to environments is also reflected in a tendency within ecopoetics and ecocriticism to interpret both themselves and the works they study through an ecological lens. Concepts such as

"field", "rhizome" and "flow" are frequently used to describe pace, space and textual activity (Tarlo, "Open Field"; Larkin, "Innovation contra Acceleration").

By adopting knowledge and terminology from the natural sciences, literature signals its responsibility to the environment and its commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue and to transforming environmental discourse. This alignment brings environmental literature and criticism into closer relation with practices in the environmental humanities (see Section Six). Beyond terminological borrowing, poets also enact this reconnection of human and nonhuman, and of literary and ecological concerns, through experimental approaches to text- and meaning-making. In Olsonian open-field poetry, as in radical and experimental landscape poetry, this means recognising and incorporating more-than-human actors as part of composition.

Such materially and environmentally grounded experimentation lies at the core of RLP and this thesis. Building on this and on Tarlo's account of radicalism in *The Ground Aslant*, I extend her grouping of contemporary landscape poetry to what I call ELP and articulate an eco-ethical composition (see Section Two). In the remainder of this section, I show how RLP practises this experimentation in form and meaning-making by reworking Olsonian open-field poetics in the British landscape, thereby advancing a poetic and environmental discourse attentive to its partiality and situatedness.

Like Olsonian open-field poetry, radical and experimental landscape poetry is composed in open form, using textual and spatial relationships on the page to embody and gesture toward the field outside. This "field" composition can be understood through what Lyn Hejinian calls an "open text" in her essay "The Rejection of Closure", where 'all the elements of the work are maximally excited… because ideas and things exceed

(without deserting) argument that they have taken into the dimension of the work' (43). In radical and experimental landscape poetry, as in Olsonian open-field poetry, words and spaces on the page are embodied and 'maximally excited' as matter that signifies and re-enacts the processual unfolding of the world (Hejinian 43). This embodiment of words and the spaces between them underlines the vitality and materiality of language and resists any easy or singular interpretation. Rather, it presents multiple modes of sense-making, inviting the reader to navigate the composition, or the place of the page, as the poet navigates the physical environment. In this way, the perspectives of the reader and the poet align, both situated within a "field" of unfolding relations.

Although radical and experimental landscape poetry shares the aesthetic and ethical endeavour of Olsonian open-field poetry to reconnect poetry and nature, subjects and objects through open form, or "field" composition, its divergence from Olsonian open-field poetry reflects the broader cultural transition at the turn of the 21st century and the geographical shift from the US to the UK These differences are evident in both the identity of the subject-poet and the field in which the poet writes.

As Byers points out, the late modernist movement in mid-20th-century US, as embodied in Olson's open-field poetics, is situated within a cultural transition toward the "independent left", whose core values included

> a critique of Enlightenment ideals, a model of political action rooted in radical individualism, a politicized male heterosexuality, and a commitment to rewriting historical method in terms of provisionality, uncertainty and subjectivity (161).

For example, the poetic subject 'Maximus' in Olson's *The Maximus Poems*, who develops a heightened attentiveness to the physical environment and his own senses,

embodies the political subjectivity of the independent left, serving as a radical individual in resistance to social institutions (Byers 161).

Contrary to the heterosexual male subject embodied in the work of Olson and later Black Mountain poets, the poet-subject in British open-field poetry encompasses a broader range of political identities, including homosexual and female poets such as Robert Duncan, Harriet Tarlo and Zoë Skoulding. This shift in the poet-subject's identity toward more diverse voices aligns with the values of the second wave of environmentalism, which, departing from the first wave, rejects both anthropocentric and ecocentric worldviews and seeks to reconcile the constructed opposition between human society and the natural environment within a postmodern framework.[5] As Lawrence Buell notes in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, the second wave of environmentalism, with its efforts to reconnect social and environmental concerns, has also influenced contemporary ecocriticism, leading it to examine the entanglement of environmental violence and social injustice in modern societies rather than focusing on the environment alone (22). This shift also contributes to Buell's concept of "environmentality", as mentioned in Section One, which sees ecological thought as inseparable from social and political power.

Moreover, the differences between radical and experimental landscape poetry and Olsonian open-field poetry stem not only from their differing cultural contexts but also from the distinct geological sites in which they are practised. Contrary to the North American landscapes that Olson describes as 'geography at bottom, a hell of wide land

[5] This is articulated by thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman, Ben Minteer and Bryan Norton, whose work is central to this thesis in its development of an interdisciplinary, pluralistic and pragmatic eco-ethics as 'a new ecological worldview' (Norton, *Epistemology and Environmental Values*). I will expand on this subject in Section Six.

from the beginning' (*Call Me Ishmael*), British landscapes have been shaped by centuries of Enclosure Acts and privatisation. These geographical and historical differences between the US and the UK necessitate the divergence of open-field poetics as it travels across the Atlantic.

As Eltringham observes in *Poetry & Commons*, the particularity of British landscapes has given rise to a historically informed 'poetics of enclosure' in dialogue with Olson's open-field poetry in the 1960s. When British poets—such as those involved with *The English Intelligencer* (1966–1968)—encountered Olsonian open-field poetics through American modernists, they recontextualised the concept of 'open field' within the historical open-field systems of the English Midlands, where land was once divided into strips for communal farming until its decline through the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th centuries (Eltringham). Situating it within the UK's landscapes and histories of land use, Eltringham presents a dialectical and "echoic" approach to understanding radical and experimental landscape poetry, relating it to both experimental and traditional, late modernist and Romantic traditions. He argues that poetry, past and present, negotiates the relationship between people and land as a poetic practice of "commoning", interrogating measures and narratives of "open field" in relation to land enclosures. As a British rearticulation of Olsonian open-field poetics, radical and experimental landscape poetry reflects 'the revival of the Romantic loss-of-the-commons narrative' in response to the '"new" enclosures' produced in the era of global capitalism (Eltringham 87).

This transcultural and transtemporal dialogue between American late modernism and British pastoral traditions, as well as the dialectics of openness and enclosure in

radical and experimental landscape poetry, is also foregrounded by Harriet Tarlo. As discussed in Section Two, in proposing the term RLP, Tarlo highlights a body of contemporary poetry that bridges the divide between traditional and experimental poetry in the UK. This grouping both adopts Olson's open-field poetics and engages with the specificities of local British landscapes.

In her essay "Open Field: Reading Field as Place and Poetics", Tarlo explores the idea of "the open field" as 'a matrix for a rhizomatic, ecopoetic exploration of the correspondences between form and landscape, as well as the cross-fertilization of British and American field poetics' (113). Reading British and American (open) field poetics together, Tarlo points out that radical and experimental landscape poetry, or British open-field poetry, extends Olson's critique of the egotistical-ecstatic mode of nature writing 'whilst maintaining that strong sense of the body in nature' (136). As mentioned above, Olson's open-field poetics aims to annex the artificial and the subjective with the natural and objective by eschewing subjective mediation in the process of composition, considering it an interference of ego in what should be a natural process of creation. In contrast, radical and experimental landscape poetry does not regard the subject as an interference. The physical presence and experience of the subject in the landscape, as well as their re-presentation on the page, are crucial to radical and experimental landscape poetry and its negotiations between subject and environment, and between the poetic and the real process of placemaking. In this way, it simultaneously preserves and challenges the poetic subject, or the lyric "I" of traditional poetry, shifting it from a naturalised authorial figure into a body subject embedded within the field. By embodying and situating the subject, the poem also draws the reader into inhabiting the page space

and participating in meaning-making, connecting them to the poetic subject through a shared experience of being outside.

This emphasis on "the body" as a point of mediation between the subjective and the objective, as well as between the poetic and the real, aligns radical and experimental landscape poetry with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty rather than that of Martin Heidegger, to whom I have previously linked Olson's open-field poetics. Heidegger calls for a poetic and authentic dwelling, linking poetic language and thought to disclosure and to a direct belonging with the world. Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, emphasises that subjective perception and experience can never mirror the given world. For Merleau-Ponty, the body anchors human knowledge in the more-than-human world: it enables disclosure while also revealing that no unmediated, universal truth is possible. Read through this body–landscape relation, radical and experimental landscape poetry negotiates between embodied environmental experience and self-reflexive engagement. Through this negotiation, it mediates across human and more-than-human worlds as well as experimental and traditional modes of representation, becoming an eco-ethical composition (see Section Three).

The ambiguity signified in radical and experimental landscape poetry stems not only from the poet–subject's position in the landscape—both intimate and distant, their perception at once enfolded within the environment and self-aware and critical—but also from its marginal position within American and British literary cultures (Selby; Bloomfield, "Landscaping the Page"; Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*). Straddling British pastoral and American modernist traditions, this liminality allows radical and experimental landscape poetry to 'stay in the open' (Heidegger, *Poetry, Language,*

Thought xiv) and to examine environmental discourses and representations by resituating them within specific subjects, landscapes and cultures (Selby).

The epistemological openness of radical and experimental landscape poetry arises not only from its origins in Olson's open-field poetics but also from its divergence from it. Its adaptation of Olson's poetics to the specificities of British cultures and natural landscapes, along with its reinterpretation of the "field" and of the poet-subject's position within it, continues challenging human imaginings of the earth. This "open" implementation of "field" poetics—rather than the implementation of a particular model of open-field poetics—within radical and experimental landscape poetry makes it an effective practice of eco-ethics through 'experimental framing—de-framing and re-framing—of nature' (Bergthaller and Mortensen, *Framing the Environmental Humanities*).

As noted above, ecocriticism has drawn on ideas and terminology from ecology. This reflects its receptivity to the environment, to what lies 'outside' its own field, and its commitment to interdisciplinary, cross-framework dialogues on environmental discourse. In "Open Field", Tarlo draws on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, which foregrounds multiplicity and processuality in world-making, to highlight the worldliness of field poetics: its heterogeneity and its grounding in the earth (Tarlo). Building on this, I propose a further signification of the rhizome for field poetics. It denotes not only heterogeneity across British and American strands of open-field poetry but also a continual becoming through variation.

To return to Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other and brings into play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states. It is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple…. It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills…. Unlike a structure defined by points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines—lines of segmentarity and stratification, and lines of flight or deterritorialization through which multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis…. In contrast to centred systems with hierarchical modes of communication, it is an acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system defined solely by a circulation of states (21-23).

Moving from "radicles" ("unit dipoles") and the links between them ("link dipoles"), Deleuze and Guattari advance a principle of multiplicity that does not return or relate to any unity but regards multiplicity—the processes of variation and transformation—as the only substantive "manner of becoming". It is not the radicles or units that structure the rhizome. Rather, the rhizome redirects attention away from units, structures and lineage. Put simply, it is composed of plateaus and is always 'in the middle' of becoming something different. It is on such plateaus that eco-ethical composition emerges, as seen in British open-field poetry's divergence from Olsonian open-field poetics and in my development of RLP into ELP.

Such rhizomatic "becoming" of open-field poetics is evident both meta-poetically, in poetry's self-reflection and redefinition of its practice in relation to other traditions, and at the level of the poem, in its 'composition, embodiment and reception' (Buell 22). On both levels, significance remains provisional and is shaped by the environment—what

lies beyond the self. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the poem's "becoming" involves multiple metamorphoses of the natural landscape. The landscape first 'deterritorialises' and 'reterritorialises' in the poet's body, then again in composition, as perception is re-presented on the page. This becoming continues in the reader's encounter, where lines and words embody and re-enact lines of flight through which the landscape undergoes another metamorphosis: 'deterritorialisation' and 'reterritorialisation'. The "environment" shaping the poem, its composition and signification, comprises not only natural landscape but also the bodies of poet and reader, and the spatial and verbal dimensions of the page. The poem's becoming, then, unfolds within a changing environment through continual interactions among multiple subjects and objects.

Such a manner of becoming applies not only to the poem but also to poetic practice itself, whether that of an individual poet or a collective. A style of composition embodies a particular way of engaging with and representing the environment, and it likewise undergoes metamorphosis through its reception by others. In this continuous metamorphosis, and in the mutual transformation among multiple landscapes, modes of landscape writing and bodies of mediation, eco-ethical composition is enacted and comes to matter as a reiteration of the "natural" environment, "human" subjectivity and their interrelationship (see Section One; Deleuze and Guattari; Butler).

In short, eco-ethical composition is a rhizome, denoting the acentred, non-hierarchical relationships among poetic practices, landscapes and the body subjects they engage. Rather than foregrounding units or "radicles", it foregrounds the relational and processual 'manner of becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari 23). Building on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "rhizome" and its relevance to the compositions and variations

of open-field poetry, this thesis develops and re-enacts the eco-ethical composition already evident in the rhizomatic roots of RLP across British and American, Romantic pastoral and modernist traditions of landscape writing. It does so by extending Tarlo's term and shifting "radical" (with its etymological root in "radicles") to "experimental", returning contemporary landscape poetry to the "plateau" and foregrounding its capacity both to undergo transformation and to transform discourses of the environment.

To sum up, this section has traced the eco-ethical and rhizomatic roots of radical and experimental landscape poetry from Charles Olson's open-field poetics to their British rearticulations. Olson's "Projective Verse", which integrates late modernist aesthetics and ecological ethics, coincided with the first wave of environmentalism and the reception of phenomenology in postwar America. Anticipating the ecological turn in literature, it encouraged interdisciplinary and cross-framework rethinking of human-nonhuman and culture-nature relations. In modern and contemporary UK contexts, poets have reworked Olsonian open-field poetics within British material and cultural environments, attuning to landscapes shaped by histories of enclosure and commoning. This transcultural adaptation demonstrates open-field poetics' capacity for continual transformation and its embodiment of eco-ethical composition as a rhizome, connecting heterogeneous landscapes and subjects through a processual and relational imagining of the environment.

V. From Open-Field to Ecopoetics: The Diversification of Experimental Poetry in Postwar Britain

The previous section argued that rhizomatic connections among open-field poetries demonstrate an eco-ethical composition embodied in radical and experimental landscape poetry, evident both in formal practices and in its relations to other poetries. This section extends that discussion by examining how experimental poetry diversified in postwar Britain following the reception of Olsonian open-field poetics.

The adaptation of Olsonian open-field poetics within British landscapes demonstrates what Buell calls a commitment to "environmentality"—a simultaneously "material, ethical and sociopolitical" stance (11)—in radical and experimental landscape poetry. This development, as a reworking of an existing model through heightened attentiveness to the "real" and to the entangled human and nonhuman makings of the environment, is anticipated across the various practices of experimental poetry that emerged in postwar Britain. Presenting a rhizomatic "mapping" of these practices, this section illuminates how radical and experimental landscape poetry comes into being in relation to others (Deleuze and Guattari). In doing so, it resists centre–periphery narratives that position such poetry on the "margins" of British and American traditions and advances this thesis's understanding of eco-ethical composition as a processual and relational manner of becoming among poetic practices, landscapes and the embodied subjects they engage.

Emerging in the mid-twentieth-century West, late modernism exerted a significant influence on experimental poetry in postwar Britain, shaping its challenge to traditional poetry. As discussed in Section Two, the divide between experimental and traditional poetry in Britain was driven less by poets themselves than by anthologies and critical narratives, reflecting divergent responses to modernity and urbanisation rather than

fundamental differences in poetic content. The opposition between experimental and traditional poetry is therefore not directed at poetic traditions as such but at their naturalisation. As Andrew Sheppard argues, narratives of traditional poetry consolidate the convergence of nation, morality and poetry, establishing a select group of educated, white, male poets as cultural and moral authority. In this context, the naturalisation of poetic form, content and authorial voice results in the naturalisation of discourse itself, producing cultural and moral assimilation.

In contrast, experimental poetry foregrounds the artificiality of composition by disrupting inherited forms and reopening the conditions of meaning-making. The British Poetry Revival (hereafter BPR) exemplifies this countermove. Drawing inspiration from Olson and other Black Mountain poets, the BPR resisted inherited metrics, lyric authority and nationalist literary narratives through open-form composition. As Eric Mottram writes, it opposed the 'limpet-clinging' to past forms characteristic of the Movement orthodoxy, seeking instead to revive British poetry through formal experimentation.

This renewal was not confined to poetic form but extended to modes of exchange and affiliation. Little magazines such as *Migrant* and *Cambridge Opinion* and *The English Intelligencer* (1966–1968) facilitated transatlantic correspondence between UK and US poets, enabling experimental poetry to develop through dialogue rather than institutional consolidation.

The scope and ambition of experimental poetry anticipated its diversification. Over time, cultural and ideological disagreements led to the fragmentation of early groupings, producing forms of collectivity that resisted coherence and permanence. *The English Intelligencer* provides a key example. Shaped by late modernist poetics, the

newsletter fostered an experimental community marked by antagonism and eventual dissolution. As Alex Latter argues, this fractiousness should not be read as failure but as integral to its experimental practices. The newsletter exemplified a poetry that 'turned at once on an ideal of correspondence of form and on a form of ideal correspondence', integrating experimentation in poetic form with experimentation in social relations. Its mode of exchange, founded on gift-giving rather than commodity exchange, enacted a late modernist belief in renewal as 'making new, again'.

This integrated experimentation in the form of both poetry and social relations challenges critiques of its antisociality and perceived irrelevance to real life. On the contrary, it is inherently a social practice. Experimental poetry has often been criticised as antisocial or irrelevant, particularly on the grounds of its linguistic difficulty and marginal modes of circulation. Such critiques tend to focus on accessibility and audience. However, as Weston and Virtanen argue, experimental poetry does not abandon accessibility but reconfigures it. Rather than presenting a coherent, empirical situation aligned with authorial intention, experimental poems invite readers to participate in the continued production of meaning. Meaning is shaped and enacted through form, rather than delivered as content. In this sense, the poem's "accessibility" aligns with the thesis's method, in which reading takes place as a situated encounter and a 'singular act-event' of interpretation rather than the recovery of a settled meaning (Attridge).

In her essay "Provisional Pleasures", Tarlo refutes critiques of experimental women's poetry as elitist, inaccessible, or disconnected from women's experiences. Instead, she argues that the "difficulty" of experimental women's poetry, or its 'difference in form', foregrounds its 'provisionality, a refusal to tell a simple story or

resolve into a single meaning' (95). This provisionality, produced through formal and linguistic experimentation, is not only 'a radical experiment in art' but also 'radically democratic' (96), not least because it challenges the poetic authority of the poet as a truth-teller, as in traditional poetry. It turns reading into a creative rather than passive experience, while also exposing and challenging the dominant narratives that have shaped women's identity and subjectivity, along with their social and phenomenal experiences. The difficulty of experimental poetry is thus relevant and crucial to the real—social and political—lives of readers and poets.

Nonetheless, experimental poetry has been marked by exclusions along lines of nation, race and institution. While later anthologies demonstrate greater diversity, the racial exclusivity of experimental poetry has been persistently critiqued. *The Ground Aslant*, despite its emphasis on openness in form and theme, notably lacks representation from poets of colour. Recent scholarship, including work collected in the special issue of the Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry titled "Still Not a British Subject: Race and UK Poetry", has reaffirmed D. S. Marriott's critique that minority poets have received insufficient critical attention within avant-garde poetry (Parmar). In response, the issue foregrounds poets of colour and their distinctive innovative practices. These interventions expose tensions between experimental poetry's claims to openness and the social realities of its production and circulation.

Such tensions complicate but do not negate experimental poetry's ethical and sociopolitical significance. On the one hand, the national, racial and gender exclusivity of experimental poetry's groups and groupings undermines its claims to poetic and ideological openness, particularly its socialist and democratic aspirations. On the other

hand, the modes of circulation and distribution of experimental poetry, along with the social relations within its groups, function as radical alternatives to modern social structures and the capitalist economy. In the case of *The English Intelligencer*, poetry circulated through gift exchange rather than commerce, enacting non-hierarchical relations among participants. This mode of distribution aligns with the participatory reading practices encouraged by open-form composition, in which meaning is co-produced rather than delivered. In this sense, experimental poetry experiments not only with form but with social and economic relations.

In *A Social Biography of Contemporary Innovative Poetry Communities*, Elizabeth-Jane Burnett argues that experimental poetry challenges the social and economic systems of the modern West through both its communal and poetic practices. By examining the relationships among experimental poets, as well as between poets and their audiences fostered by the artwork, Burnett suggests the (un)sustainability of experimental poetry communities reflects and contests the broader unsustainability of contemporary material culture, shaping an "ecopoethics" that is embedded within both the practice and the form of experimental poetry. Echoing Olson's open-field poetics, Burnett coins ecological aesthetics and ethics, as well as the poetic and communal practices of experimental poetry.

This "ecopoethics" of experimental poetry can also be identified in later experimental poetry groupings such as Linguistically Innovative Poetry (hereafter LIP). As Sheppard explains, the term LIP 'constellates overlapping practices in British alternative poetries from the 1980s onwards' (142). For instance, it brings together women's experimental poetry in the UK and North America in the anthologies *Out of*

Everywhere, edited by Maggie O'Sullivan and Wendy Mulford, and *Out of Everywhere 2*, edited by Emily Critchley. Following late modernism's commitment to linguistic and formal experimentation, women's LIP continues to interrogate and reconfigure the process of meaning-making. As Mulford writes in the afterword of *Out of Everywhere*, the poems collected in the anthology are 'clusters of language… which will not wield up meaning to readers unless it is understood that the text has been worked upon to generate new meaning' (240).

The search for "new meanings" in LIP is not only a commitment to linguistic and formal experimentation but also a commitment to the diversity of voices (re)presented on the page. To begin, both *Out of Everywhere* and *Out of Everywhere 2* are anthologies of LIP by women, seeking to rewrite the male-dominated history of experimental poetry since the 1950s. Besides addressing gender disparity in experimental poetry, LIP also engages with broader socio-political inequalities, particularly the silencing and marginalisation of minority voices by dominant narratives. As O'Sullivan writes in the introduction of *Out of Everywhere*, the poets published here 'have each in their own imaginative way committed themselves to excavating language in all its multiple voices and tongues, known and unknown' (10). In this sense, LIP not only marks a temporal shift in experimental poetry groupings before and after the 1970s but also expands the scope and ambition of earlier experimental poetry practices associated with late modernism by addressing the broader socio-political dimensions of language as a site of power and resistance.

Resonating with O'Sullivan's term "excavation", Bloomfield describes the investigation of alternative stories and histories in LIP as a practice of 'archaeopoetics'.

Building on Walter Benjamin's idea of 'history brushed against the grain', Bloomfield argues that archaeopoetics practiced in LIP—such as in the work of Susan Howe, Maggie O'Sullivan and Kamau Brathwaite—does not try to recover 'the voices and histories of colonised and subjugated people' but rather to make their silences heard 'in the gaps and fractures of colonial and neo-colonial discourse' (8, 9).

Likewise, in *Poetry & Commons*, Eltringham connects innovative poetics to sociopolitical witness and resistance, arguing that British open-field poetry challenges modern political economy by enacting a 'poetics of commoning' and a practice of 'prosody' (37). Addressing land enclosure in the UK, it offers 'a metrical analogy' for alternatives to enclosure, 'attuned to the gaps and irregular, open spaces between beats or points of stress and inflexion' (27), and generates 'webs of relation sustained by ecopoetic rhythms of return, limit and relative sufficiency' (37). In this way, it embodies a 'subsistence perspective' that resists capitalist progressivism, foregrounding the intimacy between poetic form and environment and the parallels between enclosures imposed on land, communities and ways of knowing and living. This leads into another key grouping of contemporary experimental poetry: ecopoetry.

The term 'ecopoetry' was first associated with the practice of 'ecocriticism' and encompasses a wide range of nature writing traditions, including Romantic and pastoral literature. Emerging alongside the first wave of environmentalism in the 1960s, ecocriticism reflects the ecological turn in literary studies and seeks to evaluate literary representations of nature while revitalising both the canon of 'nature writing' and the relationship between literature and nature (Hume and Osborne; Zapf). However, since the launch of the journal *Ecopoetics* in 2001, edited by Jonathan Skinner, Angela Hume and

Gillian Osborne argue that ecopoetry has departed from ecocriticism's association with realist, representational nature writing and has instead forged a closer connection with experimental poetry. In *Ecopoetics as Expanded Critical Practice*, they describe ecopoetry as 'not so much a subcategory or a school within but rather a coextension of post-1945 poetry and poetics' (3). In alignment with this view, this thesis considers ecopoetry as another grouping of experimental poetry, parallel to LIP.

As discussed, LIP cannot be identified through any single discourse but refers instead to a constellation of poetic practices emerging after the 1970s that engage the limits of language and give form to otherwise marginalised or silenced voices through experimental composition. Similarly, ecopoetry and ecopoetics resist categorical definition. As Jane Sprague observes, "ecopoetics" charts a mode of legibility marked by complexity and continual expansion, an ever-shifting lens through which environmental questions are explored. In a collective interview conducted by Angela Hume, ecopoets including Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Evelyn Reilly and Jonathan Skinner likewise emphasise the productive ambiguity of ecopoetics as a source for eco-ethical imagining.

This ambiguity enables diverse practices to coexist and interact without collapsing into a single framework, ranging from an "ethnopoetics" concerned with endangered languages to institutional critique, the cultivation of ecological sensibility and imaginative activism for environmental justice (Hume et al.). Anticipating this openness, Skinner writes in the inaugural issue of *Ecopoetics* that the field would ideally function as an "edge" where different disciplines meet and complicate one another (6). This notion of the edge figures ecopoetics as a contact zone shaped by provisional and precarious relations rather than seamless integration.

The meanings of ecopoetry and ecopoetics are, in a word, open, understood as spaces created by poets and their companions to explore the environment and modes of human engagement within it. This openness recalls Tarlo's proposal of RLP as an open constellation of contemporary poetry that reflects on the place of humans on the earth.

However, RLP and ecopoetry should not be conflated. As Tarlo stresses in her introduction to *The Ground Aslant*,

> this is not a book of polemical ecopoetry or even of ecopoetics, the more innovative tendency espoused in the journal of the same name. Rather, this is a book of radical landscape poetry, some of which may also be motivated by environmentalism. Although some landscape poets may be ecopoets and some ecopoets may be landscape poets, the two are by no means interchangeable (10-11).

The distinction between ecopoetry and RLP lies in ecopoetry's shift from a personal, local and phenomenological reflection on place to a social, transcultural and eco-cosmopolitan imagination of the planet, particularly since its connection with experimental poetry (Heise; Lidström and Garrard). In contrast to this new orientation of ecopoetry and ecopoetics—marked by conceptual ambiguity—RLP "clings to its hold on the local and physical world"; it is "located writing" (Tarlo 1, 13) By framing itself through "landscape", Tarlo emphasises RLP's 'intimate observation of and involvement with a particular place' as opposed to a purely philosophical reflection on the general environment (13).

Yet this does not mean that RLP is confined to 'personal, local and phenomenological' perspectives (Lidström and Garrard). As Tarlo notes, 'the most

fruitful relationship with place seems often to involve a degree of intimacy and of distance' (*The Ground Aslant* 13). Drawing on the dual signification of "landscape" as both subjective perception and physical phenomenon, RLP holds in tension an embodied experience of being outside and a critically reflective stance toward that experience. Its rhizomatic roots in British pastoral traditions and American late modernism further enable it to challenge entrenched divisions between the traditional and the experimental, the phenomenological and the post-phenomenological, and situated and detached perceptions of landscape. Attentive to local landscape specificity while remaining responsive to broader nature–culture relations, RLP resists categorisation as pastoral or experimental, traditional or ecopoetic, and continues to rework models of nature writing. Its radicalism lies precisely in this resistance to closure: a manner of becoming that remains relational, provisional and always 'in the middle' (Deleuze and Guattari).

To sum up, this section surveys several groupings of experimental poetry in postwar Britain leading to RLP. Contrary to common criticisms of experimental poetry as difficult or irrelevant, these practices, through innovations in form, language and social relations, carry "poethical" and sociopolitical significance by challenging dominant discourses and enacting participatory modes of meaning-making (Retallack). The development and diversification of postwar experimental poetry realise the late modernist aspiration of 'making new, again' (Latter) through continual formal experimentation, generating momentum for further transformation in poetry and beyond. In turn, this thesis expands Tarlo's grouping of RLP into ELP, situates it within an interdisciplinary, cross-framework dialogue on the environment, and articulates eco-ethical composition as a

practice of becoming with others that transforms human relationships with, and perceptions of, the environment.

VI. The Environmental Humanities in a Troubled World

As shown above, radical and experimental landscape poetry, like the various experimental practices from which it emerges, is characterised by radical openness at every stage, including 'composition, embodiment and reception', as well as in circulation and genre formation. This continuous rethinking and reworking of the "old" is sustained by attending to, and incorporating, human and more-than-human others—those on the margins of human societies and those other-than-human—within environmental processes of meaning-making. Building on this account of openness, the thesis articulates the eco-ethical composition embodied by ELP through close reading (see Section One). This final section of the introduction situates that argument within the broader field of the environmental humanities. It first introduces the environmental humanities as an interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary field of study that challenges models of human knowledge and subjectivity which presume divisions between nature and culture, and between human and nonhuman. It then argues that this epistemological openness entails an ethical orientation grounded in specific environmental encounters. In this way, practices of eco-ethical composition align with those of the environmental humanities by sharing a commitment to producing creative and inclusive understandings of the human and the natural world.

Emerging at the turn of the twenty-first century, the environmental humanities are distinguishable from traditional fields of study by their intellectual openness. As

articulated in the inaugural issue of *Environmental Humanities*, the field is defined by 'a renewed emphasis on bringing various approaches to environmental scholarship into conversation with each other in numerous and diverse ways', with the aim of revitalising and enriching environmental vocabularies and concepts (Rose et al.). Rather than forming a unified discipline, the environmental humanities function as an umbrella that brings together diverse strands of scholarship to generate new ways of understanding the environment. Despite their grounding in the humanities, they actively bridge the divide between the humanities and the natural sciences.

As discussed in earlier sections, environmental writers and scholars repeatedly underline the necessity of developing new senses and sensibilities in order to reimagine the contemporary world amid ongoing ecological destruction (Garrard; Clark). This task also requires interdisciplinary collaboration between the social sciences and the natural sciences. In *Planetary Social Thought*, Nigel Clark and Bronislaw Szerszynski argue for an intimacy between planetary multiplicity and earthly multitudes, encouraging social scientists to rethink humanity within the dynamism of Earth systems. By situating human activity within planetary processes rather than treating nature as a passive backdrop, Clark exemplifies how interdisciplinary thinking can address the ethical and philosophical challenges posed by the Anthropocene.

Importantly, these approaches do not copy scientific methods into the humanities. Instead, they reshape humanistic discourse through sustained engagement with natural phenomena. One example is Karen Barad's "agential realism". Drawing on Niels Bohr's complementarity principle, Barad challenges the discourse–matter divide by arguing that discourse is material and that knowing emerges through intra-action among phenomena.

Knowledge, then, is not detached observation but a material practice that entails 'responsibility and accountability as part of a network of performances' (*Meeting the Universe Halfway* 148).

This understanding of knowing as relational and situated is central to the environmental humanities' reconfiguration of environmental ethics. Rather than grounding ethics in abstract principles or intrinsic values, scholars increasingly emphasise ethical practice as embodied, contextual and material. In their introduction to *Material Feminism*, Alaimo and Hekman stress that 'ethics must be centred not only on discourses but on material consequences' (7). Bringing together natural and cultural studies, they propose a "material ethics" that compares the material effects of ethical positions and shifts focus from principles to practices (7). As they note, practices are embodied and situated: ethical practice unfolds in time and takes place in particular contexts, responding to expected and unexpected material phenomena and remaining open to the needs, significance and liveliness of the more-than-human world (8).

The shift of 'the focus from ethical principles to ethical practices' (Alaimo and Heckman 7-8) is also emphasised by environmental philosophers such as Bryan Norton, Timothy Morton and Ben Minteer. In his essay "Epistemology and Environmental Values", Norton argues that Gifford Pinchot's practices, which significantly influenced the first wave of environmentalism, were grounded in the hypothesis that 'economic values can be objectively measured and that an economic modelling of environmental problems represented an unbiased, scientific accounting of social values involved' (211). It is this hypothesis, he contends, that enabled the tremendous political success of Pinchot's scientific and economic management of nature (211).

This shift from principles to practices, and from abstract value to entangled materiality (Alaimo and Hekman 7–8), is also developed by Bryan Norton. In "Epistemology and Environmental Values", Norton traces early environmentalism to Gifford Pinchot's faith in objectively measurable economic value, which made scientific management of nature appear politically neutral and thus highly effective (211). Yet Norton argues that appeals to objective, intrinsic value do not reconcile human and ecological interests. Instead, they reproduce the Cartesian split between subject and object that also underwrites technocratic forestry regimes tied to colonial and capitalist control (Scott; Matless). Rather than seeking value within this framework, Norton contends that the more creative task is to construct an ecological worldview by developing new vocabularies and styles of thinking about human roles in the natural world (209).

In challenging claims of value neutrality and epistemological objectivity, the environmental humanities cultivate what Lorraine Code calls "ecological thinking". This is not simply thinking about ecology but a mode of knowing and engaging—ethical, political and epistemic—grounded in physical, historical and corporeal lifeworlds. It resists reductive objectivism while also guarding against unbounded relativism through situated accountability. Knowledge remains partial and contextual, yet materially grounded.

This commitment to materially grounded knowledge extends beyond bridging the sciences and the humanities. The environmental humanities also reconnect scholarship with public life. Bergthaller and Mortensen argue that the field is bound by a commitment to communicating environmental knowledge and urgency beyond the

academy. Similarly, Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén call for participatory, hybrid knowledge practices that engage diverse publics while attending to intercultural difference. Together, these approaches treat environmental understanding as something made not only through scholarship but also through embodied, sensory and relational encounter. SymbioticA at the University of Western Australia, for example, brings biological research into public spaces such as galleries, cinemas and concert halls, enabling non-academic audiences to meet other forms of life in embodied ways.

The environmental humanities further expand ethical responsibility by bringing nonhuman beings into knowledge-making. Posthuman and multispecies studies cultivate attentiveness to biotic and abiotic life within shared environments. Deborah Bird Rose's multispecies ethnography, for example, traces how human lives are entangled with animals, plants and ecosystems across temporal and generational scales. Such work challenges the idea that knowledge is purely human, suggesting instead that learning emerges through interspecies relations and shared vulnerability.

This emphasis on the situatedness and relationality of human knowledge in more-than-human worlds is also developed through theoretical reconfigurations of subjectivity. Scholars of environmental humanities draw on postmodernism, posthumanism, feminism and materialism to decentre the human subject and challenge atomistic models of agency. For example, Jane Bennett's "vital materialism" shifts attention from individual subjects to assemblages of human and nonhuman agencies. Agency here is distributed rather than possessed, complicating inherited ideas of responsibility and causality. Alaimo's trans-corporeality further emphasises movement across bodily natures and ecological sites, foregrounding the unpredictability of material interaction. In *When Species Meet*, Donna

Haraway likewise frames kinship as an ongoing practice of "making kin" or "becoming with" companion species, unsettling boundaries between human and animal, organism and machine, symbolic and material. Across these accounts, subjectivity emerges through situated relations rather than fixed categories.

Nonetheless, despite their shared commitment to epistemological and ideological openness grounded in materials, practices and human encounters with the more-than-human, the environmental humanities are marked by productive tensions and contradictions. Scholars differ on the relative importance of local, situated knowledge versus planetary-scale thinking, as well as on how to balance urgency, hope and play in responding to ecological crisis. Concepts such as sustainability and environmentalism remain ideologically contested, with significant consequences for policy and practice. These tensions reflect the complexity of environmental problems rather than theoretical inconsistency.

Rather than seeking definitive solutions, the environmental humanities treat ambiguity and plurality as ethically generative. As Plumwood argues, modern thought is shaped by egoistic tendencies of hyperseparation and incorporation, both of which deny alterity. Ethical relations between human and nonhuman thus require recognising difference without assimilation. Emmanuel Levinas similarly locates ethics in the encounter with irreducible otherness that resists totalisation. In this sense, the environment, in its volatility and strangeness, embodies an alterity that exceeds human knowledge and demands ethical attentiveness.

This understanding underpins the thesis's use of eco-ethics and eco-ethical composition. Following Barad's notion of "ethico-onto-epistemology", eco-ethics is

understood here not as a fixed moral code but as a mode of thinking and being in the world. It is both enactive and enacting, emerging through situated relations and material engagements between self and others, human and nonhuman. This mode of dwelling allows the other and the outside to transform the self through interactivity, just as eco-ethical composition allows the poem's environment—the landscape it re-presents, its embodiment in the place of the page, the interactivity among words and between words and the reader—to transform its meanings, as well as the conventions of meaning-making inherited through language.

Taken together, this section shows that the environmental humanities are a creative and diverse field of study. What connects its scholars and artists is a shared commitment to engage actively and mindfully with the intricate co-becoming of human and more-than-human worlds. Although their thinking and practices are grounded in the natural world, they do not insist on a neutral perspective or objective knowledge. Instead, they are founded on an epistemological openness that arises from the environment's complexity and contingency. This mode of knowing and being in the world resonates with ELP. By privileging experimentation over the naturalisation of form and discourse, ELP enacts an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being grounded in the landscape while remaining attentive to its multiplicity and capacity for transformation.

In this shared commitment to situated, more-than-human knowledge and responsibility, the environmental humanities and ELP become allied practices of eco-ethics. Both cultivate a sustainable attentiveness to others and otherness as they reimagine the human and the human's place in more-than-human worlds. The environmental humanities do so through interdisciplinary and postdisciplinary dialogue

that includes those often excluded from knowledge-making—public communities, nonhuman beings and the environment itself—thereby offering alternative ways of knowing and dwelling in the world. Likewise, through formal and linguistic experimentation, ELP challenges dominant discourses: its composition enacts a processual and relational mode of meaning-making that incorporates and foregrounds material and marginal agencies. In turn, ELP repositions language and interpretation—long centred on human authority—as collaborative practices that emerge through relations that fold in yet extend beyond the human subject.

In the body of the thesis, I examine how eco-ethical composition is enacted in distinct ways across the writing of Harriet Tarlo, Maggie O'Sullivan, Peter Larkin and Anthony Vahni Capildeo. The conclusion then draws these strands together by tracing their sustained attention to the environment and alterity. In doing so, it highlights the openness of ELP and its capacity to shape an inclusive, context-sensitive ethics amid ongoing ecological and societal transitions. Before moving on to the main arguments, I provide a chapter summary of the thesis.

VII. Chapter Summary

In the final section of this Introduction, I summarise the argument of each chapter in the thesis. This thesis comprises four chapters, each examining one poet through textual analysis that interweaves literary and cultural studies, with a focus on experimental poetics, landscape phenomenology, feminist materialism and postcolonialism. By connecting and comparing these practices within an interdisciplinary framework, I highlight the diversity of experimental landscape poetry and its potential to constitute,

communicate and enact an inclusive and situated eco-ethics amid ongoing ecological and societal transitions.

Chapter One examines the practice of eco-ethics in Harriet Tarlo's poetry and her collaborative work with painter Judith Tucker across their place-based projects, including *Field*, *Tributaries* (2011–2013), *Excavations* and *Estuaries* (2013–2015), "Outfalls", *Fitties* (2015–2019) and *Gathering Ground* (2011–2019). Following their work from its initial composition in the field through to the page-space and finally to gallery exhibition, I argue that their practice embodies eco-ethical thinking and dwelling throughout. Responding to the varying contexts at each stage of their work, Tarlo and Tucker develop specific procedures—including walking with others in the field, open-form composition on the page and innovative presentation in galleries and books—to enact and re-enact their practice of eco-ethics as a situated, open and dialogical mode of knowing and being in the environment. By tracing Tarlo and Tucker's practice across these contexts, from outside to inside, I highlight the trans-locational and transformative dimensions of experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and its contribution to an enactive, rather than disciplinary, practice of eco-ethics.

Chapter two explores the poetics and practice of eco-ethics in the work of Peter Larkin. For him, being in the presence of trees and woody landscapes leads to a series of contemplations on the nature of the world as well as the position of humanity within it. Particularly, the vegetal and spatial bearing of trees in the landscapes that are compromised and/or enclosed under anthropogenic schemes evokes thoughts on the fragility of nature as well as of the relationship between humans and nature, which Larkin calls the relation of "scarcity" ("Fully From, All Scarce To"). Being dedicated to

landscapes shaped by both ecological lives and human constructions, Larkin's poetry encourages readers to reflect on the inseverable and delicate bond between the natural and the human. This chapter is structured in four sections. Each section proposes an interpretation of "scarcity" and discusses how the concept is signified in the composition as well as what signification it serves beyond the text. Drawing on Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", I aim to highlight the metaphysical openness and transformability of his poetry and ELP as a site for enacting, reconstituting and communicating eco-ethics.

Chapter Three examines Maggie O'Sullivan's poetry and argues that it enacts a weaving of kinship among lives on earth, reconfiguring the relationship between human and more-than-human worlds as mutually dependent, constitutive and transformable. Resonating with the work of Harriet Tarlo and Peter Larkin discussed in previous chapters, the creative agency in O'Sullivan's compositions does not reside in the poet or in any individual subject, but is diffused throughout the environment—in the interrelations and interactions of various subjects and objects. By rendering materials and environments as agential and inextricable participants in the world's co-becoming, O'Sullivan's poetry constitutes a practice of eco-ethics.

This chapter also marks a departure in this thesis from Tarlo's grouping of radical landscape poetry (RLP) in *The Ground Aslant*. By connecting and comparing the eco-ethical composition of O'Sullivan's work with that of Tarlo and Larkin, I highlight distinctions among them, arguing that O'Sullivan's poetry expands the ways contemporary poetry engages with the environment—moving from the phenomenological to the sensuous, the magical and the eco-political realms. Accordingly, the chapter is structured in three sections, each exploring one of these threads in O'Sullivan's poetry

and the ways it reimagines the environment—of the poem as well as the (re)presented landscape—as a site and event of mutual transformation among the various bodies and subjects it brings into relation.

The fourth and final chapter examines the poetry of Anthony Vahni Capildeo for its eco-ethical implications and beyond. Capildeo, a Trinidad and Tobago-born writer based in the UK, navigates a multicultural literary practice shaped by their immigrant status, particularly in its mediation between Caribbean and British traditions of thought and writing. By incorporating Capildeo's reflections on human–nonhuman relationships into this thesis, I aim to highlight the intellectual openness of experimental landscape poetry and its significance in constituting an inclusive eco-ethics when approached through an interdisciplinary lens that bridges cultural and literary studies, environmental criticism and socio-political critique.

Drawing on examples from *Like a Tree, Walking*, I argue that Capildeo's poetry enacts movements and relations among various landscapes, subjects and narratives across the earth, embodying what Kamau Brathwaite terms 'tidalectics' and what Édouard Glissant calls a 'poetics of relation'. Mirroring the diverse and dynamic composition of the earth, it presents a transcultural and transnatural imagining of the world, woven from interconnected yet divergent ideologies and materials. Such practices and poetics of eco-ethics both aligns with the radical and experimental landscape poetries discussed in previous chapters and expands their horizon by introducing a multicultural perspective to ecopoetics and eco-ethics, connecting (post)phenomenological presentations of the environment—rooted in the local body subject and landscape—to an expansive

imagining of the earth that shifts between experiences of the local and the nonlocal, as well as between dominant and marginalised subjects.

Chapter One

From Outside to Inside: The Practice of Eco-Ethics in the Work of Harriet Tarlo and Judith Tucker

Chapter Roadmap

This chapter examines the practice of eco-ethics in Harriet Tarlo's poetry and in her collaborative work with painter Judith Tucker across their place-based projects: *Field*, *Tributaries* (2011–2013), *Excavations and Estuaries* (2013–2015), *Outfalls*, *Fitties* (2015–2019) and *Gathering Ground* (2011–2019). Following their work from its creative process in the field, through Tarlo's composition on the page, and finally to its exhibition in the gallery, I argue that their practice embodies eco-ethics throughout. Responsive to the particular environments of each project and to each stage of their work, Tarlo and Tucker develop specific procedures—including walking with others in the field, open-form composition on the page and innovative presentation in galleries and books—to enact and re-enact an eco-ethical way of knowing and being in the environment. By tracing their work across these varied contexts, from outside to inside, I highlight experimental landscape poetry's (hereafter ELP) trans-locational dimensions and its contribution to an enactive composition of eco-ethics.

This chapter is structured in three sections, each focusing on a stage of Tarlo and Tucker's work. In the first, I examine the eco-ethics of their artmaking. Focusing on their practice of walking and working in the field, I argue that their artmaking enacts a radical, post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place as physical and relational

entities that are mutually constituted in the process and field of perception. I also relate their companioned walking and working in the field to the research methodology of fieldwork, arguing that by grounding their creative process in the geographically and temporally specific environment, as well as in collaboration and conversation with local communities, they perform an open and dialogical—thus eco-ethical—way of knowing and being in the world. Lastly, I suggest that their artmaking, in the form of field-walking and fieldwork, provides the foundation for connecting their practice to others across disciplines and traditions—not only because the concepts of "field" and "fieldwork" resonate within the Environmental Humanities, but also because walking is a transhistorical and transcultural act of conviviality and resistance.

The second section discusses Tarlo's composition on the page and argues that it re-enacts the eco-ethical mode of thinking and being in the world that she and Tucker practise in the field outside. Moreover, building on Julia Kristeva's foundational work, I argue that Tarlo's poetry contributes to a 'revolution in poetic language' by performing a dialectical struggle between the symbolic and semiotic modalities of significance. Through opening and experimenting with form, Tarlo transforms the poem into a poetic field that embodies—without encapsulating—the spatiality of the natural field, reconnecting—without assimilating—the reader's perception of the "field" to the poet's outside. In this way, Tarlo's poetry re-presents the embodied and open view of the field as perceived by her and Tucker in the creative process, and negotiates the boundaries between the poetic and the real, the discursive and the material processes of meaning-making as worldmaking.

In the third section, I turn to the exhibition of Tarlo and Tucker's work in the gallery and argue that it continues to negotiate the boundaries between discursive and material processes of meaning-making as well as worldmaking. By juxtaposing and interweaving poetry and painting, words and images, in the presentation of their work, Tarlo and Tucker recreate the collaborative process of their artmaking in the field and emphasise 'the difference and adjacency' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 50) between these two media of representation. In this way, they gesture toward the materiality of their artwork and the physical space it inhabits in the gallery, (dis)connecting the environment inside and outside the frame of art. The exhibition of their work is thus an eco-ethical re-presentation of the environment.

I. Field Walking, Field Working

This section examines Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking outside and argues that their practice of walking and working together in the field embodies an eco-ethical mode of knowing and dwelling in the world—one that both arises from and cultivates the attentiveness of the creative subject to their body, their physical surroundings and to human and nonhuman others in the environment.

As stated in the Introduction, the emphasis on formal and ideological openness while remaining grounded in the physical and phenomenal realms is central to radical and experimental landscape poetry and practice of eco-ethics. The incorporation of walking into Tarlo and Tucker's creative process agrees with this dual emphasis on the phenomenal experience and the radical reimagining of the environment. As Tarlo and Tucker state in "'Off Path, Counter Path'", 'fundamentally, the walker is against dualism

and divisions' (106). Through working and walking together, Tarlo and Tucker move beyond the divide not only between traditional and experimental modes of representing nature and the environment, but also between the subjective and the objective, and the discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. Centring on their practice of walking with others in the field, I argue that Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking is eco-ethical by:

1. enacting a radical and post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place as fluid and relational entities, mutually constituted through the process and field of perception enabled by other subjects-objects;
2. remaining attentive and responsive to the specificity of the environment and those who inhabit it; and
3. performing a transhistorical and transcultural act of resistance, transgressing pre-existing boundaries of the body subject and received ways of understanding and being in the world.

First and foremost, the incorporation of walking in Tarlo and Tucker's creative process situates the subject—the poet and the painter—within their body and physical surroundings. Walking necessitates a body in place, and its integration into their creative process highlights the bodily presence of the creative subject in the field as a geographically and temporally specific site. However, this does not reduce the artists to neutral recorders of the objective world, nor does it collapse the subjective perception of the field into the field itself. Rather, Tarlo and Tucker's practice of walking and working in the field negotiates the relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived

environment, and between the discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking.

From a new and feminist materialist perspective, all matter—whether subjective or objective, human or nonhuman—is equally "vital" (e.g. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*). Following this view, Tarlo and Tucker recognise the capacity to "form" and "transform" as inherent to all matter, rather than attributing creative agency exclusively to the human subject. In Jane Bennett's words, this perspective raises the status of the "material" in writing as a form of "cultural" production and 'helps us recognise ourselves as parts of the vital materiality of the world' (Bennett 12). As Tim Ingold similarly argues, art is a question of 'intervening in the fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated', and 'practitioners... are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose' (Ingold, *The Textility of Making* 92). The principle of artmaking is thus to follow the materials—or what Deleuze and Guattari call the "matter-flow". This principle is shared by Tarlo and Tucker. As they reflect on their creative process for the project *Tributary* (2011-2013):

> moving through landscape, [walking is the] interaction between the physical materiality of the body of the artists, the material of making and the material of place. … We might reimagine the practice in terms of the material of the place being in collaboration with the materiality of mark-making in words and lines and of paint via that material constellation that is a body ("'Off Path, Counter Path'" 113).

The landscape, the artists' bodies, their pens and paints are all integral to the creative process. Rather than constituting a subjective or formal imposition on the natural world, their artmaking participates in its ongoing becoming, rooted in the physical materiality of, and collaborations among, various subjects and objects in the place.

Moreover, the insistence on working through walking in the field also aligns Tarlo and Tucker's creative process with that of *fieldwork*, in which scholars and artists are guided by—rather than impose doctrines and ideologies upon—the materials. This mode of knowing allow the creative and the researching subject to 'cultivate deeper connections with the rhythms, relationships and vulnerabilities of more-than-human worlds' (Tsing et al., *Field Guide* 4). During the project *Tributaries* (2011–2013), for example, Tarlo and Tucker spent extended periods walking and working in Black Hill in order to experience the seasonal changes of the place. Embracing the repetition of scenery and the rolling course of time, they returned regularly to explore the depth and variability of the locale.

In the Introduction, I argued that radical and experimental landscape poetry—or British open-field poetry—is founded on a creative tension between the formal and ideological openness inherited from American late modernism and the history of land enclosures in the UK (Eltringham; Tarlo, "Open Field"). This dialectic between openness and enclosure is also present in Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking: their engagement with the environment is both radical and limited in scale. Grounding their field-walking and field-working in specific sites and times (as reflected in their project titles), Tarlo and Tucker 'recognise that the scale of working needs to be small in order for [them] to attempt to respond to place at all' ("'Off Path, Counter Path'" 111). While their slow, repetitive

walking confines their activity to the locale, it simultaneously opens possibilities for experience within it. In what follows, I explain how a creative process grounded in the locale—such as Tarlo and Tucker's—can lead to a radical reimagining of the environment.

The extensive fieldwork undertaken by Tarlo and Tucker opens possibilities for experience of the artists within the locale because they worked and walked with what Greg Garrard calls the "attentive eye"[6]. Extending this foundational theory of ecocriticism 'in practice and place', Tarlo and Tucker were 'attentive not only to the objects that constitute her particular route, but also to the activity of her own perceptual system and its specific ways of engaging with the environment' (Widger 75). In this way, the repetitive act of walking became a creative source for their experimental encounters with(in) place. ("'Off Path, Counter Path'"). As Tarlo and Tucker explain:

> We appear to engage in the entirely repetitive act of placing one foot in front of the other, of walking, but the pattern of our footsteps as we take a familiar walk is never entirely the same and we choose to pause or turn at different places ("'Off Path, Counter Path'" 118).

The artists' attentiveness to the bodily performance of walking opens up alternative experiences of this familiar mode of being in place. As noted above, the act of walking grounds the artists and their creative process in their bodies and physical surroundings, thereby challenging the divide between discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. Beyond establishing the bodily presence of the subject in the field, the

[6] In *Ecocriticism*, Garrard proposes the term "attentive eye" to refer to a mode of perception that is grounded in careful, sustained, and ethically attuned observation of the natural world. Rather than approaching the environment as a resource to be used or as a backdrop for human action, the "attentive eye" involves being present, receptive and responsive to the complexities, particularities and agency of nonhuman nature.

incorporation of walking in Tarlo and Tucker's practice also foregrounds the body's movement and, with it, the provisionality of subjective perception. The dynamism and variability generated in the act of walking produce a perception of the field, as well as a sense of self, that is embodied and situated, yet also dynamic and provisional. This leads to a post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place as fluid and relational entities, mutually and processually constituted in the act of seeing and moving within the field.

During Tarlo and Tucker's creative process, the artists—their bodies and perceptions—are "folded" into the field. As Tarlo recounts:

> Sometimes, if we go low in a field (physically, lying down, or just being in the lower part of a steep hilly Yorkshire field, such as the Penistone field, the horizon is within the field or we are within the fold: a field folded (*Field* 35).

This observation—that the subjective horizon is folded into the natural field—recalls Merleau-Ponty's concept of the "chiasm", which refers to the intertwining of the perceiving subject and the perceived world, the ideological (the invisible) and the phenomenal (the visible). According to Merleau-Ponty, the acts of seeing and being seen are two reversible sides of the same sentient flesh; it is through the processual synergy of these senses that both a unified body and a continuous sense of subjectivity are produced. This synergy of senses is not confined to a single organism (the body) but extends between the body of the perceiver and the perceived thing. As he writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we no longer make belongingness to one same

> "consciousness" the primordial definition of sensibility, and as soon as we rather understand it as the return of the visible upon itself, a carnal adherence of the sentient to the sensed and of the sensed to the sentient. For, as overlapping and fission, identity and difference, it brings to birth a ray of natural light that illuminates all flesh and not only my own (142).

In other words, the sense of self—subjectivity—and the sense of a world beyond the self—objectivity—are mutually constituted through the embodied act of seeing and being seen. This resituating of consciousness and sensibility within the body of the subject—and, by extension, within the phenomenal and physical realms—is enacted in the work of Tarlo as well as other experimental landscape poets discussed in this thesis (see Introduction). As I will demonstrate later and in subsequent chapters, this involves decentring creative agency from the mind of the individual subject (the poet) and redistributing it across the interconnections and interactions among various subjects and objects in the environment.

The interweaving of the sentient and the sensed suggests a mutual enfolding of the subjective "field" of perception and the objective, perceivable "field". This co-becoming of the sense of subject and the sense of place, is a central concern in Tarlo's poetry. For example, the poem "Complements" from the project *Fitties* (2015–2019), is composed of juxtaposed phrases.

> blue door red porthole
> green window creosote fencing
> beech leaf marble shingle
> pink blinds pebbledash

(*Gathering Grounds* 91)

Besides the title and the form of the poem, there are no further indications of connections between the phrase sets. Although in the first line the phrases 'blue door' and 'red porthole' suggest a lyrical symmetry in the composition, this expectation is quickly disrupted by the 'irregularity' of the following lines. Rather than establishing lyrical patterns, the juxtaposition of phrases is more likely related to the arrangement of things in the streets of Fitties as perceived by the poet. Like the poet standing and looking in the 'field' outside, the reader's gaze oscillates across the page between the phrase-things on either side of the composition. In this process, the page-space is enlivened and becomes a place of its own; the act of reading and seeing becomes one of inhabiting the poem. This experimental composition allows the poet to share their perception of the place with the reader not only through linguistic representation (e.g. naming the colours and objects in the place), but also by re-presenting the field and act of perception on the page.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Tarlo argues that contemporary British open-field poetry, or radical landscape poetry, follows Olson's critique of the self-singing tendency in traditional ecopoetry and continues to move away from its egotistical-ecstatic mode of nature writing, 'while maintaining a strong bodily presence in the field' (136). To do so, the radical landscape poet 'inhabits oneself as an object among others' ("Open Field" 134). Notably, it is not only place that the poet inhabits, but also 'oneself'. Place is not presumed to exist prior to perception. Rather, the sense of self and the sense of place are both fluid, dynamically and mutually formed in the act and field of perception. As shown in the poem "Complements", there are no distinguishable individual voices in the composition. The sense of subject— 'the bodily presence of the subject' in the page-

field—is not indicated within the text but enacted by the reader as they perceive and make sense of the poem. In other words, the subject (reader) 'inhabits' themselves on the page through the act of perception and in relation to the phrases-things within the composition and/or the field of their perception. The sense of place is also produced through this act of perception. The page-space is transformed into a place by the perceiving subject (the reader), who actively reads and connects the phrase-things within the composition. Recalling Doreen Massey's reconceptualisation of place as 'a sphere of relations' and Tim Ingold's definition of "landscape" as a 'processual unfolding of a total field of relations' ("The Perception of the Environment"), Tarlo's poetry enacts an embodied mode of seeing and making sense of place by drawing relations among things within one's field of perception, rather than 'naming and fixing things within spatial coordinates' (147).

In short, the sense of subject and the sense of place are mutually constituted through perception and through their relations with other word-objects within the field of perception. This highlights not only the embodiment and situatedness of subjective perception but also its dynamism and provisionality. Working while walking in the field, Tarlo's creative process is 'quick and immediate,' recording 'everything seen and sensed with as little selection as possible at the pauses of her walk' (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'" 117). Even in the pauses of her walk, dynamism persists within the poet's perceptual system, as mobility is a precondition for living and seeing in abled bodies. The body does not cease moving when the legs do: saccadic eye movements, the rhythm of breath and heartbeat, and other fundamental life processes continue within the subject. In short, the act of walking not only situates the poet-subject within the physical

environment but also within movement itself, resisting the fixity of subjective perception and perceptual subjectivity, while reinforcing the "vitality" of bodies and the environment (Bennett). In emphasising the dynamism of Tarlo's creative process, I do not wish to underplay her attentiveness to the particular during pauses in her walk; rather, I argue that movement and change are equally vital to understanding her work.

As argued in the Introduction, radical and experimental landscape poetry embodies a post-phenomenological perspective on "landscape"—as suggested by cultural geographers such as John Wylie and Christopher Tilley—that emphasises the mutual constitution of the perceiving subject and the perceived environment, as well as the entanglement of discursive (cultural) and material (natural) processes in the world's unfolding. The post-phenomenological perspective extends the phenomenological emphasis of "landscape" on the carnal relationship between the body subject and the physical environment, into what Wylie calls 'a holistic term' that 'gather[s] together body, place, perception, and relationships between people and between people and things' (*Landscape* 172). Moreover, Wylie points out that this new perspective on "landscape" is enabled by 'a renewed attentiveness to issues of movement and mobility in recent landscape phenomenologies':

> This 'mobility', it should be noted, is not confined to physical travel. Instead, the adoption of the lived body as both domain of enquiry and research conduit has focused attention, in various ways, upon perception-in-motion. In this way landscape ceases to be understood as a static, framed gaze, and becomes instead the very interconnectivity of eye, body and land, a constantly emergent perceptual and material milieu. Thus, much writing in this area concerns itself with the

> experience of mobility, with being and becoming mobile as a particular trajectory of subjective cohesion and dissolution (Wylie, *Landscape* 177).

For instance, it is through analysing the perceptual processes of human beings during a coastal walk that Wylie acquires a renewed understanding of "landscape"—one that signifies the processual and mutual constitution of subject and environment, and of subjectivity and objectivity. As he writes:

> Landscape is not a way of seeing the world. Nor is it something "seen", an external, inert surface. Rather, landscape names the materialities and sensibilities with and according to which we see. Neither an empirical content nor a cultural construct, landscape belongs to neither object nor subject; in fact, it adheres within processes that subtend and afford these terms ("A Single Day's Walking" 245).

In Wylie's account, the perceiving and walking subject is not only embodied and situated in landscape, as Merleau-Ponty suggests in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, but also enabled by it. While Merleau-Ponty relocates the subject's sense of self from the mind to the body and from the transcendental to the physical realm, Wylie further reconfigures it as a dynamic and provisional way of being shaped by a mobile body within a changing environment.

This radical and post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subjectivity through movement is also performed in Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking: their walking and working in the field enacts a 'formation and undoing of self and landscape in practice' (Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking" 245). Since the artists' perception is propelled by the mobile and moving body in a changing environment, their subjectivity and perspectivity is not pre-

established or fixed but produced in the act of walking and seeing, and entangled within the material composition of the field. There is no distinguishable background or foreground, no separation between objects and subjects, in Tarlo's view; her concentration and attentiveness to one thing is not made at the expense of others. As the poem "Complements" demonstrates, perception is not a two-sided act between the perceiver and the thing perceived, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty (*The Visible and the Invisible*). Rather, it is enacted by the perceiving subject as they see and continually draw relations among *all* things, and between those things and themself, within the field of perception. Re-enacting the poet's perception in the streets of Fitties, readers do not 'plunge' (Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*) into a particular phrase-thing but continuously draw relations among phrase-things—not only within a line but also vertically across lines—their gaze oscillating rather than fixating on the page. In doing so, they 'inhabit' themselves among other inhabitants in the place of the page, just as the poet does in the place of Fitties (Tarlo, "Open Field"). In alignment with Wylie's post-phenomenological perspective, the sense of subject and sense of place are both fluid and relational, processually and mutually (un)formed in the act and field of perception.

In short, Tarlo and Tucker's walking and working in the field embody an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being in the environment. By remaining attentive to the activity of their own bodies, perceptions and ways of engaging with the environment in their creative process, Tarlo and Tucker enact a radical and post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place—challenging conventional understandings of subjectivity and perspectivity as exclusively human, transcendental and pre-determined, and instead rendering both as provisional and entwined within the material environment.

Moreover, Tarlo and Tucker's walking and working in the field is a practice of eco-ethics because it enacts a dialogical and collaborative mode of artmaking and placemaking. In their words, it fosters a 'site-specific and symbiotic learning' between the artists and other subjects-objects in the place ("Edge of England"). Beyond their own bodies and perceptions, Tarlo and Tucker are also attentive to the specificity of the environment in which they walk and work. However, this attentiveness is not aimed at extracting the "truth" of a place; it is not a means to an end. Rather, it cultivates an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being in the place that embraces the variability of experiences and perspectives within it.

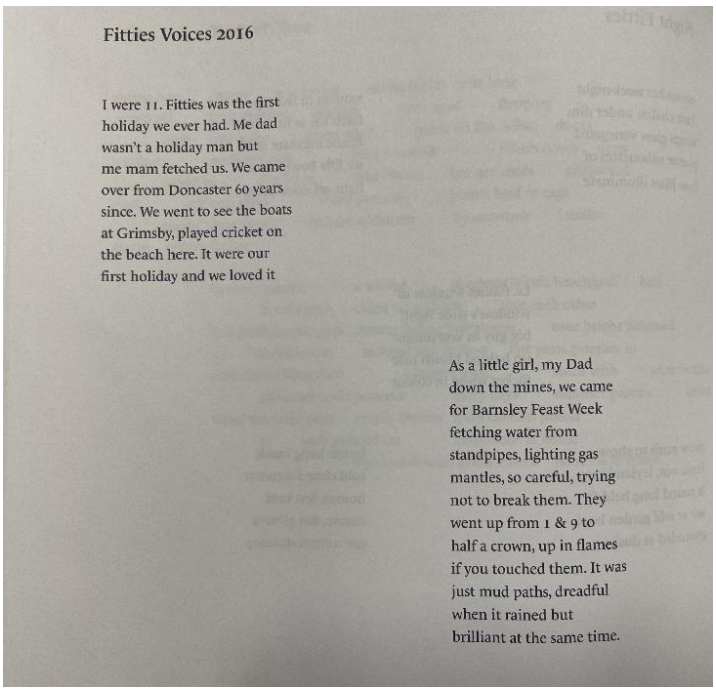
For example, Tarlo and Tucker spent several years working with and engaging local communities in the Humberston Fitties (here after Fitties) for their collaborative project *Fitties* (2015–2019). Over time, they came to understand that the place as an 'edgeland' not only geographically but also politically and culturally (Tarlo and Tucker, "Edge of England"). Being one of the last plotlands[7] in the UK, Fitties is full of fractures and tensions, partly due to the effects of climate change (e.g. the council's decision to extend the winter 'closed seasons' due to the risk of flooding against the wishes of local inhabitants) and partly due to 'the advance of Capitalism' (e.g. global chains such as McDonald's and Premier Inn slowly replacing local, independent shops). Embodying these fractures and tensions is thus a central concern of Tarlo and Tucker.

[7] Plotlands are self-built, informal settlements that emerged in the UK between the 1890s and 1940s. Working-class families purchased cheap rural plots, constructing weekend retreats, holiday homes, or permanent residences. Some settlements persisted into the postwar era before being displaced by urban development or conservation efforts.

Fitties is a place built—both materially and culturally—on the principle of 'retrieval adhocism'[8], where one 'fashions one's personal environment from impersonal subsystems that already exist' (Lee 1). As Tarlo and Tucker recount, the way of building in Fitties is 'collaborative, individualistic and creative, often merging the practical with the decorative or artistic, and frequently involving found objects, objects other people dump, leave to collect, or which wash up on the beach' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Edge of England" 652). Attending and responding to the specificity of Fitties' buildings, they transpose this mode of placemaking into their artmaking—gathering fragments of stories and information over time from workshops, interviews, local archives and other sources, incorporating them into the final work as they were found. Through extensive fieldwork, the artists foraged a wide range and large quantity of materials, creating their artwork by 'following the materials' they foraged (Ingold, "The Textility of Making"). As shown above, in the composition of "Complement", a motley of phrase-objects is arranged into two columns. There are no formal or lyrical associations between the phrases; instead, they are held together by the space of the page—much like objects on opposite sides of a street—embodying the ad hoc buildings of Fitties and a "real" sense of place.

Similarly, in the poem "Fitties Voices 2016", the composition is made of blocky stanzas placed in two diagonal corners of the page:

[8] Retrieval adhocism' refers to the improvised reuse of found or salvaged materials in creative or practical ways. In Charles Lee's article "The Ad Hoc Manifesto (Powerful Ideas from Improvisation)" published in *Environment and Planning A* (2010), the concept of retrieval adhocism is linked to urban and spatial planning, highlighting the values of self-built landscapes (such as plotlands) and other experimental place-making practices in contemporary UK.



Fitties Voices 2016

I were 11. Fitties was the first holiday we ever had. Me dad wasn't a holiday man but me mam fetched us. We came over from Doncaster 60 years since. We went to see the boats at Grimsby, played cricket on the beach here. It were our first holiday and we loved it

As a little girl, my Dad down the mines, we came for Barnsley Feast Week fetching water from standpipes, lighting gas mantles, so careful, trying not to break them. They went up from 1 & 9 to half a crown, up in flames if you touched them. It was just mud paths, dreadful when it rained but brilliant at the same time.

the first page of Fitties Voices 2016

Each page holds two stanzas, with each telling a story from a first-person perspective. The diagonal placement of the text expands the composition across the page and maximises the white space between the two "voices", emphasising both their independence and their connectivity. In this way, the composition re-presents a multivocal and dialogical imagining of the place of Fitties. Moreover, this form creates space for readers to interpret and connect the voices on their own terms. By replacing the author's subjective mediation with white space, the composition enacts a 'radically democratic' (Tarlo, "Provisional Pleasure") and dialogical process of artmaking and placemaking between the poet and the readers, mirroring that between the poet and the local community.

By interweaving text and white space, speech and silence, Tarlo preserves the autonomy of multiple, individual voices—both in the place of the page and in the place of

Fitties. As Philip Gross argues, a poem 'gains autonomy in direct proportion to [the author's] willingness to relax [their] individual ownership,' and through which, other human and nonhuman agencies can be included and gazed through poetry (40). In project *Fitties* (2015 – 2019), Tarlo and Tucker distribute the creative agency across materials and local communities, and this is reflected in the autonomy of Tarlo's poems. Even though the poems "Complements" and "Fitties Voices 2016", for example, are single-authored, they re-present the collaborations and conversations between the artists and others objects and subjects in the locale throughout their creative process**.**

Attending to the specificity of the place in which they walk and work, and allowing the "materials" gathered through field-walk and fieldwork to shape their craft, Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking is situated, collaborative and dialogical. It constitutes a practice of eco-ethics. In the next section, I explore how this mode of artmaking and placemaking is re-enacted in Tarlo's poetry. Here, I emphasise that Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking embodies an eco-ethical mode of knowing through being in place—one that embraces the variability of experiences and perspectives within it. This can also be aligned with Iain Biggs's concept of "open deep mapping", which 'engages with, narrate and evoke "place" in temporal depth by bringing together a multiplicity of voices, information, impressions and perspectives as a basis for a new connectivity' (Biggs, "The Spaces of 'Deep Mapping'" 6). By attending to and embodying the tensions and relationships within the locale—as well as between the locale and wider cultural and natural environments (such as the relationship between local shops and McDonald's in Fitties)—Tarlo and Tucker's work, though grounded in a particular place, resists the reification of the region or of regionalism. Rather, resonating with what Biggs calls

"critical regionalism" ("Educating 'Local Cosmopolitans'"), their "mapping" of the place is processual, extensive and buildable: a local, phenomenological investigation of a specific place that contributes to a trans-locational, global imagining of the environment.

This radical reimagining of place and environment—grounded in the lived experiences of local inhabitants—aligns with the commitments of radical and experimental landscape poetry (see Introduction). In *Field Guide to a Patchy Anthropocene*, Tsing, Deger, Saxena and Zhou encourage artists and scholars to attend to the ecologies and topographies of Earth's "patches", arguing that the global effects of climate change emerge from complex phenomena within and across various local environments, rather than from a singular, ubiquitous force. Similarly, Tarlo and Tucker assert that 'it is through the micro that we understand the macro' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Edge of England" 638). By attending to the relationships and tensions within the locale, Tarlo and Tucker turn their fieldwork into an open and dialogical way of knowing and being in the world, which then leads to a radical and post-phenomenological reconfiguration of place and environment as a 'sphere' and 'field' of relations (Massey; Ingold, "The Perception of the Environment").

Furthermore, beyond their own bodies and the local environment, Tarlo and Tucker are also attentive to their walking companions. In the creative process of their projects such as *Tributaries* (2011-2013), *Fitties* (2015 – 2019), Tarlo and Tucker walked with each other: They moved and paused, decided the path and direction of their journey together, and it is in this way that they worked in collaboration. As argued above, the incorporation of walking in Tarlo and Tucker's creative process grounds their work in the local and the material, while simultaneously opening possibilities for their encounters

within place. The practice of walking with others is crucial to bridging various ways of engaging with and representing the environment. For example, Tarlo and Tucker's field-walking as fieldwork allows them to gather a wide range of voices in Fitties.

Moreover, walking with each other opens pathways between different artforms. As Tarlo and Tucker reflect:

> The actual *walking with* is integral to our work, not least because it opens us up to changing our own individual practice, in part because we are walking with a person from another discipline emerging from a different tradition ("'Off Path, Counter Path'" 108).

Practising in different disciplines, the artists shared not only their journeys but also their perspectives and methodologies for engaging with the landscape. For instance, Tarlo adopts a motional perceptual system through a rhythmic 'concentration on' and 'distancing from' particular objects in the pauses and movements of her walk (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'"). This approach resonates with a painter's strategy of intermittently stepping back from the canvas to assess the work as a whole. Meanwhile, Tarlo and Tucker remain attentive to the dissimilarities between their approaches, which they describe as those of an inhabitant and an 'attentive traveller' (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'"); for while Tarlo immerses her body and sense of self in the landscape, Tucker maintains an artistic distance from the view. In contrast to conventional collaborations, where contributors' works are merged into a unified whole, Tarlo and Tucker, by working and walking alongside each other, both integrated their creative processes and maintained their artistic independence.

As argued in the introduction, radical and experimental landscape poetry embodies a rhizomatic and ecological connectivity between various poetic traditions. This model of bridging diverse perspectives of and within the field—without collapsing their individuality—is key to the practice of eco-ethics in such poetry, contributing to an open and dialogical mode of knowing and being in the environment. Likewise, rhizomatic connectivity is embodied in the collaboration between Tarlo and Tucker, making their collaborative artmaking a practice of eco-ethics. Not only are Tarlo and Tucker attentive to each other in their creative process—allowing the perspective and discipline of the other to shape their own approach—they also reflect on the differences between their respective disciplines as part of that process. By 'foreground[ing] ideas of collaboration, working with or being in conversation with from the very beginning' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Cross Multi Inter Trans" 221), their artmaking enacts an open and dialogical way of knowing and being in the world.

In addition, collaboration and conversation extend beyond Tarlo and Tucker. In their creative process, they not only walked with each other but also with 'diverse characters who had local or artistic relationships with the area, from Wildlife Trust volunteers, filmmakers and fellow artists to people who attended our peripatetic readings and workshops, or who we simply met on the way' (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'" 120). As shown above with the poems from the project *Fitties* (2015–2019), Tarlo's re-presentation of place is multivocal and dialogical, bridging diverse perspectives both within and beyond the locale. This re-presentation and reconfiguration of place and environment is enabled by the poet's critical awareness of their own

practice, cultivated through walking and working alongside the painter. As Tarlo and Tucker explain:

> Our joint practice of drawing and writing together is an ethical, eco-ethical activity, in which we move away from simply representational towards an investigation of the relationship between things through radical possibilities of how writing and drawing might operate together (“‘Drawing closer’” 49).

Working and walking together in the field, the presence of each other encourages Tarlo and Tucker to reflect on the relationship between the physical environment and its artistic representations, as well as the relationship between different models of artistic representation. Emerging from different disciplines and traditions, the “non-alignedness” between Tarlo and Tucker’s practices prevents their approaches from becoming institutionalised and sustains a critical and creative rethinking of place and environment (Biggs, “The Spaces of ‘Deep Mapping’”).

As stated in the Introduction, the concept of "field" is central to multiple Anglophone poetic traditions, including British pastoral, Olsonian open-field poetries and British open-field poetry. It provides the foundation for what Tarlo calls a "radical landscape poetry"—a poetry that mediates between traditional and experimental ways of writing and engaging with nature. Likewise, the resonant term “field”, along with “fieldwork” as a research method, also inspires collaboration and dialogue across disciplines and traditions, as seen in Tarlo and Tucker’s work. In September 2017, Sheffield Institute of the Arts and Bank Street Arts hosted a conference and art exhibition. titled “*In the Open: Collaborative Artworks Around Place, Landscape and Environment”*, which brought together over 60 contributors and was designed ‘to explore

ideas around place, ecology and environment through collaborative and dialogical thinking and artmaking across creative and academic disciplines' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Cross Multi Inter Trans"). Tarlo and Tucker co-authored the introductory article for the event, in which they reflect on the 'cross-, multi-, inter-, trans-disciplinarity' of their artmaking. They observe that their practice of walking and working together in the field grounds their work not only in the locale but also in collaboration and conversation with each other and with other inhabitants within it.

In addition, this collaborative and dialogical artmaking offers new understandings of authorship, challenging conventional definitions and the value placed on artistic originality (Tarlo, "Recycles"). By rooting their practice in collaboration and conversation with each other and with local communities, Tarlo and Tucker contest the belief that creative agency is exclusive to subjective, individual beings. As demonstrated in their project *Fitties* (2015–2019), Tarlo's poetry rejects the notion of ownership over both language and land. Instead, drawing on the histories and cultures of plotland in Fitties, she gives the creative agency of "her" poems to the assorted materials and voices of the local environment. This artmaking, as Tarlo and Tucker describe it, is 'a hybrid activity' ("Edge of England").

Beyond the terms "field" and "fieldwork", the act of walking also offers a way of connecting various practices in the field of Environmental Humanities. For instance, in an interdisciplinary conference on walking in Scottish landscapes, titled "Traversing the Field*"*, scholars from various disciplines came together to 'consider links between landscape, walking and thinking' (Tarbuck and Widger). The success of this conference demonstrates that walking is not only significant within ecopoetics but also essential to

connecting it with other fields of study, including philosophy, archaeology and ethnography. The act of walking, due to its commonality as a physical activity and a means of travel, serves as an effective pivot for connecting and comparing diverse experiences and narratives of the environment in a global context. For instance, in their introductory article for the conference, Alice Tarbuck and Eleanor Widger connect the poetry of Thomas A. Clark and Harriet Tarlo—among other contemporary poets concerned with nature, place and landscape—for their shared practice of a "walking poetics": a mode of composition both enacted by and re-enacting the experience of walking outdoors. That said, emphasising the commonality of walking also risks overlooking the experiences of minoritised subjects, who may not enjoy the same freedom to roam or travel. In Chapter Four, I show how the Trinidadian-British poet Anthony Vahni Capildeo's poetry initiates a dialogue with other ecopoets on their "walking poetics" and presents alternative ways of being and travelling in the world.

Rather than pivoting on its commonality as a physical activity, I argue that Tarlo and Tucker's walking offers a way to connect their work and their practice of eco-ethics both across and beyond disciplines through its transgressive potential; for walking is a common—trans-cultural and trans-historical—means of socio-political resistance. As argued above, through walking and working with others in the field, Tarlo and Tucker ground their artmaking in collaboration and conversation, thereby challenging dominant notions of exclusive originality and ownership of both land and language. For this reason, their practice is countercultural.

Their practice is countercultural also in the pace and paths of their walks. In the creative process of Tarlo and Tucker, 'each individual walk is a slow way of being in

place, and the process of revisiting is slow' (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'" 118). Their artmaking thus resists modernity's obsession with efficiency and productivity. Likewise, their improvised and intermittent path-making can be understood as an act of resistance against modernity's emphasis on orderliness and speed, as seen in space and settlement planning projects in postwar Britain (see Introduction; Matless). As Tarlo and Tucker recount:

> The areas we walk in are just as circumscribed as those within a city and our paths of transgressive desire just as frequently asserted as we walk 'off path, counter path' crossing barbed wire, diverting from the Pennine Way, scrambling along reservoir walls attempting to elude the wires, strictures and structures of landowners, water companies and local authorities ("'Off Path, Counter Path'"124).

The lack of plans and destinations in their walks is counteracted by the artists' determination to divert and trespass. This "transgressive desire" of Tarlo and Tucker opens their experience of a geographically small and revisited site to chance encounters within the place, whether through continuing on or leaving the "original" path (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'").

The "transgressive desire" in Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking and path-making aligns their practice with that of other walking artists and activists across different parts of the world and throughout history. As Rebecca Solnit argues in *Wanderlust*, walking has long functioned as an act of social resistance, from pilgrimage to protest. In the contemporary world, environmental and social activists have marched for equality between humans and nonhumans across the globe, as seen in The People's Climate March

(2014, 2017, 2019), Rebel Walks (2018–present) and the Pilgrimage for Nature (UK, 2021). In particular, feminist scholars have drawn attention to women's walking, arguing that it can offer new insights into this familiar activity. For example, Heddon and Turner argue that female walking artists resist the conventions of the "ideal walker"—often characterised by self-exploring solitude—by emphasising the "conviviality" of walking (Solnit). This opens up space for alternative ways of experiencing and engaging with the environment (Myers). As they write:

> While it may be easier to place men within histories and conventions of epic walking, discovery, and colonization and to place women within conventions of the companion, the domestic, the vulnerable and socially dependent traveller, both men and women are engaged in both sites and actions. And yet, if these convivial walks indicate a wider cultural shift towards relational or dialogical aesthetics, by no means exclusive to women, their preponderance draws attention to a need to consider what we mean by 'relationship' and 'dialogue', rather than using these terms generically (235).

Tarlo and Tucker's practice can be understood through this dialogical aesthetics and ethics. As shown above, their artmaking embodies an open and situated mode of knowing as being among others in the environment. Walking and working in the field, their creative process is grounded not only in the phenomenal and physical realms—body and locale—but also in movement, leading to a radical reconfiguration of subject and place as relational and fluid entities. Rather than confining creative agency to themselves, Tarlo and Tucker remain attentive and responsive to their physical and social relations with other subject-objects and to the specificity of the place in which they are working. Their

negotiation of the boundaries between subject and environment, environment and artistic representation, as well as between various disciplines and traditions of representation, contributes to a dialogical (rather than dualistic) reimagining of the environment—one that is at once subjective and objective, human and natural, autonomous and communal, ethical and ecological, and more. In this sense, Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking and path-making are transgressive, crossing both ideological and physical boundaries imposed on bodies and places, as well as on ways of understanding and being in place.

Walking with companions opens spaces and possibilities for alternative ways of experiencing and engaging. It not only supports a relational and dialogical reconfiguration of subject and place but also enables female walkers to enter new or enclosed spaces, such as 'nighttime spaces that may otherwise be considered off-limits' (Heddon and Turner 235). Walking and working together, Tarlo and Tucker are two artists collaborating on a project in a specific site, but they are also two women present with and for one another in a transforming world. Their practice of "walking-with" is significant not only philosophically and epistemologically but also socio-politically—as an act of solidarity with those who walk 'off path, counter path' (Tarlo and Tucker, "'Off Path, Counter Path'").

In sum, this section argues Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking is a practice of eco-ethics, and their walking and working with others in the field embodies an eco-ethical mode knowing and being in the place. Walking is an important way to make sense of subject, place and community. By incorporating this act into their creative process, Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking enacts a radical, post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place as fluid and relational entities, mutually constituted through the process

and field of perception, and in relation to other subject-objects within the field. Grounding their practice in field-walking and field-working, the artists are attentive to the specificity of the local environment, the tensions and relations within the locale, as well as the connections between the locale and wider cultural and natural environments. In this way, their practice of eco-ethics is not limited to the local but is trans-locational—an open and dialogical way of knowing and being in the environment. Tarlo and Tucker are also attentive to the companions of their walks. The presences of each other in the field evokes the artists' awareness and criticality toward their own practices and, more broadly, the relationship between the physical environment and its artistic representations. Their insistence on walking and working with others contributes to a hybrid and collaborative reconceptualisation of creativity in both artmaking and placemaking, shifting agency from the individual human subject to local materials and communities.

Finally, walking strengthens the bond between people who walk together, both physically and metaphysically—from collaborators such as Tarlo and Tucker to the human and nonhuman companions of their walks, and to artists and activists around the world walking toward their own goals. It is, thus, a convivial activity (Myers). Nonetheless, walking is also a common act of resistance and transgression. The incorporation of walking into Tarlo and Tucker's creative process helps connect their practice across disciplines, cultures, histories and geographies to others who are concerned with the social and ecological well-being of the earth. Tarlo and Tucker's walking is countercultural and transgressive not only because it embodies an alternative—slow and improvised—way of being in the world, but also because it

challenges the dualistic thinking embedded in Western thought and practice, negotiating the divide between dualisms such as the subjective and the objective, the cultural and the natural, and the local and the relational. So, by incorporating walking as acts of conviviality and transgression into their creative process, Tarlo and Tucker enacts an open and dialogical mode of knowing and being in the environment. In the next section, I will continue to examine how Tarlo re-enacts this practice of eco-ethics in her composition on the page.

II. The Composition of Eco-Ethics on the Page

In this section, I examine Tarlo's composition on the page, arguing that it re-enacts the eco-ethical mode of knowing and dwelling practised by her and Tucker in the field outside. Through formal and linguistic experimentation, Tarlo's poetry embodies a "real" sense of place, linking the reader's encounter with the poem to the poet's experience in the field. At the same time, however, it draws attention to the disjunction between the natural environment and its poetic representation on the page. Rather than immersing the reader in the poem, it positions them at the threshold between the poetic and the real, inside and outside. In this way, Tarlo's poetry negotiates the boundaries between these realms and challenges dominant discourses of writing and meaning-making that seek to reduce one to the other.

As explained in the Introduction, the opening and experimentation of form are key to modern and contemporary experimental poetry and its eco-ethical practices. Before proposing "radical landscape poetry" (RLP) in the anthology *The Ground Aslant*, Tarlo had already explored the intimacy between experimental poetry and environmental

reflection in her 2007 essay "Radical Landscapes: Experiment and Environment in Contemporary Poetry". In this essay, she examines the use of page-space in open-field poetry and argues that '[its] more dynamic, open-form style of writing, which makes use of the whole page-space to create, is particularly suited to reflecting on and engaging with the spatial.' According to Tarlo, the openness of form in open-field poetry is responsive to 'the openness of a [natural] field'; it is 'a canvas in open air', where both human and nonhuman elements are at work. In other words, formal experimentation in radical landscape poetry is not merely iconoclastic or expressive of poets' ideological boundary-pushing but also embodies 'the vast, complex, inter-related network' found in natural environments (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*; "Radical Landscapes"). The reflections of radical landscape poets on language and the environment are both expressed and embodied in their creative configurations of space on the page. The use of page-space is crucial to understanding radical landscape poetry—not only because it offers a distinctive way of engaging with the environment that is unique to experimental, particularly open-field, poetry, but also because it manifests each poet's unique poetics and practice. To begin my examination of Tarlo's poetry in this section, I will first investigate her use of page-space and explore its relationship to the "real" space of the natural field.

The space of the page is a meaningful part of Tarlo's poetry. It signifies both the spatial relationships among objects in the natural field and the linguistic relationships among words in the poetic field. For example, in the poem "January: Spring Lane" from *Tributaries* (2011-2014):

wall end edge hangs

holds

from fall

into

reed light

  space

weight

wait

(Tarlo, *Gathering Grounds* 21)

The absence of syntactical order in the poem opens it to reader's interpretation. The words in the first line 'wall end edge hang' are placed in a line without grammatical adhesives. This disrupts its intelligibility as verse and encourages the reader to search for connections among the words beyond conventional linguistic structures. Although the words form a description of the wall's end, the line does not stop at 'end' or 'edge' but extends into 'hangs', thereby situating the image of the wall within a perceivable field. Resonating with this, the vowel sound in the word 'hang'—"ang"—evokes a sense of openness and continuation. The meaning of the word 'hangs' also introduces a tension of falling, redirecting the reader's attention to the vertical just before they move on to the second line. The act of reading the text—horizontally across the line and vertically between lines—thus re-enacts the spatiality of the natural field as perceived by the poet. Recalling the composition of "Complements" discussed in the first section, the page is enlivened by the reader as they continuously draw relations between phrases-things. Here, the page-space is once again activated in the act of perception, embodying "real", spatial relations within the natural field. In this sense, the poem's textual and spatial compositions—its content and form—overlap, both pointing toward the world outside.

The spatiality of the composition is as indispensable to the reader's understanding of the poem as the spatiality of the natural field is to the poet's perception of the outside world. As Merleau-Ponty notes in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 'the nature of the perceived is to tolerate ambiguity, a certain "shifting" or "haziness" … and to allow itself to be shaped by the context' (4). In the stanza quoted above, the words are positioned on the page as objects situated within the natural field. The spatial and linguistic relations among these word-objects are entangled, generating an ambiguity of meaning and a "real" sense of space and being outside. Readers are reminded of both the disconnection and the connection between the words they perceive as abstract symbols and the physical objects they evoke, as well as between the poetic field and the natural field. The meaning of the poem is thus "contextual", shaped by the linguistic-spatial relations among word-objects.

This mode of meaning-making continues throughout the rest of the stanza. The second line consists of the lone verb 'holds'. Positioned in the middle of the stanza, the word is spatially and syntactically connected to the phrase 'wall end' above it and 'from fall' below it. Read together, they almost form an incomplete sentence: 'wall end' 'holds' [blank] 'from fall'. On the page, however, the words are distributed across different visual horizons—lines—leaving 'holds' isolated, missing both subject and object. The spacing of lines creates and embodies linguistic tensions among the words. These tensions—what Widger calls 'the stumbling rhythms and broken-off locutions' of language (907)—in turn transform the space between words into a material presence, as though physically holding the wall's edge from falling into the following lines. Later in the stanza, this performance of "holding" is made explicit: the composition is filled with

‘space’ and ‘light,’ which hold apart the wall and the ‘reed’, separating weight from lightness.

The interplay of spatial and linguistic tensions within the composition contributes to its materiality. As Widger argues, Tarlo’s use of words as objects cannot be understood merely as a ‘material metaphor’ but entails a “discursive materiality” distinctive to radical landscape poetry. While ‘sending forth signification, reaching towards things [outside],’ Tarlo’s work does not gesture toward a reality “a priori” but ‘inhabits a particular and spatial place’ itself (Widger 373, 366). Its materiality is grounded in its “specific evidentness” as a poem—a ‘shared phenomenality’ between words and objects, poetic and natural fields (Widger 365). It is on this level that the page-space is both embodied and embodying, producing a “real” sense of place. The poetic field is thus “equal to the real” (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*; Olson).

To note, rather than claiming the poetic field “is” or is “the same as” the natural field, both Widger and Tarlo adopt the term “equal to” (originally Olson’s) to denote a relation of equivalency and parity between the two. This choice of wording is significant because it signals radical and experimental landscape poetry’s resistance to “encapsulating” the real within the representational (Tarlo and Tucker, “Drawing Closer”). Radical landscape poetry negotiates rather than simply negates the boundaries between the artistic and the real, the subjective and the objective. As argued in the Introduction, it entails what Morton and Bloomfield call a “critical ecomimesis” in which the relationship between the poetic and natural fields—as well as between the poet and the landscape—is both phenomenologically intimate and critically distant. As demonstrated above, the embodiment of space in Tarlo’s poetry is achieved through the

interplay of spatial and linguistic tensions. By placing words creatively on the page and withholding the linguistic flow between them, Tarlo emphasises the materiality of language and gives substance to the otherwise overlooked space of the page. She invites the reader to reflect on the relationship between the discursive and the material, the artistic and the real, rather than assimilating one into the other.

This negotiation of boundaries between the ambiguous discursive and material, the poetic and the real, is not only an ecological and poetic inquiry into the divide between human and nature (see Introduction) but also a feminist critique of the dominant discourse of language and meaning-making, as outlined by Julia Kristeva. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva emphasises that the speaking subject is an embodied subject—one grounded in the physical and phenomenal world. However, modern linguistics treats language as a purely symbolic discourse, excluding the embodied subject from its analysis or 'tolerat[ing] one only as a transcendental ego' (Kristeva 22). Overly fixated on the symbolic functions of language, modern linguistics 'defer[s] any interrogation of its … externality' and ultimately reinforces the pre-existing symbolic order embedded in language (Kristeva 22). Consequently, language is transformed into a "symbolic contract", which all subjects must enter as they speak, accepting the terms and orders of the society.

In counteracting modern linguistics' focus on the symbolic operation of language, Kristeva introduces the concept of the "chora" (originally a term from Plato), which she defines as 'a modality of significance in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic' (26). In linguistic terms, the chora corresponds to the semiotic realm of language as a means of

expression—an early stage that precedes its organisation into purely symbolic operations (27). Within this realm, the speaking subject has not entered "the symbolic contract"; they remain embodied and situated in the phenomenal and physical world. Rejecting the notion that language is purely symbolic, Kristeva establishes a dialectical relationship between the semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance, and argues poetic language—particularly experimental poetry—can disrupt pre-existing symbolic and linguistic orders and reactivate the chora, or the semiotic, in the process of meaning-making. In this way, poetic language embodies a counterforce to the institutionalisation of the subject through the institutionalisation of language.

Tarlo's poetry exemplifies such a "revolution in poetic language" (Kristeva). Echoing Kristeva's feminist critique, her poetics entails a reconceptualisation of language as both discursive and material. Her method of composition—placing words on the page to embody the spatial relations among objects in the natural field—challenges pre-existing symbolic and linguistic orders.

The dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic—and between the perception of words as phenomena (things, images and sounds) and their perception as symbols—is also dramatised in her collaboration with the painter Judith Tucker. By combining poetry and painting in their work, Tarlo and Tucker invite readers and audience to reflect on the relationship between words and images. I will expand on this point in the third section, where I examine the presentation of their work in galleries.

Through formal experimentation, Tarlo's poetry foregrounds the materiality of language and complicates the process of meaning-making, rendering it both discursive and material, symbolic and semiotic. Nevertheless, her work does not surrender entirely

to a semiotic modality of significance. Instead, it performs a dialectical struggle between the semiotic and symbolic functions of language, highlighting both the connection and disconnection between the poetic and natural fields. For example, at the end of the poem "January: Spring Lane", she writes:

far path curves

up to

unseen

stop and along

folded field side

on side on side

plane breaks sky

(*Gathering Grounds* 21)

The path ahead of the poetic subject appears to 'stop,' even though it continues beyond their field of vision. Just as the poet's vision is limited by the distance they can see, the reader's gaze—and the poem itself—must stop at the border of the page. As 'the far path curves / up to [the] unseen,' the reader is guided to the line 'folded field side' and then to the repeated phrase 'on side'. This repetition signals a vision exhausted, as if the perceiving subject—the poet and the reader—is still attempting to see farther but ultimately fails, their gaze rebounding off the side or edge of the "field". At this point, a break occurs between the poetic and natural fields. While the natural field continues beyond the limits of sight, the composition halts at the border of the page and the limit of perception. In fact, the composition has been diverging from the natural field since the

beginning of the stanza: as the poem moves down the lines, the 'path' curves '*up* to [the] unseen' (emphasis mine). The final line of the poem, 'plane breaks sky', can be understood in two ways. First, it refers to a mechanical plane flying over the poetic subject, who is able to lift their head and watch the sky, even if they cannot see further along the horizon. Second, the word 'plane' denotes the horizon of the earth, which breaks from the surface as it meets the sky. In either case, the textual image directs the reader's gaze upward, toward the sky, while the act of reading continues downward, toward the bottom of the page and the poem's end. The break between the real and poetic fields is signified by this opposition between seeing and reading.

In addition, this final line is structured as a complete sentence: the subject, verb and object are arranged in order, articulating the landscape 'in manipulable, distinct and identifiable terms' (Merleau-Ponty 12). The linguistic relations on the page no longer embody the spatial relations of the natural field but instead conform to the established norms of language. In this sense, there is a third meaning to the line 'plane breaks sky'. The poem no longer presents an embodied and situated perception of the natural field as seen by the poet. In articulating this perception, it breaks away from the semiotic realm of language and enters a purely symbolic mode of discourse.

This struggle between the semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance in Tarlo's poetry, as Nick Selby argues, highlights the "slipping away" trope of nature writing—the notion that the effacement of selfhood, including the capacity to name, express and articulate, is necessary for engagement with the external world. By positioning the subject's perception of the environment at the dual margin between the legibility of language and the ecstasy of being outside, Tarlo's poetry enacts a 'delicate

exploration of the unbroken relation between the "real" and the poetic' (Selby 894). As noted in the Introduction, Selby suggests that this marginal position of the subject mirrors the marginal status of radical landscape poetry within both British pastoral and American late modernist traditions of nature writing. The liminal position—or rhizomatic rooting—of radical landscape poetry, in turn, informs its investigation of the 'profound edge' between the poetic and the real, the subjective and the objective. Selby's suggestion resonates with Tarlo's and Eltringham's observations on the British trajectory of open-field poetry, which situates the ecological poetics and ethics of Olsonian open-field practice within the histories and geographies of British landscapes, maintaining a creative tension between pastoral/representational and experimental/abstract modes of nature writing. As shown in the poem "January: Spring Lane", the subject is both "inside" and "outside", their use of language both symbolic and semiotic, enacting a performative struggle with articulating and embodying the spatial dynamics of the natural field. Yet it is precisely this performance of struggle that enables the coexistence of both critical-reflective and embodied ways of perceiving and engaging with the environment. By resisting the solidification of either approach, Tarlo's poetry enacts an open and dialogical way of knowing and being in the world.

The dialectical struggle between the semiotic and the symbolic is also performed in Tarlo's poetry through the dramatisation of the (dis)connection between the sounds of language and landscape. The significance of sound in experimental poetry is acknowledged by Charles Olson in "Projective Verse", where he links composition to the breath and its sonic energies, a view that echoes sound-poetry practices such as Kurt Schwitters's "Ursonate", Hugo Ball's Dada performances and later work by Henri

Chopin. Similarly, Tarlo argues that open-field poetry is not only spatial but also auditory, evoking deep feeling not simply through words but through the delineation of sound in space (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 14). To illustrate this, I continue to draw on examples from the series *Tributaries* (2011–2014). In the poem "February: Hey Clough", the reader is immediately informed that the poetic subject's vision is compromised:

eye blurs – floats
    meets white valley
icy tributary

(*Gathering Grounds* 23)

Everything is covered in snow; the entire valley appears white, leaving them uncertain about 'where to tread'. As a result, both the poetic subject and the reader can only orient themselves through context and by listening to the sounds around them.

thin fall-sounds
  water drops
      wide
       into
      water

(*Gathering Grounds* 23)

Amidst the snow, the poetic subject listens to the valley, envisioning an expanse of water and space beyond their perception. Similarly, the reader envisions the valley through the words on the page, whose form mimics the movement and spatial tension of water dropping 'into / water'. However, in the next stanza, the return of rhyme signals a retreat

into lyricism. As the poetic subject loses their sense of place, the reader, too, becomes enclosed within the poem.

gripping heather
up to bank
where to tread
where to stand

(*Gathering Grounds* 24)

The sound of water disappears, and the reader can no longer "hear" the world outside the poem, as the 'water stopped' dropping and turned to ice:

deeper in and
under ledges –
at the coldest minutes
of night – water stopped
into ice, little
pillars seeming
to rise

(*Gathering Grounds* 24)

While the lyric continues, the world outside the poem remains silent and unknown. No longer fluid, water becomes layered and is forced to fall in the form of ice, its flow now coarse and angular, like 'gritstone'.

higher still
each day's melting
forces waters fall

on fall on fall
it flows again
gritstone
ledge over ledge
between iced
limitations,
edges

(*Gathering Grounds* 24)

Contrary to the immanent, immediate sense of being outside enacted in the previous stanzas, the final stanzas of the poem "freeze" into periodicity. Whereas the first half of the composition adopts an open, fluid form, the second half becomes increasingly angular, foregrounding the structuredness of the poem. From 'the coldest minutes' to 'each day', time grows distant and measurable, accumulating 'ledge over ledge'. In the final stanza, what enables 'making space' is no longer the sounds of water but 'sound's water'. This unnatural phrasing points to a disconnection between the sounds of language and of water, as well as between poetic composition and landscape. At the beginning of the poem, readers are invited to envision the valley through the thin, falling sounds of water, sharing in the poet's lived experience of being outside. In the second half, the relationship between sound and space shifts from phenomenal embodiment to lyrical representation. As water freezes into ice, the verse becomes more explanatory, producing a more distant and structured sense of space and time. The disconnection between the sounds of water and 'sound's water', between the natural and the artificial, is embedded in the transformation of the poem through its creative use of space.

To recap, so far, I have discussed two entangled and reciprocal uses of space in Tarlo's poetry: to interrupt the linguistic flow within the composition and to embody the spatiality of the natural field. By disrupting syntactical order in the text, Tarlo draws attention to the material presence of words and page-space, transforming the composition into a spatial field that is "equal" to the real (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*; Olson). This experimentation with space also signifies the disconnection between the poetic and the natural fields by enacting a struggle between the semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance. In this way, Tarlo's poetry is eco-ethical and negotiates the boundaries between the poetic and the real, the discursive and the material. It re-presents—without encapsulating—the environment. Next, I will expand on this negotiation of boundaries in Tarlo's poetry by drawing examples from *Field*.

Beyond spatial experimentation, Tarlo's poetry also negotiates the boundaries between the poetic and the natural field through a self-referential and ambiguous language that positions the reader on the threshold between inside and outside the poem, encouraging reflection on the (dis)connection between the artificial and the real. In *Field*, entry "13 May 10 (driving)", Tarlo writes:

> into cut and speed of morning route
> through High Flatts, Ingbirchworth
> right turn to Penistone
> ……
> from Barnsley Road
> it's boundaries, not
> field that's seen

(31)

The ellipses in the middle of the first stanza symbolise its indeterminate and porous boundary. Their visual form and literary function render “the line” permeable, preventing it from clearly dividing the stanza into two. This sense of boundary is further signified semantically in the last two lines of the stanza: ‘it’s boundaries, not / field that’s seen.’ The sentence begins affirmatively, yet the comma in the penultimate line anticipates its instability, its meaning soon complicated by the word of negation: ‘not’. The line break in the sentence pauses the reading process, momentarily suspending the reader in ambiguity before they proceed to the final line, where the sentence resolves in meaning. The composition of this sentence enacts the indeterminacy of the poetic subject’s perception of the field outside and communicates it to the reader on a visceral level. In this way, the reader is immersed in the poem, mirroring the poetic subject’s embodied and enfolded perspective within the natural field.

Later in the poem, the poet brings the reader into movement: ‘into cut and speed of morning route’:

> we are at the top line, cars
> glinting in sun, tiny from train
> seeing right over unseen Don
> to Spring Vale cement works
> houses, school
> church above

(31)

The poetic subject and their companions ‘are at the top line’, possibly referring to the railway, looking over the field from the train. Simultaneously, “we”, the readers, are also ‘at the top line’ of the stanza, looking from a distance at—reading—the scene of ‘Don’, composed of ‘Spring Vale’, ‘houses, school’ and ‘church’. This “line” aligns the position and perspective of the poetic subject in the natural field with that of the reader in the poetic field. Yet, it also reminds the reader—who is both reading and engaged within the composition—of their distance from the poetic subject and the natural field. This simultaneous enfolded and distant perspective of the field mirrors the kind of attention Tarlo cultivates in her perception of and engagement with the field outside.

As mentioned in the previous section, in “Traversing the Field”, Tarbuck and Widger use the works of Thomas A. Clark and Harriet Tarlo to demonstrate the practice of “walking poetics”. This refers a mode of composition that not only draws on the poet’s experience of walking outside, but also re-enacts ‘the attention paid [by the poet] to the natural world while walking’ in the attention paid by the reader to the poem (Tarbuck and Widger 242). ‘To transfer that close attention from the natural world to the text’, Tarbuck and Widger argue, ‘the text … must be taken seriously as an environment, and must also be read not as mimetic, as in Romantic nature poetry, but as gestural’ (242). Since the textual and natural environments ‘cannot be mapped one to another’, contemporary walking poetry ‘makes secondary the particulars of environmental immersion’ and instead focuses on *demonstrating* the types of attention required and produced by walking outside (242).

Walking and working in the field, Tarlo’s creative process generates an embodied and immersive mode of seeing and being in the environment, in which the subject’s

perspective and sense of self are not only situated within but also (un)formed in their movements and in relations with other subjects and objects in the local environment. To demonstrate this mode of perceiving and dwelling in the natural field, Tarlo constructs an interactive and dynamic textual environment in which "we" become part of the compositional process, as the above example from Field illustrates. By aligning the reader's perspective and act of reading with the poetic subject's movement through the field, Tarlo takes the reader with her, inviting them to travel and traverse the boundaries between the poetic and natural fields.

Nonetheless, the performance of walking and working in the field both requires and generates a critical mode of attention. Walking and working with the painter Judith Tucker, Tarlo's perceptual mode is varied, oscillating between a rhythmic "concentration on" and "distancing from" the object during the pauses and movements of her walks. Being companioned by a painter also heightens the artists' awareness of the limitations of their respective disciplines in representing landscape. Resonating with this, as the extract from Field, entry "13 May 10 (driving)", shows, the attention to the field produced in the reading process is likewise both immersive and distant; the reader is simultaneously viscerally and visually engaged within the composition and made aware of their position outside the "field". Transported through the landscape, the poetic subject and their companions look over the field from a displaced and shifting perspective, despite their physical presence within it. Similarly, "the top line" engages the reader in the process of composition while also making them aware of their own participation, heightening critical awareness of their position. As the poet informs us at the beginning, "we" are

driving along boundaries of the field, both inside and outside, both connected to and disconnected from it.

As argued in the first section, the act of walking grounds Tarlo and Tucker's creative process in the "field"—in both physical and social relationships with others within the locale—bridging the divide between the subject and the environment, as well as between discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. This leads to a radical and post-phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and place as fluid rather than fixed, and phenomenal rather than purely conceptual entities that are mutually and continuously shaped through the act and field of perception. Echoing this practice of eco-ethics outside, Tarlo's composition on the page is also eco-ethical, presenting an embodied and situated—yet radical—reimagining of the environment and the place of the subject within it that highlight the entanglement between subjective and objective, discursive and material, processes of artmaking as worldmaking. In Tarlo's words, her poetry enacts a 'shifting and sifting of assessing and reassessing our relationship with the places and spaces we inhabit' ("Radical Landscapes"). As shown above, through her ambiguous use of language, Tarlo positions the reader on the threshold between "inside" and "outside"—between being immersed in the field, as the poet is during the creative process, and being disconnected from it. In this way, her work interrogates the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived environment—both textual and natural—and negotiates the boundaries of "field", questioning the divide between an objective outside and a subjective inside.

Tarlo's composition on the page is eco-ethical also because it re-enacts the collaborative and dialogical mode of artmaking that she and Tucker engage in during

their creative process. As discussed in the first section, in their project Fitties (2015–2019), the collaborations and conversations between the artists and between the artists and the local communities in the environment, shape not only their experience and knowledge of the place but also their craft. This is reflected and re-enacted in Tarlo's poetry. For instance, the poem "Fitties Voices" is composed of multiple personal stories from people in Fitties, re-presenting a heterogenous sense of place that aligns with the culture of "ad hocism" found in the buildings of Fitties. Moreover, this collaborative and dialogical mode of artmaking and placemaking is not exclusive to *Fitties* (both the artwork and the place). Rather, it embodies an eco-ethical way of knowing and being in the environment that applies across different scales and locations. For example, in *Field*, entry "20 Aug 10", Tarlo re-presents a hybrid sense of place by accumulating and shifting between various viewpoints on the page:

what? I never saw
is it a wild thing?
        what, so fast, JT

black dog joy
running top field

                man
        at the edge
            calling

calling his dog

she won't come

back

not now she's in

(39)

This short poem records an event in which a black dog breaks free from its owner and presents four different perspectives on this simple occurrence. In the first stanza, two perspectives emerge—those of the poet and "JT" (Judith Tucker). The organisation of the verses simulates a conversation between Tarlo and Tucker on the page; the spaces between and within the lines interrupt the reading process and enact the pauses in their conversation as they stop to look for the dog. Once again, through formal and spatial experimentation, Tarlo connects the reader's experience of the poem to that of the artists with(in) the field outside. In the second stanza, the dog is seen running up the field, and the event is portrayed through the perspective of a witness—the conversing artists. Having introduced their viewpoint as witnesses, the poem then presents two more participants and their perspectives in the third and fourth stanzas: the man calling his dog, and the dog running away. In this way, the poem encompasses the experiences of four subjects within the field: the two artists, the man and the dog. Their distances and relationships are embodied in the spatiality of the composition. While the spacing in the first stanza enacts the exchange between the poetic subject and JT (Judith Tucker), in the third stanza the 'man / at the edge' is positioned at the far right of the composition, visually indicating his location in the field relative to the artists.

Both the individuality of each character and their interconnectedness are conveyed in the poem through its spatial arrangement. The spacing between and within lines ensures that each subject's experience and perspective is accumulated within the (poetic) field, rather than reduced to a single, unified view of the natural field. The poem thus becomes a multivocal and multifocal re-presentation of the environment—one composed of multiple subjective experiences rather than a singular "objective" observation. In turn, the reader engages with the poem in the same way the poet engages with(in) the natural field: through collaboration and dialogue with other human and nonhuman subjects within it. In this way, Tarlo's poetry re-enacts the eco-ethical way of knowing and being in the environment on the page that she and Tucker practise in their creative process outside.

III. Re-Presenting Landscape

The last section of this chapter examines the practice of eco-ethics in the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work in galleries and in books. Resonating with Tarlo's open-field composition, the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work re-enacts their practice of eco-ethics in their creative process outside and negotiates the boundaries between the discursive and the material, the artificial and the real, by performing a dialectic struggle between images and words as semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance (Kristeva). As mentioned above, the dialectic between the semiotic and the symbolic is emphasised in the collaboration between Tarlo and Tucker and in the interface between poetry and painting. Focusing on the dynamic between the two artists, as well as between their respective perspectives and mediums of engaging with the landscape, I argue that

the presentation of their work constitutes an eco-ethical re-presentation of the environment.

As previously mentioned, Tarlo and Tucker participated in an exhibition hosted by the Sheffield Institute of Arts, titled “In the Open”, in which their work negotiates the boundaries between the visual and the verbal, the semiotic and the symbolic, through innovative forms of display.

Figure 1.1 “Outfalls”

For example, Tarlo and Tucker’s work “Outfalls” was presented as a collection of interwoven yet distinctly bounded words and images arranged on the gallery wall (see Figure 1.1). Unlike other collaborative works presented in the exhibition—for example, “Field Notes/Field studies” by Elizabeth-Jane Burnett and Rebecca Thomas (Figure 1.2) and “Searching for Jossie” by Daniel Eltringham and David Walker Barker (Figure 1.3)—the presentation of “Outfalls” does not integrate words and images. By framing Tarlo’s poems and Tucker’s drawings individually and next to one another, this presentation emphasises the boundaries between the two art forms while placing them together.

Figure 1.2 “Field Notes/Field studies”

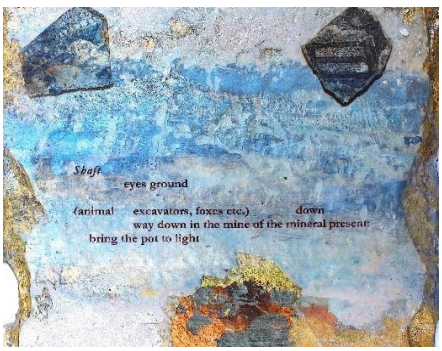
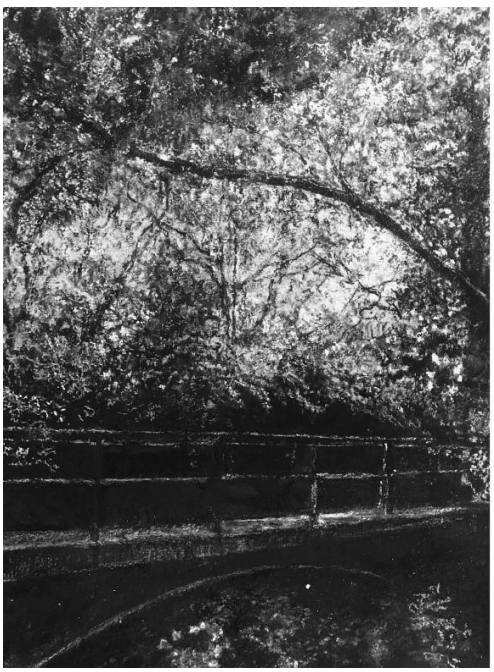


Figure 1.3 “Searching for Jossie”

On one hand, the physical frames and the space between them divide Tarlo and Tucker’s work into separate black-and-white units and highlight the contrast between the two means of representing landscapes—one verbal and the other visual. On the other hand, the arrangement of the frames signifies the interconnectivity between the drawings and the poems. The wholeness of Tarlo and Tucker’s work is reinforced in the complementary shapes of the frames and the consistent alternation between drawings and poems, presenting an interplay of black and white, lines and spaces, that echoes the relationship between the artwork and the wall, foreground and background. Tucker’s detailed, saturated drawings both contrast with and complement Tarlo’s abstract, controlled textual compositions, and vice versa. The monochrome presentation of their work underscores the shared materiality (ink and paper) of these two mediums of

representation, bringing the verbal and the visual to the same level of phenomenal significance. In this way, by presenting their work as separate yet complementary units, Tarlo and Tucker ground it in the material context of representation. Resonating with their creative process—walking and working together in the field—the adjacency of poetry and painting on the wall re-enacts a collaborative and hybrid mode of artmaking, grounded in interaction and in the physical materiality of its composition.

Looking closer into their work, "Outfalls" (see Figure 1.4), the composed drawing and poem are connected through the place the artists are working within.



river ruptures out
sluice running Lud
under DUCKERING
LINCO iron foot-
bridge worn ropes
hang JONO ♥ JODI
twist back under
cross felled trunks
clagged over ditch
hedgerow grasses
brushing bedstraw
clover mallow be-
low gate to sorrel
plantain meadow
DR PEPPER & PEPSI
caught reed fringe
winds to roadside
behind barbed green
wire creep-ripples to
small stone bridge at
field edge & wanders
north-east into fen

Figure 1.4 "Outfalls"

Viewing the drawing and the poem side by side highlights both their connections and disconnections; the poem references details both present (e.g., 'river', 'iron foot-bridge') and absent in the drawing (e.g., the 'roadside', 'plantain meadow', 'DR PEPPER & PEPSI'). The scant and scattered correspondences between the poem and the drawing create space for imaginative engagement with the landscape, reminding the audience of

what remains “outside” each representation. In this way, the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker’s work encourages readers and viewers to experience the landscape in an open-ended, rather than fixed or fully defined, manner.

Similarly, in the gallery setting, framing poems and drawings individually emphasises their differences and creates multiple ways of reading and viewing them together, as shown in Figure 1.1. Each framed unit may connect to others through spatial and/or referential proximity, with different combinations producing new perspectives of the landscape. Thus, the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker’s work constitutes an open-ended and multifocal representation of the landscape. Another example of this representation of landscape can be found in their publication *Behind Lands*:

Figure 1.5 “Behind Lands”

As shown in Figure 1.5, poems and pictures are presented separately and together, enfolded within a single piece of paper. Through interspersing pictures with poems and vice versa, Tarlo and Tucker defer the integration of their works and instead, stage a continual (un) folding of the stories “behind lands” to be performed by the audience as they read, see and play with the book. As they explain,

> Effectively we were turning the pages live, but avoiding, as the concertina structure of the book itself does, the direct equation of one image to one text as pairs. In the multiple fold, there is a democracy of units – drawing is not privileged over poetry or vice versa, each page is entire unto itself or may be read sequentially. There are infinite ways of folding and unfolding the book to reveal different combinations (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 65).

As shown in figures 1.1, 1.4 and 1.5, Tarlo and Tucker's work is presented with a 'democracy of units' between each poem and picture in various contexts and scales. In such a presentation, the relationship between the composed units and the whole is neither integrative nor subordinative, as the purpose of each unit is not to contribute to a singular, unified view of the landscape. Instead, the units remain freely and ambiguously interconnected, embodying multiple possible perspectives on the landscape. In this sense, the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work enacts an eco-ethical way of seeing and interpreting place—one that is interactive, pluralistic and 'radically democratic' (Tarlo, "Provisional Pleasures").

As argued in the first section, Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking, though grounded in a geographically specific site, performs an open and dialogical mode of reimagining the environment. Their practice of eco-ethics is thus both locational and trans-locational, phenomenal and experimental. The collaborations and conversations between the artists, as well as between the artists and local communities—human and nonhuman—position their work in the "metaxy" (Biggs)—the space in between different disciplines and perspectives. From this liminal position, they are able to present and sustain an embodied and situated, yet critical and creative, perception of the environment. This perception of

the environment is then re-enacted in Tarlo's poetry. The composition of "Fitties Voices" (2016), for example, signifies both the autonomy and interconnectedness of the inhabitants of Fitties by presenting their stories and perspectives of the place in diagonal corners of the page. Likewise, in the presentation of "Outfalls" (see Figure 3.1) and *Behind Lands* (see Figure 1.5), poems and pictures, the perspectives of Tarlo and Tucker within the landscape are juxtaposed rather than superimposed. The boundaries and spaces between the composed units, created by frames and the wall, accentuate the connectivity between them while preserving their autonomy.

Moreover, such interactive and multivocal, or in Tarlo's words, 'radically democratic' ("Provisional Pleasures"), presentation of the artwork and the landscape mirrors the network of experimental poetry and experimental poets. As noted in the Introduction, the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of groupings within experimental poetry reflects its commitment to radical experimentation with form, both in poetic composition and social relationships. Elizabeth-Jane Burnett and Anthony Faramelli use the metaphor of the wolfpack to characterise the relationships among experimental poets, as well as between experimental artists, poets and their audiences, in which 'each member defines themselves in relation to the others, while at the same time remaining at, and working from, the periphery' (171). This balancing between autonomy and collectivity is especially evident in group exhibitions, where 'individual contributions represent individual artists while the exhibition as a whole (the pack contribution) may not be fully representative of each individual's particular concerns' (171For instance, the Sheffield exhibition "In the Open" included more than 60 contributors and was designed 'to explore ideas around place, ecology and environment through collaborative and

dialogical thinking and artmaking across creative and academic disciplines' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Cross Multi Inter Trans"). Participating in this exhibition, Tarlo and Tucker present their work with a democracy—rather than full integration—of composed units and demonstrate an eco-ethical mode of attention elicited by the exhibition, one that aims to reconnect without assimilating distinct perspectives within the natural world.

Also participating in the project, the audience explores the environment of the gallery as well as the environments represented in the artwork and engages in collaboration and dialogue with the various artists through their works. By attending the exhibition, they generate diverse interests and modes of engagement with the artworks as sites of encounter between art and nature. In this way, the artists' eco-ethical aspirations and experimentation are realised in the audience's interactions within the gallery, as well as in the natural landscape re-presented in the artworks. Tarlo and Tucker's practice of eco-ethics is thus transformative and trans-locational, being re-enacted by others in a different place. As Burnett argues:

> The gallery context widens the scope of the audience through the positive and strategic sharing of skills and networks in interdisciplinary poetry-art-ecology collaborations that can begin to answer one of the criticisms that ecopoetics faces; that of the ill equipped nature of a small readership for a political cause of environmentalism that demands wide engagement (194).

In short, the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's artwork in galleries embodies a both creative and contextual practice of eco-ethics, not only in its democratic organisation of words and images but also in its cultivation of the audience's attention to the environment and to others within it.

In short, the juxtaposition of poetry and painting—both on the wall and on paper—mirrors the dynamics between Tarlo and Tucker as they work and walk "with" each other in the field. As Tarlo and Tucker state, the drawings are 'an accompaniment rather than an illustration' of the poems ("Drawing Closer" 50). The juxtaposition of poetry and painting signifies their 'adjacency and difference'; the space between them allows two distinctive yet interconnected ways of seeing and representing the landscape, enabling the artists to 'conduct open conversations with each other and [their] viewers and readers' (50). The presentation of their work, as well as the representation of the landscape within it, is thus eco-ethical, encouraging the audience to imagine the landscape in collaboration and in conversation with others— "in the open"—and to reflect on what lies "outside" its artistic representations.

This highlights another aspect of Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking as a practice of eco-ethics: their attentiveness and criticality towards their own disciplines enable them to interrogate the nature of representation and the relationship between the represented and the real landscape. The artwork represents the landscape, and meanwhile, it re-presents itself as a representation. This is apparent in the exhibition of *Excavations and Estuaries* at Bank Street Arts, Sheffield, 2014 (see Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6 *Excavation and Estuaries*

Words are placed on the wall without being confined by the page borders or frames, both surrounding and being surrounded by paintings. The audience explores the artwork as they explore and walk within the gallery space, re-enacting the artists' creative process outside. As argued in the first section, walking and working in the field, Tarlo's and Tucker's subjective horizons are enfolded within it. Correspondingly, the implied horizon in their artwork parallels the horizon of the gallery space: as the audience moves through the gallery and views the work, their embodied line of sight meets the artists' within the landscape (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 65). This creates an immediate sense of being outside, leading the audience to believe they participate in the landscape both "inside" and "outside" its representation.

The alignment of the lines of sight between the audience in the gallery and the artists in the landscape not only enacts an immediate sense of being outside but also re-enacts the artists' perception of the landscape, which is embodied and situated, yet dynamic and provisional, grounded in walking bodies and the physical and transforming environment. In other words, as they walk and view in the gallery, the audience is invited

to walk with the artists in the landscape. According to Terry Royce, in his studies of 'intersemiotic complementarity between texts and image:

> The level of involvement by a viewer with a visual is realized by a horizontal angle, which is concerned with the interrelationship between two frontal planes: the frontal plane of the constructor of the visual and the frontal plane of the represented participants (72).

The angle between the two planes, which Royce calls 'the angle of divergence' indicates the degree of involvement of the constructor in the represented scene. The closer this angle is to zero, the more involved the constructor is. In Tarlo and Tucker's work, since their perceptions are situated within the landscape, 'the angle of divergence' between them and the 'represented participants' is minimal; the artists are fully immersed in the landscape. In addition, 'the angle of divergence' also indicates the "power relations" between the viewer and the visual (Royce). Since the angle of divergence between the artists and the represented landscape is minimal, Tarlo and Tucker's work reflects an equal relationship between the viewer (the artists) and the visual (the landscape), aligning with their eco-ethical process of artmaking.

This equal relationship is then extended to the audience and the artists through the presentation of their work in the gallery. The alignment between the artists' lines of sight and that of the audience conveys a sense of equality among the constructor (the artists), the visual (the represented landscape) and the viewer (the audience). Contrasting the conventional presentation of poetry on the page, Tarlo's writing is displayed on the wall. The words are, in Tarlo and Tucker's terms, 'liberated not only from the boundary of the page edge but also from horizontality' ("Drawing Closer" 128). In this way, 'the angle of

divergence' (Royce) between the poet and the reader-audience is reduced to a minimum. The reader-audience is invited to explore the poem as a painting and to participate in both the textual and visual environment presented on the wall, as the artists did in the landscape.

Nonetheless, the innovative presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work in the gallery prevents the audience's immersion in the represented landscape. Although the audience is invited to explore the landscape *with* the artists, the juxtaposition of texts and images on the wall makes them aware of the difference between their own perspective within the gallery and that of the artists outside, in the landscape—highlighting the disconnection between the represented landscape and the natural one. As Tarlo and Tucker explain:

> Having text and image together in an open space abutting each other at a similar scale allows a viewer to make connections and to appreciate what happens when there is apparent divergence between the two practices. It is perhaps on these occasions that the unexpected aspects of our collaboration emerge. These aspects cannot be overdetermined or planned: silent, static drawings might become filled with sound and movement and somehow the density of the drawing is counterbalanced by the spaces between the words ("Drawing Closer" 51).

As shown in Figure 1.6, the words and paintings 'symbiotically help to emplace' one another on the wall (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 51). Presented together, these two mediums of representing the landscape both complement and reveal each other's limitations. In other words, they frame one another and remind the audience of the frame

of art, even when the words are liberated from the page and the paintings are displayed without physical frames. As Timothy Morton argues in *Ecology without Nature*,

> Contemporary art evokes what is often excluded in our view of the picture: its surrounding frame, the space of the gallery itself, the institution of art altogether. In a very significant way, these experiments are environmental (31).

The traditional function of the frame is to separate the artwork from the real world. In landscape painting, for example, the frame disconnects the viewer's attention from their immediate surroundings and draws it into an imagined "outside." However, in the exhibition of *Excavations and Estuaries*, the paintings are 'framed' by the poems, and vice versa. While 'both the poem and the drawing … provide evidence of "having been there" of direct experience of place, of bodies moving and then being still in the landscape', the divergence between the two artforms *marks* 'the space of the gallery' and 'the institution of art' (Tarlo and Tucker, "Drawing Closer" 51; Morton 31). Morton describes this simultaneous evocation of ambience and environment—inside and outside—as a gesture of 'remark': 'a special mark or a series of them [that] makes us aware that we are in the presence of marks' (Morton 48). This gesture of remark holds the audience in a liminal space between the real and the artificial, the landscape and its representation within the gallery space, inviting them to reflect on the difference and the continuity between the two realms.

Like Tarlo's composition on the page, the artwork 'inhabits a particular and spatial place' within the world itself —the gallery walls (Widger). As argued in the second section, Tarlo's poetry stages a dialectical struggle between the semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance through a creative use of space, transforming the

composition into a poetic field that is both seen and read. Similarly, in the exhibition of *Excavations and Estuaries*, the artwork presents, in Morton's words, 'a weaving margin' between words and images. While Tucker's paintings keep the audience visually engaged, Tarlo's poems—positioned alongside and given equal prominence to the paintings—requires them to engage with the landscape and the artwork verbally at the same time. Their work thus occupies a space between words and images not only because of its cross-disciplinarity but also because, through this cross-disciplinarity, the boundary between words and images, as well as the symbolic and semiotic significances of artwork, is renegotiated. This renegotiation suspends the representational significance of the landscape and instead grounds both the artwork and the audience in their physical materiality. Put simply, the audience is emplaced *through* (rather than *in*) the artwork within their immediate environment—that is, within a material and external world that remains phenomenally and physically continuous inside and outside the frame of art. The space of the gallery is connected to the space of the represented landscape for their 'shared phenomenality' (Widger).

Echoing Widger's argument for the "shared phenomenality" between the representation and the real, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that the value of experimental art does not lie in its capacity to reveal 'truth' but in its invocation of 'the sensibility of exteriority' (Dronsfield). That is, 'the constitutive sense of the fact that there is world' (Nancy 55). Tarlo and Tucker's work evokes such 'sensibility of exteriority,' grounding the audience in their bodies and their physical surroundings. It is both a representation of the landscape and a 'remark' on the material and external world beyond that representation (Morton 48). As Tarlo and Tucker explain,

> For a moment, before conscious thought, both the materiality of the paint and the materiality of the form of words operate pre-linguistically and, in this instance, operate together ("'Off Path, Counter Path'"126).

The presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work serves as a site of encounter between the audience and the environment—not only the landscape represented in the artwork but also the gallery space inhabited by the artwork itself. This face-to-face encounter re-enacts the artist's experience within the landscape and may be understood as the encounter between a finite human subject and the infinite natural world, which, as argued in the Introduction, forms the precondition for an ethical relationship between the two (Levinas). In this way, Tarlo and Tucker's work embodies a practice of eco-ethics that is not only grounded in specific contexts and encounters with others but also transformative and enactive across various environments.

In short, as demonstrated in the exhibition of *Excavations and Estuaries*, the practice of eco-ethics in Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking is re-enacted in the presentation of their work—both in galleries and in books—through the juxtaposition and interweaving of poetry and painting. This innovative presentation evokes a sense of materiality and exteriority, situates the audience within their immediate environment while gesturing towards a world beyond, and encourages reflection on the (dis)connections between the spaces inside and outside the artwork. It is, therefore, an eco-ethical re-presentation of the environment.

To sum up, this section has examined the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work and argued that it embodies an eco-ethical re-presentation of the environment. Echoing their creative process in the field, as well as Tarlo's composition on the page, the

presentation enacts an interactive, collaborative and dialogical mode of meaning-making. It signifies and negotiates the boundaries between images and words, and between the space "inside" (of the book page and the gallery wall) and the space "outside" (of the represented landscape and the natural world). Their practice is, therefore, eco-ethical from beginning to end.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the practice of eco-ethics in Tarlo and Tucker's work, tracing its development from their creative process in the field to Tarlo's composition on the page and, finally, to the presentation of their work in galleries and books. By incorporating the act of walking in their creative process, their artmaking delimits the human subjects and activities in material terms from the start. And by walking and working with each other and the local communities in the locale, Tarlo and Tucker decentre the creative agency of their artmaking from the mind of an individual subject and reattribute it to the interconnections and interactions among various subjects-objects within the place. Their artmaking thus embodies an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being in the world that is situated and dialogical. This practice of eco-ethics is then re-enacted in Tarlo's composition on the page and in the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work in galleries and in books. Through experimental organisation of space, words and images, Tarlo and Tucker continue to signify and negotiate the boundaries between the subjective and the objective, the discursive and the material, processes of artmaking as worldmaking. From landscapes to paper and gallery walls, from outside to inside, Tarlo and Tucker's work is a practice of eco-ethics.

Mirroring the collaboration between the two artists, Tarlo and Tucker's work bridges distinctive perspectives within and across the "field"—as a geographical site, a poetic composition and a set of disciplinary practices—without collapsing their differences. These include distinctions between the artists themselves, between the artists and local communities, between the artists and the reader-audience, and between the participants in the group exhibition. This dialogical approach to knowing, being within and representing landscape constitutes an eco-ethical reimagining of the environment—one that is formally and ideologically open, yet remains grounded in physical materiality, in practice and in place. In contrast to eco-ethics understood as a fixed moral discipline, Tarlo and Tucker's practice is open-ended and pragmatic, enacted collaboratively and dialogically with other subjects and objects across various locations and situations. Foregrounding materials, relations and actions, their work contributes to the constitution of an eco-ethics that is trans-locational and transformative, attentive to ongoing ecological and societal transitions in the contemporary world.

Chapter Two

Eco-Ethical Reflections and Speculations on Peter Larkin's Poetics of "Scarcity"

Introduction

This chapter explores Peter Larkin's eco-ethical composition. Being and becoming with trees, his poetry invites radical reflection and speculation on the nature of the world and humanity's place within it. In particular, the vegetal and spatial bearing of trees in landscapes compromised or enclosed by anthropogenic schemes, as re-presented in his compositions, prompts readers to contemplate ethically both the fragility and endurance of the natural world and its relations with humans—what Larkin calls 'the relations of scarcity' ("Fully From, All Scarce To"). Through this entry point, I propose four ways Larkin's poems render and re-enact the life of trees in enclosed landscapes, and their scarce relations to the human subject, by experimenting with language and page space: mindful mediation between constructed opposites within the text; the marginalisation of human perception; granulated, irregular and multiple configurations of language and paths of meaning-making; and the production and imagination of ecological space. Centred on Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", these readings highlight the generative creativity of experimental landscape poetry (ELP), grounded not only in formal and linguistic innovation and expanded meaning-making but also in experimenting with ways to connect human and nonhuman, language and landscape, on ecological and ethical grounds.

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis adopts performative and phenomenological understandings of landscape and landscape poetry. Drawing on their

"rhizomatic" material-discursive becoming, non-linear, interconnected and continually evolving, it advances "eco-ethical composition" as a continual "reiteration" of the human–nature relationship within and through ELP (Deleuze and Guattari; Butler). By expanding Harriet Tarlo's "radical landscape poetry" (RLP) to "experimental landscape poetry" (ELP), and bringing together four distinct practices under "eco-ethical composition", the thesis highlights a mode of writing and being that becomes with others and transforms itself in the process. Larkin's poetry, in particular, reiterates ecological and poetic terms such as "scarcity", "innovation" and "enclosure" by recontextualising them within plant life and natural landscapes. Attending to the resonance and dissonance of these terms across cultural and natural contexts, it reflects on the limits of human knowledge while affirming an inexhaustible plurality of intelligence and agency in more-than-human worlds.

By advancing four interpretations of Larkin's poetics of eco-ethics in relation to specific texts and environments, this chapter also performs reiteration through recontextualisation. It aims to re-enact ELP's eco-ethical composition, highlighting its capacity to transgress boundaries and traverse the spaces between human and nonhuman, discourse and matter, and interpretation and practice.

In this Introduction, I propose that the term "scarcity" is pivotal to understanding Larkin's compositional practice and broader philosophy, preparing the ground for my further exploration of his eco-ethical composition centred on a poetics of "scarcity". The first part examines the liminal position of Larkin's poetry in relation to tradition and innovation, and to landscape and language, aligning it with Harriet Tarlo's proposal of RLP. Building on this liminality, I argue that the term "scarcity" functions as the pivot of

Larkin's thought and practice: his poetics of "scarcity" both marks the boundaries between human and nature and enables mindful mediation across them.

Drawing on Natania Meeker and Antonia Szabari's *Radical Botany*, the second part differentiates Larkin's poetry from RLP, arguing that it not only remains with local, physical environment but also speculates on more-than-human natures, opening possibilities for new modes of dwelling. Treating "scarcity" as both mediating pivot and speculative drive, I emphasise its indeterminacy and propose an open, contextual approach to Larkin's eco-ethical composition.

Part One: "Scarcity" as a Pivot of Mediation and Reflection

Larkin's poetry appears in Harriet Tarlo's anthology of radical landscape poetry (RLP), *The Ground Aslant*. Tarlo characterises his work as poetry that, 'however innovative, clings to its hold on the local and physical world' (Tarlo 7). As explained in the Introduction, RLP challenges the divide between experimental or innovative and traditional or mainstream poetry and straddles American late modernist and British pastoral traditions. Larkin similarly acknowledges the coexistence of innovative and pastoral elements in his own work. In an interview with Edmund Hardy, he describes himself as 'a "mild" or "conservative" innovative poet' who is 'concerned to reconnect rather than sever links to the non-human and more-than-human universe—but conceding the radically different conditions'. Larkin's innovation is thus contextual, emerging from the compositional relations of a given environment, physical or textual.

In his interview with Hardy, as well as in his article "Innovation Contra Acceleration", Larkin explicitly distinguishes his work from American Language Poetry,

which he associates with Charles Olson and the Black Mountain poets. He argues that poetic innovation extends beyond ‘exemplary technique’ and ‘laying bare syntactic and ideological frames so as to re-empower the reader’, and instead operates through ‘a fantasy of structuration’, an ambivalent capacity for interaction not only between text and reader but also between the old and the new (Larkin 170). This sense of ambivalence and relationality echoes Larkin’s poetics of “scarcity”, in which poetic innovation is both constrained and generative, enabling an eco-ethical reconnection between human and nonhuman worlds.

For Larkin, the aim of innovative poetry is not to liberate language from convention but to ‘re-embed conventions as inventions in what it is they can be given to be’ (Larkin 170). As he writes in “Innovation Contra Acceleration”:

> I am not seeking to decry innovatory techniques so much as wanting to embed innovation (at the cost of some sacrifice of critical purchase) in a wider sphere of cultural negotiations. I take the cultural to be a zone from which the constructed has to forego formal identity in opening onto a richer but also more chastening field of pressure relations met with as one might meet with givens. The given is in the opportunity or the obstruction (170).

In other words, poetic innovation need not be strange or new but “answerable” and related to “the given”, that which exists. It transforms cultural and linguistic conventions by re-embedding them within the environments from which they arise. The value of innovative poetry thus lies not in formal novelty but in its capacity to reveal what gives rise to form and structure.

Neither free nor formal, yet both innovative and traditional, Larkin's verse is structural. Hardy notes 'a tendency to write in thin, justified prose blocks' that, without deliberate lineation, 'allow rhythm and emphasis both to extend more broadly and permit all sorts of micro-cells or juxtapositions within the sentence structure' to emerge (Hardy). This structuration enables multiple meanings and modes of meaning-making to arise while remaining anchored in the given text.

> For example, in "Slight Agreeing Trees", section "Palefield Coppice":
>
> Scarcity crossed by collective shells of infill, elastic in captive message assigning which hovel leaf is to be pinned at foundational push. The crush of green flakes capsulating, until the search between can be unreserved a moment, suspended as though all opened on to glowing gall: lesser fall, slow to ground, is quiet business about jacket (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 20)

Because of the absence of conventional linear coherence in the text, the reader must interpret meaning creatively, searching for connections across levels of morphology, inflection, syntax and overall organisation.

The word "scarcity" appears at the start of the stanza in a noun combination: 'scarcity [that is] crossed by collective shells of infill'. Then, in the following clause, it is described as 'elastic in captive message….' From these two direct portrayals, the reader learns that "scarcity" is 'elastic'; it signifies a 'collective' and 'captive' state of being, most likely referring to the leaves of a tree 'pinned' and 'hovel[led]' on the branch.

However, since the definition of the word 'cross' is itself elastic, the reader cannot fully grasp the meaning of "scarcity". The phrase 'scarcity crossed…' may be understood as "scarcity" is intersected, agitated, traversed, marked or negated (crossed

out) by the ‘collective shells’. It is only when reading the verb ‘cross’ in relation to the adjective ‘elastic’ that the reader understands “scarcity” as ‘crossed’, or intersected, ‘by shells of infill’. The parallel structure between the first and second phrases, each serving as the context for the other, embeds the meaning of “scarcity”, though ambiguously, in the stanza as a ‘chastening field of pressure relations’ in between words (Larkin, “Innovation Contra Acceleration” 170). In a word, obscuring the language around “scarcity”, the poet simultaneously emphasises its elasticity and anchors its meaning within the rest of the text.

I will further examine this passage and its rendering of “scarcity” in the next section. Here, I wish to underscore the simultaneous openness and situatedness of Larkin’s writing. By eschewing external forms, whether traditional or innovative, Larkin allows the rhythms and echoes of the text to unfold from within. His poetry highlights interrelations across lines and embodies a (post)structure that is provisional and plurifocal: words are always in the ‘middle’ of composition, in a process of becoming with one another, resisting transcendence towards any higher-level, unified meaning (“Innovation Contra Acceleration”; Deleuze and Guattari). In this way, the meaning of “scarcity” remains both open in its making and situated within the given text.

As shown through the signification of “scarcity” in “Palefield Coppice”, the innovation at work in Larkin’s poetry is situated within the textual environment, arising from the activity and connectivity of composition. This embedding of meanings, however nonconventional, within the environment also reflects Larkin’s sustained attention to nature. As with Tarlo’s poetry (see Chapter One), Larkin’s work is grounded in the landscape from which it emerges.

For instance, each section of the poetic sequence “Slight Agreeing Trees” is named after the place from which the writing arises and which it re-presents, and a “topographic note” is appended to the sequence to explain each landscape as the “ground” of his reflection and composition. These notes share vocabulary and imagery with the main poetic text and manifest an intimacy between the given and the innovative, and between the physical environment and the poetic composition, which I will examine further in the next section in relation to “Palefield Coppice”. Such dedication to landscapes and their specificities demonstrates Larkin’s belief in answerable poetic innovation and, more importantly, his pursuit of a “sustainable” relationship between humans and nature defined in poetic, ecological and ethical terms (Larkin, “Innovation Contra Acceleration”).

Embedded within and enabled by the given, the (textual) environment, Larkin’s poetic innovation recalls Derrida’s argument in “The Invention of the Other”. Derrida suggests that invention is paradoxical: it is possible only as an act of a social subject and only insofar as it accords with a social and symbolic contract. Even when it breaks conventions, it must still be recognised and legitimised by others according to established criteria. In the process of invention, and of its acknowledgement, ‘the other does not come… nothing comes to the other or from the other’. Paradoxically, then, invention invents nothing and becomes a production of the same (Derrida 60). The steam engine, as developed by James Watt, is widely regarded as groundbreaking because it transformed eighteenth-century social and economic structures and reshaped experiences of space and time through rapid transportation. Yet it is recognised as an invention precisely because

its apparatus conforms to, and reinforces, the linear logic of progress associated with industrialisation and modernisation.

Nonetheless, Derrida remarks on the fatigue induced by such programmatic inventions in the modern world—that is, by inventions that are institutionalised and absorbed into convention. In response, he proposes a deconstruction of invention, or rather a reinvention of invention: the impossible invention of the other:

> The invention of the other is not opposed to that of the same; its difference beckons toward another coming about—the invention of the entirely other, the one that allows the coming of a still unanticipatable alterity. Yet it is necessary to prepare for it... for letting the other come is not mere passivity or inertia open to anything whatever. The coming of the other, if it has to remain incalculable and aleatory, escapes from all programming (55–56).

By pointing out the paradoxical condition of modern invention, Derrida seeks to bring forth an invention that does not merely reproduce the same and is therefore impossible for any social subject to conceive or for society to recognise. In other words, no subject can produce or recognise such an invention of the other, but can only prepare for it and wait for it to come—to transform both the self and the existing discourse.

This invention of the other and the impossible, understood as a 'letting the other come', is reframed by Michelle Bastian in her essay "Inventing Nature" as an active waiting for transformation by more-than-human natures. Drawing on Derrida and Val Plumwood's work, which perceives the natural world as active in worldmaking and meaning-making, Bastian proposes that all living organisms are agents of invention, and

that the ecological resilience and thriving of a species depend on its capacity to receive, rather than impose, change.

Larkin's innovations, the unconventional relations and meanings of his poem, arise not from the poet or poetic subject but from the poem's processual structuration and composition. As shown above, relations and significances are (un)made within the text beyond conventional grammars and forms, enacting ecological becoming in the natural environment. Larkin's poetry is therefore innovative insofar as its composition is prepared for the advent of the "other", the unexpected and the ecological, and for the radical reconfiguration of discourse that follows. Later in this section, I explain how such composition both speculates on and performs the vegetal intelligence and agency embodied in the trees, and how it moves beyond the limits of human perception. For now, I return to Larkin's understanding of innovation as a process arising from existing contexts and conventions while retaining the capacity to break away from them.

Attentive to local environments and human–nature relations, Larkin's poetry is both innovative and environmentally embedded. Its meanings are unpredictable and manifold, yet they remain grounded in the dynamics of the poetic field and in the particular landscapes from which each piece of writing emerges. This dual grounding positions his work at the threshold between the traditional and the innovative, the given and the creative, sustaining a receptivity and openness to alterity essential to both poetic innovation and ecological becoming.

At the end of "Innovation Contra Acceleration", Larkin anticipates RLP and acknowledges Tarlo's efforts to draw together a strand of "radical pastoral" in contemporary British poetry. For Larkin, the dual marginality of RLP allows it to enact

an innovation that is not only formally open but also embedded within a wider cultural and physical context— 'a chastening field of pressure relations' (170) among subjective and objective entities of the contemporary world—which both supports and constrains the creativity of language and cultural imagination. As argued in the Introduction, RLP emerges from both Olsonian open-field and British pastoral poetics, holding these modes of engaging with the environment in productive tension. From this perspective, its practice of eco-ethics can be seen as a mindful mediation that both reconnects and distinguishes between 'hyperseparated' terms such as nature and human, tradition and innovation, rural and urban, old and new, the given and the creative (Plumwood). Larkin's poetry shares the ambiguity and provisionality of "radical pastoral" and RLP, together with their goal of connecting diverse actors and modes of worldmaking across landscape and page.

In Larkin's work, the sustaining tensions between the human and the more-than-human are signified and held through a poetics of "scarcity". In "Fully From, All Scarce To", Larkin describes how his poetic, environmental and philosophical concerns converge in the charged term "scarcity". According to him, "scarcity" is not a fixed concept but a generative source of poetic thinking. Straddling various sites of negotiation, it becomes a continual point of return in his writing and reflection. As seen in the passage quoted above, the meaning of "scarcity" is 'elastic' and shaped 'collectively' by other actors within the textual environment, while simultaneously revealing the "scarcity" of relation—or even contradiction—between them.

Beyond the quoted passage, "scarcity" continues to serve as a key mediating term shaping Larkin's broader thought and practice. In both his creative and critical writing

(for example, his readings of Wordsworth and Coleridge[9]), he traces the shifting meanings of "scarcity" across contexts and disciplines. In doing so, Larkin contrasts the real, ecological scarcities experienced by those deprived of the basic conditions for survival with the constructed scarcities produced by global economic and political narratives. These inconsistencies expose the gap between modern economies and ecological realities, positioning "scarcity" as a mediating concept across human and more-than-human lifeworlds and across multiple domains of knowledge.

Scholarly responses to Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" also reflect its elasticity as a transdisciplinary concept—one that both draws upon and exceeds disciplinary boundaries. This is evident in the work collected in the special issue of the *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry* titled "Peter Larkin: Poetry, Phenomenology, and Ecology". For example, John Milbank argues that Larkin should not be read only as an ecological nature poet: "scarcity" instead reveals a theological-metaphysical paradox in which plenitude coincides with fragility, so that the "fullness of Creation" is grasped through "weakness and rarity", inviting a "covertly theological rendering" (1). Similarly, bringing theological and ecological concerns together through Larkin's "praying // firs \ attenuate", Anne Frances Elvey reads Larkin's "scarcity-gift" via "deep incarnation", framing it as an ecotheological practice of attentiveness to sacred-material relations in contexts of ecological vulnerability and trauma (1). Beyond theology–ecology readings, Simon Collings argues that "scarcity" interrelates the economic, ecological, theological and ontological horizons of Larkin's poetry, establishing a '*whole* stance towards the world [emphasis added]' to which we fully, yet fragilely, belong (10).

[9] See Peter Larkin's essay collection *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

These diverse interdisciplinary readings show that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" cannot be reduced to a single definition. Rather, its indeterminacy allows inconsistency and limitation to emerge productively across different dimensions and disciplines of thought (Larkin–Hardy). This cross-framework deferral, sustained by the concept of "scarcity", also enacts a sustainable relation among perspectives, grounded in the recognition of self-limitation and situatedness within a wider cultural and material environment. In this way, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" contributes to an eco-ethical composition in which relations between self and other, and between human and nature, are 'reiterated' and 'reinvented' beyond the logics of the same, those of progress, accumulation and dominance (Butler; Derrida).

To recap so far, I have outlined how Larkin's poetry mediates across human and more-than-human worlds through a poetics of "scarcity". Its capacity to hold multiple actors and meanings in relation—between tradition and experimentation, the given and the creative, the ecological and the economical, among others—makes it an effective means of reconstituting eco-ethical relationships among earthly beings. The indeterminacy of "scarcity" also opens Larkin's work to multiple critical perspectives without exhausting its meanings or meaningfulness. Building on this generative indeterminacy, and its role in supporting expansive readings of Larkin's poetry—eco-ethical and beyond—I will now turn to its other function: a drive of speculation.

Part Two: "Scarcity" as a Drive of Speculation

Beyond the realist and phenomenological orientations often found in RLP, Larkin's poetry exhibits an additional 'speculative drive' (Mason). While it 'clings to its hold on

the local and physical world' (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant* 7), it simultaneously opens toward the invisible and mythic creativity of nature. His work, in other words, reflects not only on what is visibly given but also on 'what it is they can be given to be' (Larkin, "Innovation Contra Acceleration"). This dual engagement with the phenomenological and the speculative distinguishes Larkin's work from Tarlo's RLP, which foregrounds embodied perception and the experience of being outside. Through a poetics of "scarcity", Larkin's work enacts an eco-ethical speculation on unknown natures, emphasising the limits of human measure while experimenting with nonhuman modes of dwelling in the world.

Larkin's attention to trees and landscapes gives rise to distinctive speculations on human existence and the more-than-human natures that sustain it. This is enabled by the creative indeterminacy of his writing. As shown through the signification of "scarcity" in the passage from "Palefield Coppice", the meanings of his writing continually undergo transformation and proliferation. The resulting difficulty of interpretation—its very "scarcity" of meanings—suggests the fundamental insufficiency of human measure to comprehend or represent the more-than-human world (Collings; Marion). This characteristic of Larkin's poetry underpins his eco-ethical orientation, in which the human is situated within, yet remains radically less than, nature.

However, such a poetics of 'scarcity' does more than expose the limits of human knowledge in grasping the mystery of nature; it also defers to and enacts a vegetal intelligence and agency radically different from human and animal modes of environmental engagement, which remain bound to individual bodies. Although limited to human—linear and conventional—understanding, Larkin's composition of entangled

relations and layered horizons re-presents a landscape shaped by nonhuman agencies, particularly those of trees.

For instance, the composition of "Roots Surfacing Horizon" is porous and continuous; its open-ended structuration enacts the inhabitation, growth and communication of tree roots underground:

> no grounds of soil tumult except by loose root they out-take surface until it
> circulates as volume towards horizon what is humped to a chin abuts: won't pass
> co-finitely under recession of its wake but is fielded abed awake
>
> any level plain
> beseeches span
> in the palm of root
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 137)

There is no punctuation in the text; each verse-phrase is (dis)connected by empty spaces that form an integral part of the composition itself. Like the nodes of rhizomatic, fibrovascular roots, these spaces are where the passage pauses and variegates. As expressed in the stanzas— 'any level plain / beseeches span / in the palm of roots'—the landscape is shaped by the movement of roots within the depths of the earth. Likewise, the surface of the composition—its form—is shaped by the connective and propulsive movement of words across the lines of the text.

The quoted passage, through both its form and content, does not advance a single message but enacts a vegetal presence—of trees underground. The compositional words—such as 'surface', 'level' and 'horizon', 'out-take' and 'recession', 'abed' and

‘awake’—embody the entangled, tensile relations of the textual environment, withholding any singular, one-directional deliverance of meaning. In this way, the composition enacts the making of trees and landscape in the earth: both unfold by drawing relations across lines and spaces rather than by inscribing lines or borders. I will return to Larkin’s poem “Roots Surfacing Horizon” in Section Four to discuss further how such composition speculates on and re-enacts vegetal modes of inhabitation, growth and communication. Here, I wish to underline that the indeterminacy of Larkin’s writing—its “scarcity” of meaning—not only marks the limits of human understanding of the ‘hidden worlds of trees’ (Wohlleben) but also gestures toward alternative, eco-ethical ways of engaging with them.

As Larkin stresses, ‘the indeterminate reserve [is] not identical to the nihil’ (Larkin–Hardy). His poetics of “scarcity” generates a proliferation of meanings and modes of meaning-making as forms of world-making. By obstructing conventional linear flows, the composition becomes a textual environment in which multiple actors or linguistic units interact across syntactic boundaries, participating collectively in processes of signification. While also ‘radically democratic’, this mode of meaning-making shifts agential weight to the interactivity within the composition—the textual environment—rather than to the poet or reader, as in Tarlo’s case (Tarlo, “Provisional Pleasure”; see Chapter One). In this way, Larkin’s composition is both disabling—resisting subjective interpretation as an imposition of meaning—and re-enabling—returning intelligibility to the (textual) environment itself, thereby embodying ‘hope and transformation’ in response to the current human predicament (Larkin–Hardy).

As recent botanical science has shown, the survival and well-being of trees depend on vast, entangled networks of symbiosis among trees, plants and animals. A forested landscape is not merely a place but a 'multispecies knot' in which life cannot be divided (Rose). Attending to the ecological constitution of landscape, Larkin's composition enacts a rhizomatic mode of meaning- and world-making—one that arises from within the textual and natural environment while eschewing forms or orders imposed by external discourses. As shown in the passages above, there is no higher order of meaning in the text—only polysemes sustained through 'adjacency and democratic adhesion' across multiple units and levels of expression (Suliman; Skinner 216). Through this deconstructive yet generative use of language, Larkin textures his composition and textually enacts the becoming of trees and landscapes. This mode of composition and innovation is grounded in an ecological and ethical principle: it resists hierarchical enclosures and foregrounds diversity and the mutual transformability of its participants.

Although such resistance to enclosures also informs the collaborative walking and working practices of Tarlo and Tucker—which, as examined in Chapter One, ground art- and place-making in the bodies of artists and readers as they move within the field—Larkin's eco-ethical composition is, by contrast, 'radically botanical' (Meeker & Szabari). In other words, his writing derives its logic not from human movement through space but from vegetal growth within it. In *Radical Botany*, Natania Meeker and Antonia Szabari argue for the active participation of plants in the continual radicalisation of human thought. Tracing this participation across human intellectual and cultural history, they contend that 'the apparent passivity of plants' functions as 'a powerful, destabilising force in its own right' (4). Their radical alterity from human and animal modes of

existence makes plants resistant to anthropomorphisation and representation, while also creating an ontological gap that has fuelled radically botanical thought from before the Enlightenment to modernity—a thought that continually reflects on the limits of the human and speculates beyond them.

Echoing Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "rhizome", Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" can be read as a form of radically botanical thought. Grounded in plant life and logic, both "rhizome" and "scarcity" reflect on the limits of human knowledge while speculating on alternative modes of being and relation within the more-than-human world. In the first part of this section, I argue Larkin's poetry directs readers' attention to the textual and physical environments particular to each piece of writing and gives rise to an 'answerable' poetic innovation that is both embedded within the given and, in Derrida's terms, 'an innovation of the Other' that breaks away from convention (Larkin, "Innovation contra Acceleration"). The 'apparent passivity' of Larkin's innovative poetry, as a practice of 'letting the other come', resonates with that of plant life, as noted by Meeker and Szabari: both embody an active dwelling in the world that entails waiting for, and becoming with, others. Reinventing poetic innovation and re-enacting the life of trees in the earth, Larkin's composition is both radical and botanical, letting the natural phenomenon of trees to come and inform itself (Derrida). It is, in essence, open to alterity—evident in the heterogeneous and unexpected relations within the composition, as well as in the co-becoming of poem and trees within the place of the page.

As noted above, this chapter explores Larkin's eco-ethical composition as a practice of reiterating the human–nature relationship by recontextualising it within ecological frameworks and landscapes. The mediative and speculative functions

embodied in the poetics of "scarcity" suggest that this practice of eco-ethics and reiteration is enacted not only through the negotiation of boundaries between the subjective and the objective, or the innovative and the given, but also, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, between 'the visible and the invisible'.

Contrasting the "naturalist" orientation of RLP as seen in Tarlo's poetry which focuses on embodied knowledge of the environment, Larkin's poetry engages both the physical, local landscape as perceived by human subjects and that which lies beyond perception. Owing to its function as an 'indeterminate reserve' for mediation and speculation, I do not attempt to define the term "scarcity" in this chapter but rather to explore its fluid significations across Larkin's work and to outline a poetics of "scarcity" as a practice of eco-ethical composition (Larkin–Hardy). In other words, rather than fixing the meaning of "scarcity" in each poem, I argue that Larkin's eco-ethical composition enacts an experimental and mindful reconnection between human and nature by reflecting on the "scarcity" of meanings available to the human subject in contrast to what is—or can be—there.

The following analysis is structured in four sections, each examining one of Larkin's poems collected in *Lessways Least Among*. The first two sections explore the function of "scarcity" as a pivot of mediation. Section One focuses on the poetic sequence "Slight Agreeing Trees", examining how multiple, even contradictory, relations and meanings can be held—or withheld—at a crossing through the poetics of "scarcity". Section Two turns to "At Wall with the Approach of Trees", proposing that this poetics may also be understood as the localisation of subjective perception at the margin—both inseparable from and radically less than the natural world.

Sections Three and Four consider "scarcity" as a drive of speculation. Section Three examines the poem "Wotton Hill Clump", where a granulation of language disrupts conventional linear flow and opens proliferating paths of sense-making that imitate the natural growth of trees. In this way, Larkin re-presents the apparent passivity of trees as a form of ecological vitality that exceeds anthropogenic schemes of enclosure. Section Four turns to "Roots Surfacing Horizon", reading Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" as speculating on and enacting a vegetal model of inhabitation and communication within the deep earth.

In presenting four interpretations of Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", this chapter also adopts an experimental approach to writing and nature. As exemplified in Larkin's poetry, this approach does not prescribe relations within language, or between language and landscape, human and nonhuman, but instead prepares for unexpected and unconventional connections to emerge and shape one another. In this way, "scarcity" and the indeterminacy it embodies appear not as a lack, but as a mediative and speculative openness through which Larkin's poetry reimagines how humans dwell and connect within more-than-human worlds.

1. "Scarcity" in the Crossing

The meaning of "scarcity" in Larkin's poetry is neither finite nor definitive, so one opts to speculate. In this section, I propose that the term and poetics of "scarcity" signify the ambiguous—scarce yet inseparable—relationship between constructed oppositions, both within the composition and in the place of its making, such as those between humans and

nature or language and landscape. In the poetic sequence “Slight Agreeing Trees”, the term “scarcity” is often situated at the intersection of a series of oppositions.

> For example, in the stanza from the section "Palefield Coppice”
>
> Scarcity crossed by collective shells of infill, elastic in captive message assigning which hovel leaf is to be pinned at foundational push. The crush of green flakes capsulating, until the search between can be unreserved a moment, suspended as though all opened on to glowing gall: lesser fall, slow to ground, is quiet business about jacket.

The meaning(s) of “scarcity” is simultaneously charged and embedded within the given text. Beyond its signification through the words ‘crossed’ and ‘elastic’, which I have already examined in the Introduction, the entire passage is structured through such intersecting yet tensile renderings of “scarcity”. In the first sentence, ‘collective’ and ‘captive’ are parallel in structure, alliterative and rhythmic, yet their denotations conflict: while the former suggests a communion of particles, the latter implies their confinement. Similarly, the first and second sentences each end and begin with the nouns ‘push’ and ‘crush’. Although these two words resonate linguistically and lyrically, they denote different movements, thereby ‘push[ing]] and ‘crush[ing]’ the stanza into dissonance. In this way, the poet bridges the two sentences while rejecting enclosure or integration of meaning.

Beyond words in pair, a single word may also embody contradictory meanings. For instance, the word ‘crush’ denotes a tight crowd when used as a noun and a violent act of compression when used as a verb. This dual denotation of ‘crush’ aligns with the rendering of “scarcity” as both ‘collective’ and ‘captive’, ‘crossed’ and ‘elastic’. The

ambiguous signification of "scarcity" prompts the reader to interpret the text in multiple, even contradictory, ways. In doing so, the meaning of the phrase 'the crush of green flakes' becomes ambiguous, too, evoking both an innocent image of a crowd of leaves and a violent image of them being subdued by an unknown external force. Beyond the cases mentioned, the first half of the stanza is almost entirely composed of correlatives—words that are linguistically or lyrically related yet conflict in meaning (e.g., 'shells' and 'infill', 'hovel' and 'push', 'pinned' and 'push', 'captive' and 'capsulating'). As these words cross and clash, the stanza incites a 'search' for meanings that are both contextual and momentarily 'unreserved'. Its message is thus 'elastic in captive'; such is the "scarcity" of meanings and the inexhaustible meanings of "scarcity".

Furthermore, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", as the charging and captivation of meanings in the text, is both dedicated to and derived from specific landscapes. Larkin explicates the settings of each poem from the poetic sequence "Slight Agreeing Trees" in their titles and in the appended "topographical note". Accordingly, the landscapes to which "Slight Agreeing Trees" is dedicated include plantations, tree farms, natural and manmade clumps—in other words, woodlands that are enclosed and restrained, whether naturally or artificially.

As shown, the stanza quoted above is composed in part of correlative, contradictory words that signify the ambiguous meanings of "scarcity", which simultaneously constructs and obstructs the process of meaning-making. Nonetheless, in the middle of the second sentence, the linguistic flow is restored, and 'the search [for meanings] between [words] can be unreserved a moment' (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 20). After the first clause of the second sentence, Larkin's writing becomes more coherent, its

meaning clearer. Authorship, previously a mysterious force 'push'ing against and 'crush'ing together words and their meanings, now emerges as an identifiable narrative voice. To understand this sudden shift, the reader may look to the natural landscape to which this stanza is dedicated. Selected from the third section of "Slight Agreeing Trees", the quoted stanza is written for "Palefield Coppice" (the section's title). According to the topographical note:

> *Palefield Coppice* lies to the north of Old Manor Farm, Haseley, in Warwickshire, and approximates to an inverted T with a footpath passing through the stem of the upright.
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 39)

This note aligns with records provided by Warwickshire County Council. On their website, "Palefield Coppice" is listed as a site of a possible deserted settlement (1066 AD - 1750 AD), with evidence including 'a hollow way and a complex of sunken ways' visible in an aerial photograph taken in 1956 ("Site of Earthwork"). Although minimal, these notes offer historical and topographical insights into Larkin's composition by suggesting a dialectic between path (passing through) and coppice (cutting down), between human construction and human tempering of earth and plants. In this light, the change that occurs in the middle of the quoted stanza—where the "scarcity" of meanings gives way to the flow of narration—imitates the human project of path-making, in which trees are felled and vertical obstructions are levelled into the horizon.

Humans cut down trees and flatten the land for pathways. Nonetheless, cutting produces both wounds and openings in the trees. Dissecting trees at their midpoint, the act of coppicing temporarily halts growth but also stimulates proliferation. Similarly, in

the quoted stanza, even though the poet levels the sentence midway into a horizontal and grammatical flow—so that the stanza becomes, for 'a moment', coherent and accessible—it soon returns to and opens into the "scarcity" of meanings, as indicated in the colon clause at the end: ': lesser fall, slow to ground, is quiet business about jacket'. In *Anthropocene Poetics*, David Farrier argues that Larkin's poems 'follow a familiar syntax pattern but resist any final claim to sense-making' (39). Such incompleteness in writing leaves 'the impression of a kind of "hovering sense"' and urges the reader to fill in its meanings (39). As argued above, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" entails pushing and crushing compositional words into dissonance—an act of violence that, paradoxically, extends and strengthens the links between words as well as between the text and the radical imagery of coppice it endorses. The physical materiality of the coppiced woodland offer further insight into Larkin's poetics of "scarcity". By trimming narrative from language, Larkin stimulates its "growth" as a proliferation of meanings attached to the "stem" text. In this way, Larkin not only re-enacts the coppicing of trees in his composition but also emphasises the ambivalence of this act—one that can serve as both a benign stimulation of growth and an anthropocentric manipulation of natural life.

As the topography of "Palefield Coppice" evidences the crossing between the human construction of pathways and the natural presence of trees, the composition of "Palefield Coppice" embodies the crossing between the human (i.e., the narrative) and the natural, too. To explain, in the stanza:

> A target for saving stem, wood in this undetachable bin, settled splint at chapter.
> Narrative doesn't continue, won't leap over until back-arched far as remissible,

then let this repose in place of horizon transmit offence. Scarcely, a skipped emendation, which is not towards the bereft into link.

(Larkin, *Lessways Least* 18)

The narrative is portrayed as a splint targeting (saving) the tree's stem. Human engineering of trees involves not only dissecting trunks ('bin') but also the 'emendation' of their stems. This 'emendation' is not done hastily through violent, mechanical force but by tying the stem to a splint that secures and slowly straightens it. This roped, side-by-side arrangement of the splint and the tree—the human and the natural—embodies an offensive yet inextricable *link* between the two, resonating with the *link* between the conflicting yet correlative words in the composition, as demonstrated above. Both signify the crossing between constructed opponents as a "scarcity" of relations and/or the relations of "scarcity". Nevertheless, the scarce relations between the human and the natural, as signified in the (poetic as well as material) composition of "Palefield Coppice", indicate not only human captivation of trees but also a state of 'settled', 'remissible' 'repose' between them. The splint, itself made of wood, and the tree stem are mutually dependent; the splint is "saved", "offended" and tied to the tree as much as the tree is to the splint. Again, Larkin brings forth the ambivalence of "scarcity", alluding to the complex relationship between poetic/wooden artifice—the narrative/splint—and the natural life of trees.

The dissonance between the artificial and the natural, as signified in the text, evokes a cautious and conscious reconnection between these two conflicting yet inseparable ways of being. In other words, Larkin's poetry, by signifying the "scarcity" of relations between humans and nature, calls for an eco-ethical reconnection between the two.

Having discussed the poetics of "scarcity" at the lexical, syntactical and semantic levels of Larkin's composition, I will now turn to its form. "Slight Agreeing Trees" is composed of paragraph-like stanzas separated by line spaces. These blocks of words, which inhabit the page space from top to bottom, are varied in size yet never disordered. As mentioned in the Introduction, German forestry science gained popularity in the 20th century for its economic and bureaucratic advantages, giving rise to monocultures around the world (Scott). In particular, monocultural practices in European colonies were established on the displacement and dispossession of indigenous peoples and local ecologies. The plantations in South America, for example, embody histories of colonial violence and foreshadow the ongoing exploitation of both human and nonhuman beings under contemporary political-economic systems (Mitchell).The plantation logic of mastery, discipline and control continues to shape the lives of people, plants and animals today (Chao).

In response, a number of scholars, including Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing, have proposed the term "Plantationocene" to characterise the current geology of our planet. Compared to the "Anthropocene", the term "Plantationocene" shifts away from an anthropocentric, overly generalising narrative and instead draws attention to the intersections between humans and nature (Mitman; Haraway and Tsing). Described as both 'a system of multispecies forced labour' and 'a ground for multispecies resistance and resurgence', plantations are crucial sites for re-examining the interactions and relations between humans and nature (Haraway and Tsing; Chao). Similarly, it is this "crossing"—the entanglement and friction between humans and nature—that Larkin explores in his poetry, informed by both the idea of "scarcity" and the physical

materiality of landscapes and trees. In addition to the section “Palefield Coppice” discussed above from the poetic sequence “Slight Agreeing Trees”, its opening section, “Turf Hill”, is also dedicated to a compromised landscape: the remaining field of a once ‘totally unjustifiable plantation’—Millersford Plantation (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 39).

Moreover, the entanglement and friction between political and ecological economies are not confined to plantations. In *Landscapes and Englishness*, David Matless notes a wave of “new naturalism” in mid-20th century UK, whereby ‘the concept of nature reserve was recast as an ecological research arena of state responsibility, a living laboratory representative of national habitat’ (308). This discourse is exemplified in “Wotton Hill Clump”, another site and source of Larkin’s composition in “Slight Agreeing Trees”. Classified as a “Biological and Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest” and jointly owned by the National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Wotton Hill is an important site for local, communal events. For example, in 2022, it hosted various activities to celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee, ‘including bat, butterfly & dawn walks, charcoal-making, storytelling and decorating the tree of peace.’ Like “Palefield Coppice”, “Wotton Hill Clump” is a woodland crossed—marked and compromised—by human use and activity. I will expand on the poetic composition and the physical topography of “Wotton Hill Clump” in Section Three.

Considering the landscapes that "Slight Agreeing Trees" is sourced from and dedicated to, the poem’s orderly textual structure can be understood as a mimesis of the topographies of these compromised woodlands (Morton; Bloomfield). The homogeneous form of Larkin’s composition symbolises the radically simplified landscapes shaped by anthropogenic schemes. More importantly, it embodies the process of simplification as

part of their representation on the page. In simplifying the forms and meanings of ecological lands and lives, humans instrumentalise nature, reducing it to a subject of technoscientific management and observation, as seen in plantations and reservoirs. The composition of "Slight Agreeing Trees" underlines such reductive thinking and operations by representing compromised woodlands on paper (itself made from trees) and re-enacting these processes through this very act of representation. This self-reflective rendering of landscapes aligns with what Mandy Bloomfield and Timothy Morton call "critical ecomimesis" in experimental landscape poetry: 'an aesthetic mode which is reflective about the very conventions within which it necessarily operates' (Bloomfield 123; see Introduction). The poetic sequence "Slight Agreeing Trees" captures the reductive view of landscapes as commercial or national property, then further condenses this perspective within the borders of the book's pages to emphasise the limitations of this anthropocentric way of seeing and engaging with nature.

Furthermore, the regularity of the compositional form contrasts with the ambiguity and complexity of Larkin's use of language in "Slight Agreeing Trees". As shown above, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" can be understood as both a signification of—and a mediation between—constructed oppositions within the poetic composition and the landscape from which it is sourced. This signifies not only the ambiguous meanings of "scarcity" but also its significance as a source of poetic thinking and innovation—one that enables multiple, even contradictory, readings of the poem while remaining embedded in its textual and ecological contexts. (Lakin, "Innovation Contra Acceleration"). For instance, on one hand, the poet re-enacts the coppicing of trees in "Palefield Coppice" by cutting down narrative and grammatical structures in the text. On

the other hand, this "coppice" of language opens up possibilities for the reader to interpret the text. The proliferation of meanings is both a result of and a counterforce to the "coppice" of language. By the same logic, the ambiguity and complexity of Larkin's use of language serve as a counterforce to the horizontality and regularity of the form. Once again, at the formal level of Larkin's composition, the poetics of "scarcity" is found at the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical, the formal and the meaningful.

Such tension between the vertical and the horizontal, the growing and the levelling forces within Larkin's composition can be traced to the physical materiality of trees. In *Plants in Place*, Casey and Marder argue that the physical materiality of each tree embodies the unique phenomenon of its life as situated within a specific environment—what they call "the singular placeology of trees":

> Despite the effort [of the scientist, the grower, the owner] to impose a site-specific positionality upon the planting and growth of trees', 'the architectures of the branches and root systems of each developing tree will be unique…. The sitedness that determines the layout of the planted forest in its original format quickly gives way to a singularity of placement in the case of any given member of the growing forest (52).

The order imposed on trees and other ecological lives by human measures is only temporarily effective at the surface level and is inevitably overtaken by their vertical and original growth. The verticality of trees also recalls their 'bipolar and biaxial existence' (52), as they grow simultaneously upward into the sky and downward into the earth. This aligns with my earlier speculation on "scarcity" as a signification of the creative tension embodied in the crossing of binary oppositions in Larkin's poetry—including the natural

and the human, the meaningful and the formal, the life-full and the lifeless. Mediated through such poetics of "scarcity", the presence and ecological vitality of trees in compromised, modified landscapes become a "natural" counterforce to the imposition of human order. Moreover, the singular, biaxial placeology of trees invites multiple interpretations of both the idea and the poetics of "scarcity". I will expand on alternative significations of "scarcity" in Larkin's poetry beyond that of the crossing in later sections.

Being a contributor to the anthology *The Ground Aslant*, Larkin is recognised by Tarlo as a radical landscape poet. As Tarlo writes in the introduction of the anthology:

> In diverse ways, all the poetry presented here remains concerned with the connections between the poet and the landscape, an age-old poetic relationship often associated with the Romantic age. Here it is again, but this time explored in the context, not only of that history, but also of all the variety, intimacy, complicity and complexity of modernity (13).

Correspondingly, Larkin's poetry explores the ambiguous relationship—both intimate and distant—between the poet, with their poetic and inevitably subjective mediation and composition, and the landscape within which they are writing. While Larkin's poetry embodies the physical materiality of landscapes and trees, it differentiates itself by foregrounding the limitations of language and literary representation, demonstrating a critical awareness of its own processes. This is a practice of, in Larkin's words, 'an active symbolic scarcity' that is 'authentically insufficient where open to a horizon of dedication-towards' ("Occasions for Scarcity" 138). Sourced from the idea of "scarcity" and modified woodlands, his poetic mediation and innovation not only signify the

relationship between ecological and human ways of being but, more importantly, reflect on the ambiguous nature of that relationship. This practice in Larkin's poetry can be understood in relation to its connection to traditional British poetry of the Romantic period and the history of land enclosures in the UK since then (Eltringham).

As mentioned in the Introduction, the relationship between postwar British open-field poetry and Romantic pastoral poetry is evident and outlined by Daniel Eltringham in *Poetry & Commons*. With reference to Larkin's poetry, Eltringham identifies three 'key transhistorical concepts that straddle poetries of Romantic and postwar periods: scarcity, use and the multitudes' (42). Concurrently, in a series of essays on *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, Larkin reflects on the roots of contemporary ecological thinking and ecocriticism in Romantic poetry. In his reading of Wordsworth's poem *"The Ruined Cottage"*, Larkin argues that humanity's position in nature is contingent upon the relationship between nature and its representation—both of which can be characterised by a "scarcity" of relations.:

> It is a scarcity not to be salved simply by contemplating innate natural plenitude, since it is a plenitude that, however inspiriting, remains ontologically less than fully accessible, or morally unnegotiable. … ("Wordsworth's Maculate Exception" 85).

Echoing Levinas' argument that absolute difference between oneself and others is the basis of ethical relation (see Introduction), Larkin maintains that the incomplete and partial deliverance of the narrative—both the poet's and the Pedlar's in "The Ruined Cottage"—is necessary to prevent the absorption of others (Margaret) and their suffering into one's subjective understanding. Likewise, in "Palefield Coppice", Larkin deliberately disrupts the narrative flow to highlight the scarcely accessible, yet

nonetheless abundant actions and meanings embedded within the natural landscape. The obscurity of his writing signifies the irreducible presence of trees within landscapes shaped and simplified by human measures, serving as a counterforce to the imposition of form in both language and life. In this sense, his poetry embodies a practice of eco-ethical being in the world with trees.

Furthermore, outside poetic and material histories of the UK, Larkin derives and distinguishes a poetics of "scarcity" within wider contexts of politics, economy, ecology and theology. His poetry not only embodies a practice of linguistic innovation but also that of eco-ethical dwelling in the real world. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Larkin calls for an "answerable" poetic innovation 'embedded in a wider sphere of cultural negotiations':

> Ontologically speaking, it is to go on relating constructs to what it is co-structures them, and politically it is to open writing to what can misrecognise or re-recognise it beyond the formal provisions of innovation itself ("Innovation Contra Acceleration" 170).

In his essay "Occasions for Scarcity", Larkin examines the history of the contested term "scarcity" and highlights a dialectic between "scarcity" and desire, tracing the inception of both terms from classical and neoclassical economics to contemporary capitalism. Larkin observes that since Adam Smith and David Hume introduced the idea of "indiscrete desire" in the 19th century—which blurs the boundary between want and need— "scarcity" has become 'a perpetual demand, endlessly strategizing substitution between desires but postponing any total satisfaction' (135). In the modern world, where the economy is driven by insatiable desires and overproduction and where

overconsumption have become norms, a good life for humans has become incompatible with the ecological well-being of the earth (Larkin, "Occasions for Scarcity"; Minteer, "A Pragmatic Reconciliation"). Beyond the conflict between ecological and human well-being, the modern economy of desire also generates a 'milieu of scarcity' and pushes humans 'to see each other as threats amid a spirit of competitiveness' ("Occasions for Scarcity" 136). This socially induced "scarcity" then produces "real", subsistence and ecological scarcities—such as the lack of safe food, homeplaces, 'pure air, clean water and access to open space', among others—for those who are already politically and economically vulnerable (Larkin, "Wordsworth's Maculate Exception" 84; Casey and Marder).

In counteracting such economics and politics of scarcity, Larkin's argument for 'a poetics of scarcity' reflects an eco-ethical yearning for a good life amid nature and the numinous co-presencing of nonhuman communities and earth-spaces—a yearning that cannot be mistaken for indiscrete or emulative desire ("Wordsworth's Maculate Exception" 85). Put simply, Larkin employs the term "scarcity" to resist the excessive production and consumption in modern societies and to recover an ecological and ethical relationship between humans and nature. In this view, landscapes and trees are not a "source" for Larkin's poetry in the traditional sense of resource. While his thinking and practice are grounded in the physical materiality of landscapes and trees, they neither extract them from their natural existence nor reduce them to 'materials' for poetic innovation. Rather, Larkin's poetry signifies nature's un-extractability and irreducibility, redefining the idea of the natural resource as a source of human practice and thought, and thereby subverting the human–nature dynamic.

Echoing his argument for answerable poetic innovation, Larkin maintains that social innovation ought also to be chastened by ecological and cultural givens ("Innovation Contra Acceleration"). His poetics of "scarcity" emphasises the ecological conditions and consequences of human activity, resituating human creations within the gifts of nature. 'Opposing any unblinking idea of linear progression', Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" denotes a more complex and dialectical understanding of "progress"—one that remains mindful of the "limits of natural paltriness" (Larkin, "Fully From, All Scarce To" 114; Soper; Marx). Similarly, in *Poetry & Commons*, Eltringham mobilises "the subsistence perspective", embedded in the poetics and practice of "commoning" across Romantic and modern contexts, to contest the progressive narrative that shapes British and global discourses of "development". Grounded in the pragmatism and precarity of subsistence practices—working on the land—Eltringham argues that the poetics of commoning—or, in Larkin's case, the poetics of "scarcity"—'serves as a metrical analogy for these turn-taking, fugitive and latent alternatives to enclosure, attuned to the gaps and irregular, open spaces between beats or points of stress and inflexion' (37). This resonates with the creative tension between opening and enclosure in Larkin's composition, as well as in the landscape to which it is dedicated, where horizontal and formal obstructions give rise to unexpected flows.

The aim to recover an eco-ethical relationship between humans and nature through the poetics of "scarcity" also reveals the theological connotations of the term. In his essay "Occasions for Scarcity", Larkin references multiple theologians—including Jean-Yves Lacoste, Kevin Hart and John Milbank—on the connections between the transcendental, the material and the poetic. More specifically, he examines the

manifestation of God and his gifts in the phenomena of trees and human language. From a theological perspective, the crossing of the vertical and the horizontal, as signified through the poetics of "scarcity", can be understood as a *cross*-ing of God and God's creations (humans and trees) in poetry. The poetic rendering of the natural world in Larkin's poetry becomes both praise and prayer, participation and anticipation—an engagement with life alongside others on the earth. I will expand on the theological dimension of Larkin's poetry in the next section.

The practice of eco-ethics in Larkin's poetry—as one of both appreciating and participating in life—resonates with thought beyond theology. Many scholars in the Environmental Humanities—including Deborah Bird Rose, Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing and Thom van Dooren—emphasise the importance of caring, loving and responding to others, particularly in the current age of ecological precarity. Situated at the crossing of the natural, the transcendental and the textual, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" invokes eco-ethical, as well as 'the poetic and artistic in general', "response-abilities" to be 'open to the novelty of beings, the rigorous possibilities of symbolic codes and to the need to shape, however fragmentarily, a universally relevant vision' (Haraway; Milbank 241).

To sum up, this section proposes that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" signifies and reflects on the scarce yet inseverable relations between humans and nature. In response to the complexity and ambiguity of "scarcity", Larkin situates the term at the crossing of various contestations in the composition, including those between the horizontal and the vertical, the formal and the meaningful, the "scarcity" of meanings and the infinite meanings of "scarcity". In this way, he emphasises the indefiniteness of "scarcity" and

recasts it as a metaphysical opening for an authentic and eco-ethical relationship between humans, language and the natural world.

2. "Scarcity" in The Margin

In the first section, I argue that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" signifies the ambiguous relationship between human constructs and the natural world. Beyond a crossing of contraventions, this section proposes that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" also enables an imaging of "margin": a narrow border space that both connects and differentiates the inside and outside of a place. By locating Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" in the margin, I do not mean to diminish its significance as a poetic mediation between the human and the natural, but rather to emphasise its occasionality and locality. To demonstrate this, I will draw examples of Larkin's composition from "At Wall with The Approach of Trees", which unfolds in the margin between the wall and the trees, mediating between constructed enclosure and natural approach. Through a close reading of this poetic sequence, this section continues to examine Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", focusing on the place of his poetic mediation and expression.

Unlike his crafting of "Slight Agreeing Trees", discussed in the previous section, Larkin does not specify the geographical site of "At Wall with The Approach of Trees". There is no topographical note appended to this poetic sequence, and the titles of each section are single, bracketed words: '(approach)', '(shade)', '(inflections)', '(horizon)' and '(call)'. Different from the section titles in "Slight Agreeing Trees", such as "Turf Hill" and "Palefield Coppice", these inconclusive headings do not name the place of Larkin's writing and reflection, but instead situate it within a field of action, as trees

approach the wall, eschewing an anthropocentric viewpoint embedded in the act of naming from the start. The place of Larkin's composition is nonetheless specified—framed in the margin between the trees and the wall through his attentiveness to the dynamics between the two. For example, in the stanza from the "(approach)", Larkin depicts the scene:

> Tree not in tall barrier but surge a seizure of arrival, so far as wall crouches beyond profile. If margin wants this near, admit trees to shadow a wall in their lee which they are the first approach not to pass through. Bordered unseverable shoot only apparently shut-to.
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 43)

In this stanza, the tree arrives at the wall ('tall barrier') but does not touch it; the distance between them is close enough that the tree's shadow is cast on the wall. Contrary to the wall's intention to 'shut' the tree inside, it is instead 'shadow[ed]' by the tree and 'admit[ted]' to its 'lee'. This choice of verbs not only marks the activity at the edge of the tree, but also reveals a subverted dynamic between the tree and the wall.

Larkin attributes the activity in the margin to the tree. As shown in the stanza above, it is the tree, opposed to the wall, that 'surge[s] a seizure of arrival'. Yet, with the words 'arrival' and 'surge' appearing in the same phrase, this denotation of action becomes ambiguous. In the first section, I proposed that the poetics of "scarcity" can be understood as a simultaneous captivation and charge of meaning in the text, composed through linguistic units and structures that invite open, even contradictory interpretations. Here, this performance of what Larkin calls 'answerable poetic innovation' ("Innovation Contra Acceleration") signifies the activity of the tree in the margin. The incoherent

language emphasises the ambiguity of both the poetic depiction and the depicted scene, interweaving the events of arrival and approach, and rendering a counterintuitive, animate view of the tree edge. As a result, the place of the composition becomes both an occasion and a location—it happens 'at wall with the approach of trees'.

The contesting relationship between the trees and the wall also signifies the eventfulness and edginess of the place of composition. Most likely a measure of land enclosure, the wall both symbolises and materialises human presence in the place of composition. The simultaneously oppositional and affinitive relationship between the wall and the tree thus serves as both an analogy and an occasion for the relations of "scarcity" between humans and nature. Although not physically touching or impeding the tree, the wall represents a discourse of enclosure that opposes the course of growth embodied in the tree. The juxtaposition of the wall and the tree edge embodies a conflict as well as a correlation between the human and ecological ways of being. This can be understood through the distinction between "a prohibiting border" and "an inviting boundary" (Casey and Marder). According to Casey and Marder, both terms refer to the edge of a place, yet a border is non-permeable—constructed, mostly by humans, to enclose a space—while a boundary is porous and 'offers opportunities of transition between places and regions' (35). For example, the edge of a tree provides a perching place for passing birds, which then carry the tree's seeds—or those of other trees—to more distant locations. In contrast, the construction of a wall often serves to enclose, asserting control over land and living bodies.

Attentive to the activity of the tree edge opposed to the inactivity of the wall, Larkin's composition takes place in the dual margin between the ecological and the

human ways of being as a space for mediation rather than division. As the quoted stanza implies, the wall is both a 'barrier' and a ward of the tree, which 'only apparently shut[s]' the passage of the tree and 'crouches' in its 'lee'. This ambiguous relationship, or the relations of "scarcity", between the human and the natural is embodied in the place of composition: the "margin" co-constructed by the wall and the tree. Put simply, in "At Wall with The Approach of Trees", poetic mediation is enacted and situated between the wall and the tree. In this way, Larkin's poetry continues to signify and reflect on relations of "scarcity" between humans and nature, as well as between language and landscape, by positioning itself in the margin between these two modes of being.

In addition, this dual marginality embodied in the place of composition recalls the dual marginality of experimental landscape poetry—or "radical pastoral" poetry—which, as argued above, Larkin identifies as key to making its poetic innovation "answerable" by embedding it in 'a chastening field of pressure relations' ("Innovation Contra Acceleration" 170). Similarly, situated within such 'a field of pressure relations' between the human and the natural, the wall and the tree, Larkin's poetic mediation and innovation in "At Wall with the Approach of Trees" is thus answerable (170).

Beyond poetic mediation and innovation, the place of composition in the dual margin between the wall and the tree also foregrounds the practice of eco-ethics in Larkin's poetry. To show, in the stanza:

> A tree turns where its stasis has ridden the outside-of along symbiotic wall guarding no other lair: deep-runnelled paradestination travels in gnarled trunk out towards this slight counter-rink committing midst to the cramp of immediate edge.
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 46)

The word ‘symbiotic’ indicates the mutual dependency between the wall and the tree—not because they are in physical contact but because they demarcate each other; they are inseparable at the edge. Moreover, the juxtaposition of words— ‘outside-of’, ‘along’ and ‘symbiotic’—in the stanza suggests the parallelism between the tree and the wall. The lack of grammatical links among these words demonstrates a non-hierarchical relationship. As Larkin states in “Occasions for Scarcity”, ‘things are with us, not simply outside or within us and so are not reducible to any hierarchical predominance’ (142). In the case of “At Wall with The Approach of Trees”, rather than saying the tree is bordered by the wall, it is more accurate to say that the tree is growing next to and “with” the bordering wall. The parallelism between the tree and the wall does not imply a lack of relation between them. Rather, as indicated by the terms ‘symbiotic’ and ‘deep-runnelled paradestination’, our relationships with “things”—the natural world—cannot be severed. The parallelism between the tree and the wall embodies an eco-ethical relationship between the natural and the human, one that is both inseparable and unassimilable. That is, an eco-ethical dwelling as a mode of being *with* trees.

To reiterate, the poetic mediation occurs in the dual margin of the human and the natural in “At Wall with The Approach of Trees”. Like the openness and dynamism at the edge of the tree, this mediation in the margin is both peripheral and powerful (Casey and Marder). As Larkin writes in the foreword of the anthology *Lessways Least Scarce Among*:

> All [a scarcely gifted world] can do is work at the chafed difference between givens and what gives without collapsing the necessary paucity of mediation, so

> as to be a work of inflection not determination, givens tapered along the tail of gift (7).

To look for Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" in the margin corresponds to his belief in "the necessary paucity of mediation". As argued, the juxtaposition between the wall and the tree demonstrates a parallel (non-hierarchical) and proximate relationship between the human and the natural world, so the margin between them, however small, cannot be collapsed. In the place of the poem, the small space between the wall and the tree enables the tree to cast a shadow over the wall, which is a gesture of gift-giving. However, due to the radical difference between them—the tree being visibly taller and wider than the wall—the wall cannot fully receive the tree. Instead, it touches only a shadow of the *physis*.

Such relations of "scarcity" is rendered illimitable by Larkin. For him, the less that is mediated, determined and received by the wall (the human), the more there is that remains unmediated, undetermined and unreceived from the tree (the natural). It is this inverse correlation between 'gift' and 'givens' that is sustained in the space and imagery of "margin". The inverse correlation between 'gift' and 'givens' can be visualised through a hyperbola diagram, where two lines are correlated without crossing each other, extending infinitely in opposite directions. For Larkin, poetry embodies a force of hyperbolic projection—moving towards what gives (the tree) from the given (the shadow). In Milbank's words, it is 'to interpret in the mode of a kind of counter-gift', 'since we can only handle our intuition as an idea and must take up an existential stance towards being within this reality itself, even though it entirely surrounds and penetrates

us' (235). In this sense, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" is a mediation not only between the natural and the human, but also between the material and the transcendental.

As mentioned above, in "Occasions for Scarcity", Larkin stresses that 'things are…not reducible to any hierarchical predominance' (142). This suggests that "things" (the natural world) cannot be known fully. Instead, to know the world at all, we must recognise the 'lessness' and the particularity of the human scope, and from where, try to imagine the horizonless world through a mindful participation in it. As Larkin's explains:

> If so, such a transcendence would be recuperated in poetry not just at the margins of the world but as revealing itself as actively and mysteriously less than any identification with the self-sufficiency of that world. Lessness figures as a non-oppositional difference, a distinct mode of participation not simply measured by consummation but not subverting potential horizons of fulfilment either ("Occasions for Scarcity" 138).

As seen in "At Wall with The Approach of Trees", poetry's mindful participation in the world takes place in the margin between the self and environmental others. Peripheries are where human and nonhuman body subjects are most vulnerable and most receptive to the external world. For example, through its leaves, a tree receives and orients itself toward light sources and communicates with others in its surroundings by sending chemical signals through scent. Similarly, through our skin, we do not just know but feel the environment—the temperature and humidity outside as well as the touch of human and nonhuman others. By locating poetic mediation in the margin between the wall and the tree, the human and the natural, Larkin emphasises the particularity, vulnerability and openness of both beings in relation to each other. In this way, his poetry demonstrates

mindful participation in the world through close attention rather than the consummation or absorption of the other.

Furthermore, the dual marginality of Larkin's poetry produces an ambiguous sense of place. In "At Wall with The Approach of Trees", Larkin positions both the poetic subject and the reader between the tree and the wall. As the following stanza from the section "(Inflections)" describes:

> A wall of which we never see the ends because it ranges wider than any dead-end obstruction: could only be this wall because both sides take the skimmings of us, skirts us like a current, a graining elongated by a counter-duration, never outside us, always further across, not so much dividing as combing and flaring.
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 60)

"We" are held between 'both sides'—the wall and the tree, the human and the natural—and caught in the dynamic between them 'like a current'. The metaphor of "current" evokes the flow in the margin between the wall and the tree, highlighting the continuity and dynamism of their relations, and resonating with the present participles in the stanza, including 'skimming', 'graining', 'dividing', 'combing' and 'flaring'.

This signification and positioning of flow in the margin also enact a dialectic between obstruction and passage, reinforcing the poem's ambiguous sense of place: "we" are both compressed in the margin and caught in the current between the wall and the tree. The dialectic between obstruction and passage can also be found within the tree. Returning to the stanza:

> A tree turns where its stasis has ridden the outside-of along symbiotic wall guarding no other lair: deep-runnelled paradestination travels in gnarled trunk out towards this slight counter-rink committing midst to the cramp of immediate edge.
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 46)

The parallelism between the tree and the wall reflects the parallelism between movement and stagnation, as indicated by the juxtapositions of the phrases 'paradestination' and 'travel', 'gnarled trunk' and 'out towards'. As the stanza states at the beginning, 'a tree turns where its stasis'; by juxtaposing the force of movement with its counterforce of stagnation, the poet creates an uneven progression of language that embodies the 'unsevering differentia of a branch' (Larkin, "Fully From, All Scarce To"). In other words, like the mediation in the place of composition—the margin between the wall and the tree—poetic mediation enacted within composition is also a process of differentiation and connection.

Beyond the dialectic of obstruction and passage, the ambiguous sense of place produced in the composition also arises from its incompleteness. Despite our proximity to "things"—the trees in the landscape— "we" fail to make any final claims about them. As mentioned above, Larkin does not name the place of composition in "At Wall with The Approach of Trees". Instead, he positions the reader within the composition as a field of action and relational tension between the wall and the trees. The section titles of "At Wall with The Approach of Trees" are inconclusive and held in parentheses, just as "we" are held between the wall and the trees. As such, situated within the narrow space between two sides of a place, "we" never see the ends of the wall—yet it is only the wall that "we" see.

In Chapter One, I argued that although Tarlo's poetry pivots on the local and phenomenological experience of landscapes, it does not enact an "egoistical-ecstatic" mode of being outside often associated with traditional nature writing (see Introduction; Tarlo, "Open Field"). Instead, through working and walking with others, Tarlo adopts and re-enacts in her composition a perspective that is both enfolded in the field and dynamic, being produced by a body in motion. In this way, she emphasises the partiality and provisionality of subjective perception as well as perceptual subjectivity. Similarly, by placing "us" in the margin, Larkin highlights the subjective and experiential nature of poetic mediation, which both limits our knowledge of the natural world and enables our participation in it through poetry. In other words, the poem embodies a locational and occasional encounter between the subject *within* the world—namely, in the margin between the wall and the tree. It is thus 'significantly' incomplete and 'scarcely completed' (Larkin, "Wordsworth's Maculate Exception" 80), and it is this incompleteness, as a resistance to closure, that allows "us" to cultivate an authentic and eco-ethical relationship with the natural world.

Moreover, "margin" also refers to a space for error. In this view, Larkin's mediation in the margin also entails a sense of accountability. By placing the poetic subject in the margin, Larkin acknowledges that his composition is subjective and incomplete: it is written in the "margin". As Sophie Seita notes, writing in the margin is 'like a doodle, an un-singable score, an offhand thought, which still persists, and must. As notes to ourselves, we often write in the margins to remind ourselves of something, to hold ourselves accountable.'

However, this gesture of holding oneself accountable is not a rejection of subjectivity or a denial of access to "truth" through human thinking. On the contrary, it promises an ontological openness and an inexhaustible nature. In Larkin's words:

> What is scarce can be lived out as a compression of the ontological…but is the very opposite of a contraction: no longer least where intensely among and not just sacrificial slights but more festive for tenuous (*Lessways Least* 8)

The promise of an inexhaustible nature in Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" can be understood through the concept of poetic negative capability (Milbank). In his essay "Negation in Poetics and Theology"[10], John Milbank explores the correlation between the negative capacity of Romantic poetry and negative theology, both of which gesture toward a world beyond human understanding. Exemplifying the work of Coleridge, Milbank argues that:

> …for Coleridge, a preparedness to remain with mystery and with the significance of beauty was not a retreat from the pursuit of truth or from the search to know, nor a surrender of the hope of transcendence. Instead, the confession that one cannot comprehend a certain situation, event or significance marked for him our entrance upon a mode of understanding in excess of a merely comprehensive conceptual grasp. One mark of such a mode is clearly that a mystery is inexhaustible, … So neither beauty nor mystery, nor, indeed, 'inanimate nature' is a full-stop, like a blank wall (230).

[10] Which Larkin references in his essay "Occasions for Scarcity" (2022), also published in the January, 2024 issue of *Modern Theology*.

Building on this, I conclude this section by arguing that Larkin's poetry promises an inexhaustible, mysterious nature through a negative poetics rooted in the intimacy between the subject and the world.

To take another stanza from the section "(inflection)" for example:

> The way knowing intimacy resists being blest by me: not a denial of me but how the dedication of what I offer adheres along a world-grain in the poverty of being narrowly before an unmediated neighbour of response (a this side onto). But will call, give way for mist of participation block by block.

(*Lessways Least* 60-61)

The negation performed in the stanza is not a denial of self but a resistance to self-enclosure. It is to adhere and dedicate 'what I offer' to the natural world—the mediated to the unmediated. And since 'what I offer' is merely a grain of the world, it cannot exhaust the latter; the 'poverty' of the mediated points to the plenitude of the unmediated. Thus, the inexhaustible mystery of nature is promised through the intimacy between poetic, subjective mediation and unmediated nature. That is, the insufficient yet inseverable relationship—or the relations of "scarcity"—between the poetic composition and natural materials.

Once again, Larkin's poetry is derived from the physical materiality of landscapes and trees. Corresponding to the place of the poem, which is 'at wall with the approach of trees', Larkin's poetic mediation is situated in the margin between the wall and the tree, the human and the ecological ways of being. And corresponding to the dialectic of obstruction and passage in the space of margin as well as in the tree's branch, Larkin enacts an uneven flow of language in his composition as though traveling through a

'gnarled trunk' (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 46). As Sophie Seita argues, the embodiment of 'the specific limitations and structural characteristics of a tree' in Larkin's work demonstrates 'a poetic ethics of care and attention'. This not only entails an intimate observation of the poet toward the trees, but also a carefulness and mindfulness in reflecting on the possibilities of appropriation. Through a negative poetics and an intimate way of knowing the world, Larkin's poetry promises a natural world whose mystery can neither be exhausted by nor severed from subjective perception. It embodies what Seita calls 'a poetic ethics of care and attention': a careful and attentive mediation between the given world and the subject's perception of it as a reception of gift.

To sum up, in this section, I propose that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" can be found in the "margin"—a narrow space at the border that both connects and differentiates the inside and outside of a place. This localisation of "scarcity" in the margin underscores the locality and occasionality of Larkin's poetic mediation between the human and the natural, which he refers to as 'the necessary paucity of mediation' (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 7). For Larkin, the mysterious natural world can never be fully known. Instead, to know the world at all, we must recognise the 'lessness' and particularity of human perception and, from there, attempt to imagine the more-than-human world through mindful participation in it. Building on this, I conclude the section by considering Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" in relation to negative theology, arguing that his poetry promises an inexhaustible, mysterious nature through a negative poetics grounded in the intimacy between the subject and the world.

3. The Granulation of Text

In the previous sections, I proposed that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" can be understood as a poetic mediation—at the crossing and within the dual margin of the human and the ecological. Through innovative uses of language, Larkin signifies the relations of "scarcity" between these two forms of being, as well as their co-becoming in the poem and in the place of its composition. In this way, his poetry enacts an eco-ethical mode of knowing and being with others (i.e., trees) in the environment. This section continues to examine the eco-ethics of Larkin's poetry and propose a third interpretation of his poetics of "scarcity" as the granulation of text. The term 'granulation' points to two aspects of Larkin's composition: the "granules"—crowds of finite signifiers—and the 'granularity'—irregular, shifting linguistic flows in the text. Focusing on these, I argue that Larkin's poetry constitutes a radical and recuperative imagining of nature in "unnatural" landscapes—those shaped by human practices.

To demonstrate, I examine Larkin's composition—along with the place of its making—in the section "Wotton Hill Clump" from the poetic sequence "Slight Agreeing Trees". Situated atop Wotton Hill, "Wotton Hill Clump" overlooks the town of Wotton-Under-Edge, Gloucestershire. In Larkin's topographical note to this section of the sequence, "Wotton Hill Clump" is described as 'a nineteenth-century commemorative walled knot of pines now reduced to nine surviving trees' (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 39). Correspondingly, Larkin's composition focuses on images of exile and enclosure. For example, in the stanza:

> Reeling exile around its few poles of home (stole over the hill's undistress), not
> an axle but a mast angled in no fleeing from greeting, stripping fuel to prick the

air by which it calls, full to thinnest stick. The trees wave all that an overstress by which it can be less.

(Larkin, *Lessways Least* 33)

The wall that reels around the trees turns them into exiles, forcing them to leave their 'poles of home' on the ground for the sky. As mentioned above, Wotton Hill is a biological and geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, jointly managed by the National Trust and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. It exemplifies the discourse of "new naturalism" in mid-century UK, in which the ecology of the land is subjected to national and scientific—anthropocentric—interests (Matless). This reductive and restrictive view of nature is both embodied and interrogated in the uniform stanzaic layout of "Slight Agreeing Trees". In line with this, "Wotton Hill Clump" continues the critique of imposed horizontal forms and ordering—both on the page and in the place of composition. As seen in the stanza, humans, through the construction of the wall, attempt to enclose and turn the trees into a figure of commemoration. Yet within the wall, the remaining trees grow tall into the sky, as though escaping their horizontal confinement on the ground. In the final sentence, the verb 'wave', following the subject 'the trees', alludes to the word "waive", suggesting the trees' rejection (waiving) of the wall—understood as an 'overstress' that threatens to reduce them to something 'less' than what they are.

Nonetheless, the wall, which embodies a measure of enclosure, also stands for a reeling force that stresses and poles the growth of trees in "Wotton Hill Clump". As argued above, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" entails an innovative use of language to signify the ambiguous relationship between humans and nature. Like the examples of

Larkin's poetry discussed above, the writing and meaning of "Wotton Hill Clump" are also ambiguous, enacting a dialectic of dynamism and sessility, as well as hospitality and hostility. For instance, in the stanza quoted above, the phrase 'poles of home' may be a depiction of walls homing in on the trees and propelling them to flee, or a depiction of "boles" (which resonates with the image and the sound of 'poles') rooted in the wall as the home of trees. In this case, the word 'wave' in the last sentence of the stanza may be understood as a returned gesture of greeting to the wall. Similarly, the words 'axle' and 'mast' in the stanza evoke imagery of wheels and sails, suggesting the departure of the trees. Yet both forms of departure are negated within their context, emphasising the trees' sessility: 'not an axle', 'mast angled in'.

This ambiguous rendering of the dynamic between the wall and the trees interrogates the boundary between exile and growth, enclosure and home, and gestures toward the ambivalent discourse of natural preservation at Wotton Hill. By reiterating the ambiguity of the "wall"—both a 'home' for the trees and a 'pole' of their exile—Larkin questions both the effectiveness and the ethics of human enclosures in relation to local ecologies. As Minteer points out in his book *Refounding Environmental Ethics*:

> Instead of fooling ourselves that we can preserve species or systems within historically defined conditions and ranges of variability—or restore landscapes to their "predisturbance" past—we will likely have to accept the fact that Global Climate Change imposes such a high level of unpredictability and promises such dynamic and novel ecological circumstances that these models are no longer as useful as they once were. As a result, many are beginning to argue that we must take a more adaptive approach to conservation law and policy, focusing on

> moving environmental-policy targets, such as "adaptive capacity" and "ecological resilience", rather than the conventional preservationist and restorationist visions that have dominated conservation law and policy in the past (165).

Contrary to the logics of enclosure and preservation, Minteer suggests that we need a new, adaptable environmental ethics and politics attuned to local circumstances and ecological ways of life, whose 'objective is to increase the ability of species, ecosystems and societies to cope with rapid environmental change (resilience) while also improving the capacity of these systems to continue to deliver goods and services that are critical to human social, physical and economic well-being' (165). Returning to the stanza from "Wotton Hill Clump": in addition to the trees' waiving or greeting of the wall, the word 'wave' also suggests a swaying motion, indicating the trees' animation despite being confined by—or in response to—external forces (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 33). In line with Minteer's argument, Larkin's poetry recognises the vitality and variability of nature and contributes to the shift towards 'a more dynamic and elastic, [thus a more pragmatic,] legal and policy regime' for the environment (Minteer 32). Building on this, I next show how Larkin signifies the ecological vulnerability and resilience of trees within tamed landscapes such as "Wotton Hill Clump", through a "granulation" of text.

To make sense of the stanza quoted above, the reader must place it under a "microscope" and consider the units—words, syllables, even letters—of the composition as distinct and potentially meaningful signifiers. At such atomic and subatomic levels, the stanza appears as a saturated field of tensions and relations. For example, the words 'poles', 'mast' and 'stick' are semantically related, each contributing to the image of slender, tall trees. Similarly, the words 'poles', 'home' and 'stole' are phonetically

linked, sharing the same vowel sound and duration in speech. However, the connections among compositional units are never fully secured in the text; those related in one way often contradict each other in another. For instance, the words ‘reeling’, ‘fleeing’ and ‘greeting’ resonate with one another phonetically and formally. Yet although ‘fleeing’ and ‘greeting’ are syntactically and lyrically connected in the phrase ‘no fleeing from greeting’, the semantic dissonance between them complicates their relation, turning it into a tense and involuntary connection akin to confinement. Similarly, while ‘reeling’ signifies a circular inward turning, ‘fleeing’ suggests an outward movement marked by urgency. A comparable dissonance appears in the phrase ‘reeling exile’, where the two words are proximate in space but distant in meaning. Such entangled tensions and relations among words in the composition correspond to the ecological dynamics embodied in the trees of “Wotton Hill Clump”. While ‘angled in’ the ground, the trees greet the air; their boles, like masts, prick and call the air. These two opposing movements—to flee and to greet—belong to the same subject: the trees. Their growth into the high air is both a fleeing from their walled enclave and a greeting to the open sky. This process of growing in confinement, enacted in the text through the entangled tensions and relations among words, demonstrates the ecological vitality and resilience of “Wotton Hill Clump”.

I have argued in the first section that the vertical growth of trees calls for their ‘bipolar and biaxial existence’ and serves as a “natural” contrast to the conventionally linear flow of language, as well as to the uniform stanzaic layout of “Slight Agreeing Trees” (Casey and Marder). Likewise, the literary and linguistic flows in the composition of “Wotton Hill Clump” are obstructed linearly, so any sense or connection in the text

must be made radically—across multiple directions and at multiple levels—mirroring the trees' escape from their enclosure on the horizon. Nonetheless, as the trees remain 'angled in' the walled ground, the meanings of the composition are contextual—both emerge from and confined within the tensions and relations among words. For example, as shown above, the (dis)connections among 'mast', 'stick' and 'pole', and among 'reeling', 'fleeing' and 'greeting', are both tensional and tenuous. The complications among them give rise to varied and variable interpretations and images within the text. It is this simultaneous proliferation and percolation of meanings that I attribute to Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" as a granulation of text. Both like and unlike my previous understanding of Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" as a crossing and a dual margin of the human and the natural, the granulation of text also brings forth the relations of "scarcity" between these two forms of being. In this section, by pivoting on the granules and granularity of the text, I wish to bring attention to the ecology (rather than the topography) of the composition and its dedicated landscape. From this standpoint, the composition is understood as a (textual) environment in itself, and the tensions and relations among words enact the interactions among compositional units within both the textual environment and the physical environment from which it emerges. From here, I argue that Larkin's granular composition is eco-ethical in its restoration of ecological—as opposed to linguistic and linearly structured—connectivity, creativity and meaningfulness within the (textual) environment.

In *Eco Language Reader*, Brenda Iijima proposes the term "re-enablement" to challenge the tendency to think about poetry—and beyond—through polarising terms such as disability, dysfunction, disfiguration and breakage, which are often positioned in

opposition to today's ableist cultural environment (277). Rather than framing poetry through a terminology of disablement, Iijima suggests there is a vital "wavering" between poetics of disablement and enablement, where dysfunctional poetics may generate new, resistant functionalities, just as instruments may malfunction (277). In the first section, I argued that the signification of "scarcity" in the crossing of multiple contraventions in Larkin's work reflects the term's ambiguous and contradictory meanings, traversing the fields of economy, ecology and theology. By interrogating meanings of "scarcity", Larkin's poetry not only reveals the distorted narratives, along with material and cultural values, centred around the term, but also calls for a more authentic relationship between humans and the natural world. On the one hand, Larkin's poetry engages with, thus disables, the contradictory constructs of "scarcity" in modern economic-political systems and their provocation of unending desire and competition among individuals, nations and corporations. On the other hand, it reclaims the term "scarcity" to signify the precarious yet inseverable bond between human and ecological beings, inviting an eco-ethical—attentive and mindful—way of knowing and dwelling with others on Earth. Resonating with such poetics of "scarcity" as a subversion of meanings and meaningfulness from linguistic to ecological and ethical terms, the granulated composition of "Wotton Hill Clump" not only questions the effectiveness and ethics of natural preservation as a form of enclosure, but also underlines the vulnerability and resilience of trees within such enclosures, "wavering" between a language of exile and ecological vitality (Iijima). In this sense, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" aligns with what Iijima calls "re-enablement" and "wavers" between the deconstructive and recuperative forces of poetic language.

To continue examining the ecology of "Wotton Hill Clump"—its signification and recuperation in Larkin's composition—I now turn to the poem's divaricated texture and textuality. Mirroring the trees' flight from their enclosure in the ground, linear obstructions in Larkin's composition consistently give way to multidirectional openings. Literary and linguistic flows are unreserved; they do not follow a conventional, linear course but are extended and expanded through a granulation of text. The paths of meaning-making in the composition continually bifurcate into tributaries, like runnels in coarse, cellular tree bark. This dialectic of opening and enclosure enacted in the composition results from Larkin's intimate observation of the creativity and rootedness of trees—a feature of radical and experimental landscape poetry that both inherits and diverges from Olsonian open-field poetry [11](see Introduction). In his essay "Innovation Contra Acceleration", Larkin highlights the mutualism between obstruction and flow in innovative poetry:

> Our sense of flow needs to include coprimordial obstructions to flow, as well as the capacity of those obstructions to become part of a granulation which also configures, so that percolation is differentiated as much carrying along with its elements enigmatically less that any pure process of the fragmentary traces of its own lining or enframing (173).

Obstructions of flow in the text are its reconfigurations. Since the reader cannot make sense of the poem linearly in a conventional manner, they are invited to explore possible connections between words across multiple directions and lines. In this creative process

[11] Recalling the dialectic of openness and enclosure in Tarlo's poetry, as argued in Chapter One, which opens space and possibilities for alternative ways of experiencing and engaging with the environment while remaining grounded in the physical, phenomenal and local, radical and experimental poetry invites an eco-ethical—situated yet radically open—mode of knowing and being in the world.

of meaning-making, the linearity of language gives way to new configurations; lines become nets. For example, in the stanza quoted above, the words ‘distress’ and ‘overstress’ can be related and read together, but to do so, the reader must escape a pair of brackets and leap to another sentence. Likewise, the reader may connect ‘exile’ to ‘fleeing’ due to their similar denotations, even though the two words sit in different clauses. Beyond these, the reader is invited to link many other words in the text—including ‘exile’ and ‘axle’, ‘axle’ and ‘reeling’, ‘reeling’ and ‘fleeing’—each in various ways and for different reasons. This processual reconfiguration of the text and its meanings, provided by Larkin’s granulated language, signifies the mutualism between obstruction and flow in the composition, as the mutualism between the human and the ecological in the topography of “Wotton Hill Clump”.

Moreover, the entangled tensions and relations among compositional units encourage the reader to wander beyond the text itself. Provided with the central imagery of the enclosure and exile of trees, the reader may also relate the words on the page to those “hovering” just beyond it (Farrier). For example, in the stanza quoted above, the word ‘wave’ evokes “waive”, and the word ‘axle’ evokes both “axil” and “axile”, which in turn resonate with the word ‘exile’ in the stanza. The more connections one makes, the more crossovers and overlaps emerge within the text. The granulation of language not only configures but also intensifies the sense of interconnectivity and flow within the composition. In her photo essay “Larkin and Lean Thinking”, Natalie Joelle presents a map of differentiating and entangled value-streams within an extended network, which may be borrowed here to help visualise the configuration of Larkin’s poetry (see Figure 2.1).

This visualisation of Larkin's poetry as 'an entanglement of lines' fits what Ingold calls a "meshwork" (81). In *Lines*, Ingold introduces the term "meshwork" to counter the concept of a "network", commonly adopted by modern transport systems (such as the

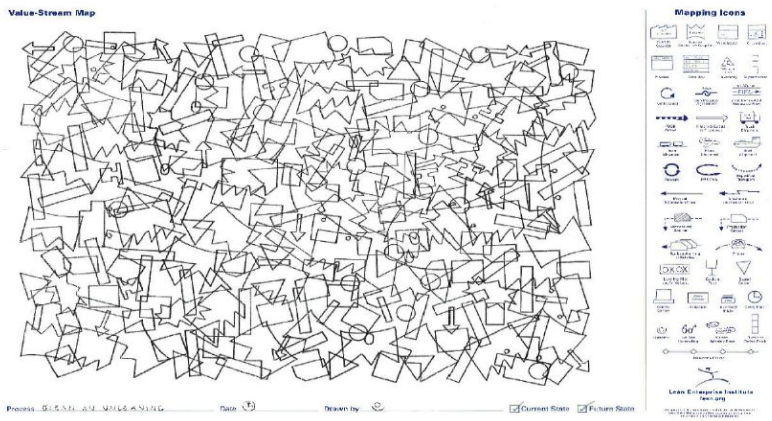


Figure 2.1

underground and the railway network), which are constituted by connected points of departure and arrival. Instead of this mode of configuring and occupying space with dots and straight lines, Ingold argues that 'wayfaring is the most fundamental mode by which living beings … inhabit the earth', producing a heterogeneous and provisional sense of place that can be characterised as a "meshwork" (81). Put simply, the difference between "network" and "meshwork" is one between transportation and wayfaring, occupation and inhabitation. It is this latter, meshed and material sense of place that is produced in the process of reading Larkin's poetry. As shown above in the stanza from "Wotton Hill Clump", the granulated language prompts readers to continue drawing connections between compositional units without any final determinations. As though a wayfarer, Larkin's reader inhabits the composition as "mesh" of signifiers. Rather than being transported along a predetermined, unidirectional line, their paths of meaning-making

constitute a provisional map of the composition that is always susceptible to reconfigurations.

As Ingold acknowledges in *Lines*, the idea of "meshwork" originates from Henri Lefebvre's argument against the abstraction of space in modern societies. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre points out the global commodity market has reduced real, geographical space into 'one integrated system of exchange and accumulation', or transportation "networks" (Ingold). In Lefebvre's view, the "abandonment" of the material sense of space in modern societies reflects the tendency of Western metaphysics to restrict itself to the conceptual and the symbolic. To resist such abstract senses of space, Lefebvre proposes a "revolutionary" and "reconstructive" production of space as the material underpinning of social relations on all planes, both micro/local and macro/planetary (407). This operates on the principle of "unification" as opposed to separation (such as that of subject and object, mind and body, in Cartesian thinking) of knowledge, the critique of knowledge and everyday experience ('non-knowledge') (Lefebvre 415). Larkin's poetry can be viewed as a revolutionary and reconstructive production of space due to its creative deconstruction of language and the symbolic order embedded within it (Lefebvre; Kristeva). As shown above, it does not offer a symbolic or conceptual representation of the trees and landscape. Instead, his poetics of "scarcity" entails a granulation of text into a meshwork of signifiers, whose meanings emerge through their interrelations and in the act of reading as 'wayfaring' (Ingold). In this way, the production of meanings, the reader's engagement with—and inhabitation in—the poem, as well as the critique of language's linearity are "unified" in Larkin's poetry (Lefebvre). Resisting the reductive abstraction of language and landscape, Larkin

emphasises the 'material underpinning' of both in his composition, enacting an eco-ethical reconstruction of material space in the modern world and the relationship between human and ecological beings within it (Lefebvre).

The granularity of text generates more vigorous and variable interconnections and interactions within it, creating a textual environment that resists being enclosed by singular interpretations. For this reason, Larkin's poetry is ecological and recuperative. As Haskell notes, the complex and contested environment of a rainforest does not 'force life into an atomistic mode', where 'individual must fight it out, victims versus enemy in endless, looping strands of conflict' (14). Rather, 'Darwinian war has created a furnace that burns away the individual, melting barriers and welding networks as strong as they are diverse', and that 'alliances that fuse distantly related species are just as common as those that form within species' (Haskell 14, 16). Similarly, by obstructing the conventional flow of language and the process of meaning-making, Larkin melts away the barriers among linguistic units in the composition—such as their differences in tense, form, sound and part of speech—and fosters more diverse ways of connecting them. As shown in Figure 2.1, the configuration of Larkin's poetry, as a 'meshwork' of signifiers, is 'arch-textual' rather than architectural; it is made up of individual and interlaced patterns that vary in shape and size (Ingold, *Lines*) and continue to form new patterns through their interrelations. The granules (discrete signifiers) and granularity (variable connections between signifiers) of Larkin's composition not only contribute to a "revolutionary" and "reconstructive" 'production of space' but also embody 'the essence of life form'—one that straddles existing as an individual and existing in relation (Lefebvre; Haskell). As Haskell argues, studying Ecuador's Amazon rainforest:

> So life has a contradictory, creative duality in its nature: it is atom or network; it is neither and both. This is not a question of metaphor; it is life's fundamental character. Life straddle two states of existence and thereby animates what was a dead universe (47).

In this sense, Larkin's poetry is ecological and recuperative. Grounding the process of meaning-making in the "granules" of composition, it restores ecological connectivity and vitality in both the textual and physical environments of "Wotton Hill Clump".

To sum up, this section proposes that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" entails a granulation of text, pointing to two aspects: the "granules"—the crowds of finite signifiers—and the "granularity"—the irregular flows—in his composition. Focusing on these, I argue that Larkin's poetry is both ecological and recuperative, offering an open and vital imagining of trees and the landscape that extends beyond the ideological and physical enclosures imposed on them by humans. Sourced from and dedicated to the growth of trees, Larkin reconfigures—"granulates"—the composition, as well as the imagery of the natural environment it embodies, into a "meshwork" of signifiers, rather than a symbolic, linguistic network (Ingold, *Lines*). In doing so, he enhances the interactivity and interconnectivity within the text, not only re-presenting but also recuperating the ecological vitality and resilience of trees in modified landscapes such as "Wotton Hill Clump". For which, Larkin's composition is experimental and eco-ethical, enacting a radical reconfiguration of both textual and natural environments while highlighting their relationality and materiality. I will further explore this practice of eco-ethics in Larkin's poetry in the following section, focusing on its re-presentation and production of space for trees in the earth.

4. The Production and the "Scarcity" of Space

In the previous section, I argued that Larkin's poetry is ecological and recuperative, "wavering" between a language of disablement and "re-enablement" (Iijima). His granulated composition produces a meshed and material sense of space, re-presenting the ecological liveliness of trees within landscapes and counteracting the abstraction and diminishment of natural lives and lands in modern systems. In this sense, his poetry constitutes a practice of eco-ethics. This section continues to examine the 'production of space' in Larkin's poetry—the 'material pinning' of social and ecological relations in both local and global environments (Lefebvre)—and how it signifies interconnectivity and activity in the place of trees, both individually and in woodland settings. Moreover, since the life of the tree takes "place" both aboveground and underground—branching into air and rooting into soil—this section now shifts from their "exile" from horizontal enclosures into open air in "Wotton Hill Clump" to 'the hidden life of trees' (Wohlleben) and their inhabitation in the soil. From here, I argue that Larkin's poetry embodies a practice of eco-ethical dwelling both *on* and *in* the earth.

Connecting the tree's crown and trunk to the ground, as well as to the deeper layers of soil, tree roots are elemental to the structure of both tree and earth. Extending to twice the spread of their crowns, tree roots provide the essentials for both the individual and social lives of trees, including nutrients, stability and information. In a woodland, the roots of various trees grow into one another, forming a complex underground organisation not only for the trees themselves but also for the 'multispecies knot' (Rose) between trees and other soil inhabitants, such as rodents and fungi. Reading Larkin's

poem "Roots Surfacing Horizon" alongside botanical science, the following examines how his composition embodies the physical materiality and spatiality of tree roots both in and above the ground.

Compared to other works collected in the anthology *Lessways Least Scarce Among*, the form of “Roots Surfacing Horizon” is notably porous and diverse. In contrast to the uniform block-like stanzas in the compositions of “Slight Agreeing Trees” and “At Wall with The Approach of Trees”, as discussed in previous sections, the stanzas of “Roots Surfacing Horizon” are interrupted by empty spaces and vary in both length and width. Although this also appears in the composition of “Stone Forest”, the stanzaic layout of “Roots Surfacing Horizon” is less consistent: short stanzas sometimes follow one to four long stanzas, while long stanzas may be followed by one to three short stanzas. The spacing between stanzas varies as well: there are often more line breaks between a short and a long stanza than between two short or two long stanzas. Each longer stanza is also ruptured by erratic, empty spaces, much like the pores of the text. Such varied interruptions in the composition with space, as well as the shifting alternation between long and short verses, cause the poem to take on a different form on each page, with its most consistent formal quality being its inconsistent openings. To understand this porous and variform presentation of the poem, one may look to the structure of soil and the importance of its irregularity for the life of trees.

For trees to grow, sustain themselves and thrive, the soil must be loose enough to allow roots to expand. At the same time, it must also contain solid footings, such as rocks, which roots can grip and cling to for stability (Wohlleben). Space and footings in the soil are essential not only for the growth of trees but also for their alliances with other

vegetal and non-vegetal beings underground, which help to mobilise, socialise and proliferate tree life. For example, fungi, which function as a means of communication among trees, need space in the soil to 'penetrate' and 'envelop' tree roots (Wohlleben). Rodents, too, live in small, dry holes amidst the web of tree roots; after they die, the various seeds they have buried in the soil sprout and grow into new plant life. In other words, the space underground must be irregular—both permeable and solid—in order to host a diversity of species and sustain the ecological well-being of the earth. Any uniform structure of soil—or its monopolisation by a single species—is life-threatening. In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Wohlleben offers a series of examples in which trees suffocate in flooded soil or on concrete ground, and where they fail to grow due to a lack of support in the loose soils of construction sites. Just as photosynthetic leaves and outreaching branches breathe and extend, so too do roots—seeking air, anchorage and connection underground.

In short, the organisation of space in the earth is a matter of landscape and a matter of life. Larkin's effort to perforate and diversify the compositional form of "Roots Surfacing Horizon" is thus both experimental and ecological, restoring a formal and spatial liveliness to the poem that mirrors the porous and irregular structure of soil as a precondition for vibrant underground life. In other words, by disrupting the monotony of page space, Larkin subverts its function as a backdrop for linguistic and symbolic practice, producing instead a material and dynamic sense of space and re-enacting the span and spread of roots in this animated and embodied place of the poem. To demonstrate this, I now turn to a close reading of "Roots Surfacing Horizon".

As argued above, the meaning of "scarcity" in Larkin's poetry is both indefinite and infinite, serving as a source of poetic thinking that mediates between the natural world and its subjective perception. The 'production of space' (Lefebvre) in Larkin's composition, through a poetics of "scarcity", is likewise dialectical, mediating between aboveground and underground, and between the surface and the depths of the earth. For example, in the stanza:

> no grounds of soil tumult except by loose root they out-take surface until it
> circulates as volume towards horizon what is humped to a chin abuts: won't pass
> co-finitely under recession of its wake but is fielded abed awake
>
> any level plain
> beseeches span
> in the palm of root

(Larkin, *Lessways Least* 137)

The space underground is as open as the air aboveground, and the expansion of tree roots in the soil is as multidirectional and multifaceted as the tree's branching in the air. The 'span' of roots in height ('level') and width ('our-take[n] surface') constitutes the 'volume' of earth and configures its surface. As argued above, the place of tree(s) is not an abstract space but a "knot" or 'entanglement of lines' (Rose, "Multispecies Knot"; Ingold, *Lines*). The formation of earth and roots, as well as the space both underground and aboveground, is interrelated and continuous; they are expressions of one another. Likewise, Larkin's composition, though interrupted and variform, remains continuous.

I have quoted the above passage in this chapter's introduction and argued that the compositional form it exemplifies embodies the spatiality of the underground shaped by the co-structuration of roots and soil. Moreover, it enacts the lifeful presence of trees in the earth on the page, speculating through experimenting with a vegetal mode of dwelling and communication. In this section, I further examine such eco-ethical composition and discuss the kind of relationship between human and more-than-human beings that it implies.

To take with another passage from "Root Surfacing Horizon" for example:

> Roots amend depths by surface over cleft how participation stanzas at swells of static the messages leap to the sill of the outcome as displacement would not
>
> (Larkin, *Lessways Least* 139)

'Roots amend' the depths of earth by 'enfibering' it (143). Yet, as signified in the porosity of the stanza, roots do not "fill" empty space or stitch together the 'cleft' in the soil. Rather, they create a 'surface over cleft', as though an 'ebullition' or 'pocket', maintaining the openings in the soil throughout their growth (139). In this way, roots inhabit the soil without occupying it, preserving and producing space for other soil inhabitants, such as fungi and rodents mentioned above. The distinction between 'amend[ment]' and 'displacement' noted in the stanza also highlights the non-invasive and constructive nature of the roots' expansion, as a production of space and openings. The ruptured composition of "Roots Surfacing Horizon" not only embodies the tree's rooting in the soil but also signifies the materiality ('**fibrousness'**), openness as well as activity of underground space. The irregularity and porosity of Larkin's composition thus

constitute a ‘production of space’ that is both material and ecological, underpinning the actions and relations in the earth among trees and beyond (Lefebvre).

The insistence on material and ecological senses of space is crucial to understanding Larkin’s eco-ethical composition. In the essay “Reforesting the Rhizome”, Dominic Hand provides the first substantial elaboration on the connection between Larkin’s poetics and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome:

> It is clear that Larkin’s poetics enacts many radical aspects of the ‘multiplicities’ encouraged by the rhizome. However, I equally claim that, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Larkin’s poetics re-incorporates and even defends the ‘arborescent’ metaphorics of the tree, and so works through a more ecologically sensitive network of thoughts, images, and textures more complimentary to recent discoveries of mycorrhizal systems. As such, I argue that Larkin hypothetically ‘reforests’ the rhizome (3).

Hand argues that, on one hand, the linguistic ‘outgrowths’ and ‘off shoots’ performed in Larkin’s poetry, as seen in the proliferating prefixes and suffixes, place his writing in a continuous change of states, enacting a ‘relentless expansion’, variation and connection that recalls Deleuze and Guattari’s characterisation of the rhizome.

On the other hand, the reinforcement of verticality in Larkin’s composition, in response to the arborescent structure of trees as well as the ‘meshwork’ of earth (Ingold, *Lines*), while maintaining its rhizomatic multiplicities, differentiates his poetics from the “depthless” model of the rhizome. In their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of the rhizome and list its ‘principle of cartography and

decalcomania': 'a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure' (11).

This preference for surface over depth is also remarked on by Jeffrey Nealon, who warns that Deleuze and Guattari's concept is not literally or specifically botanical but operates metaphorically, describing the rhizome instead as a 'machinistic network of finite automata'. By weaving verticality and depth, and most importantly the phenomenon of tree roots, into the textual surface of rhizomatic expansion and variation, Larkin's poetry re-grounds the rhizome in vegetal life and restores a botanical nature to it (Hand). The page space thus comes to embody the spatiality of earth, whose composition is variform and voluminous, made of both open spaces and embodied lives, depths and surfaces.

Beyond the expansion and spatiality of tree roots in the earth, Larkin's porous and fibrous composition also enacts a conveyance of meaning that mimics the transmission of messages within a tree through its roots. The poem's movements recall the dynamic exchanges and signalling pathways documented in contemporary plant science, where nutrients, chemical cues and electrical impulses circulate through roots and mycorrhizal networks to sustain interdependent life.[12]

For example, in the stanza quoted above, the spaces between the verses embody the pauses in its conveyance, much like the 'swells' (nodes) of a root system, where momentum builds before 'the messages leap' from one carriage-verse to 'the sill' of another. As mentioned above, there is no punctuation in the text; the stanza, as well as the

[12] For research on subterranean plant communication and signalling networks, see: Simard, Suzanne W., et al. "Inter-plant communication through mycorrhizal networks mediates complex adaptive behaviour in plant communities"; Song, Yuanyuan, et al. "Social networking in crop plants: wired and wireless cross-plant communications"; Canales, Jonathan, et al. "Electrical signal transmission in the plant-wide web"; Wang, Wenxu, et al. "Common mycorrhizal network: a review of the theories and mechanisms behind underground interactions".

entire poem, carries out one continuous conveyance, like the transmission of messages in an extensive "meshwork" of roots (Ingold, *Lines*). The messages are not displaced but 'leap' across openings within the text; *space* is where the transmission of messages takes place.

Contrary to the traditional imagery of plants as sessile and inanimate, this "contactless" transmission resembles the process of neurotransmission in animals. In animals, when a message needs to be transmitted across the body, their internal fluid environment is polarised with "Na+" and "K+" inside and outside each communicating cell, enabling electrical signals to pass between them without specialised conducting tissues. Considered one of the basic forms of communication and intelligence, neurotransmission was traditionally thought to be exclusive to animals, such as humans. However, without going into further physiological or botanical detail[13], the simple fact is that trees also channel electrical impulses within their bodies:

> for short trips, these signals pass from one cell to another by means of simple openings in their cellular walls, called *plasmodesmata*; for longer trips (for example, from the roots to the leaves), they use the main vascular system (Mancuso and Viola 66).

This similarity between communication systems in plants and animals is crucial to ecological thinking and ethics.

As Mancuso and Viola explain in *Brilliant Green*, the division and subjugation of plants to animals is a result of cultural discrimination rather than biological reality.

[13] See, for example, *The Brilliant Green* (Mancuso and Viola); "The Whispering Trees" (Simard); "Aboveground plant-to-plant electrical signaling mediates network acquired acclimation" (Szechyńska-Hebda et al.); "Electrical Signals in Avocado Trees (Persea americana Mill.) in Response to Light and Water Stress" (Gil et al.).

Originating in ancient Greek philosophy, the bias that vegetal and other non-animal life forms are unintelligent, soulless and immobile persists in modern Western thought, causing generations of biologists to overlook evidence of the similarities between plant and animal cells (Mancuso and Viola). In fact, when compared side by side, plant cells are more than equal to animal cells. Not only do they share the same functions as animal cells—such as reproduction and the transmission of electrical signals—but they also possess a rudimentary sense of "sight", which enables them to detect the frequency and direction of light. This unique ability of plant cells helps plants perform photosynthesis efficiently and enhances their overall environmental awareness. By enacting a transmission of messages in the composition—sourced by and dedicated to trees—that mimics neurotransmission, which is otherwise considered exclusive to animals, Larkin's poetry fosters a reimagining of plant life as intelligent, active and agential, offering a revaluation of vegetal life in relation to that of animals and humans.

Nonetheless, Meeker and Szabari point out in *Radical Botany* that Mancuso and Viola's view remains highly speculative and is 'the object of intense criticism from within the field of plant biology' (Meeker and Szabari 10), criticism that centres on the lack of evidence for plant consciousness as well as the superfluousness of imposing consciousness on plants. Taking the conversation beyond the debate on plant consciousness in biology, Meeker and Szabari aver that 'plants are not somehow an "alternate" subjectivity: instead, they point to the dissolution of the human subject, insofar as the latter is ascribed a psychology, a consciousness, and a desiring individuality' (Meeker and Szabari 176). Plants, for them, exhibit a posthuman, post-consciousness intentionality and intelligence that unsettles models derived from human

biological and ideological paradigms. In this view, Mancuso and Viola's attempt to bring plants closer to humans and animals, thereby granting them the status of ethical subject, makes their thinking appear less "radically botanical" than humanist and liberal. Their comparison of plant and animal intelligence continues to operate within an anthropocentric and biopolitical framework.

Echoing Nealon's critique of the rhizome, Meeker and Szabari caution critical plant thinking against falling into a paradigm of assimilation that reduces plants' radical alterity to metaphor and to analogical sameness with the human self. In contrast to this tendency towards self-assimilation, Larkin's speculation on plant intelligence and agency is indeterminate; it is undertaken experimentally and ethically. In "Roots Surfacing Horizon", messages and meanings are delivered within and through a composition of variation and expansion, resisting any arrival at final or generalised claims. Rather than bringing plants closer to human understanding, Larkin brings both composition and reader closer to how plants might think, act and communicate among themselves and with other species—mushrooms, rodents and humans. Put differently, the indeterminacy of Larkin's work, sustained through the poetics of "scarcity", is both a result of its intimacy with nonhuman forms of agency and intelligence and a preservation of their radical alterity. In this sense, it is essential to Larkin's eco-ethical composition, functioning to reconnect the human to more-than-human worlds while accentuating their asymmetry.

To recap, so far I have argued that the porous and variform composition of "Roots Surfacing Horizon" embodies the irregular structure of soil, which is vital for roots to breathe and spread, and for trees to cohabit with other forms of life in the earth. Through

formal and spatial experimentation, Larkin's poetry embodies the interconnectivity, voluminosity as well as dynamism of the earth, within which tree roots partake, transforming the immaterial place of the poem into the material and ecological place of trees—the earth. In Lefebvre's words, it constitutes a production of space as the material underpinning of the individual lives of trees, as well as their "social" (ecological) relations with other inhabitants of the earth (407).

Moreover, recalling the process of neurotransmission in plants and in animals, the empty spaces in the composition connect different parts—verses, stanzas and sections—of the poem and build the momentum of its conveyance of messages, turning the 34-page poem into a continuous, communicative "meshwork" (Ingold, *Lines*). In short, by enacting the inhabitation and communication of trees in the composition as the earth, Larkin's poetry not only highlights the rootedness and liveliness of trees but also speculates on their intelligence and sociality. In this way, its composition becomes an eco-ethical experiment, re-presenting the natural landscape and re-enacting lives within it on the page space without resorting to anthropocentric figures or discourses. Next, I will expand on this practice of mediation and speculation in Larkin's poetry with regard to its 'production of space' above and underground (Lefebvre).

In the case of "Roots Surfacing Horizon", Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" may be interpreted as a mediation between surface and depth—between the perceived and the unperceivable make-up of the earth. This mediation between the two realms is derived from the physical materiality of tree roots, marked by extensivity and continuity. As Larkin explains in his "Note" to the poem, the roots underground, despite their 'thinness', when 'networked', can 'alter' and 'nurture' the surface of the earth (133). Moreover, he

questions what would count as ‘above-ground’ when the surface of the earth is thickened and inflected by the way roots colonise it laterally? (133). As indicated in the stanza quoted above, it is by ‘surfac[ing] over cleft’ of the earth that the roots ‘amend’ its ‘depths’ (139). The configuration of the earth by roots is continuous and voluminous, unfolding both underground and above ground; so too is the ‘production of space’ in Larkin’s poetry (Lefebvre). The span and expansion of tree roots, the spatiality of soil and the interrupted yet continuous surface of the earth are all distinct expressions of a shared ground. The relations among them are relations of “scarcity”—not equivalent, yet not severable. In the first half of this section, I argued that Larkin’s poetry enacts the inhabitation of tree roots in the earth and their underground production of space. Building on these relations of “scarcity” between above and below ground, I now argue that the composition of “Roots Surfacing Horizon” also re-presents the earth’s surface, or the horizons of roots’ ‘surfacing’.

Like the structure of soil in the earth, the surface of the earth is both interrupted and continuous. As Larkin writes in the stanza:

> holding out a soil-face rather than refolding it prevents horizontal corrosion:
> horizons wherever endless surface is interrupted at the convertibility of own
> surfeit

(*Lessways Least* 140)

The endless surface of the earth is interrupted by a ‘soil-face’, which, in the context of the poem, is most likely ‘[held] out’ by the expanding roots in the earth. The roots ‘enfiber’ and texturise the earth, transforming its endless surface into something ‘broken-bulged’ (138). Nonetheless, as indicated by the hyphen between the words ‘broken’ and ‘bulged’,

the surface is interrupted but not entirely broken off; rather, it is 'inflected' by the roots. Corresponding to the inflected surface of the earth, this stanza is also texturised by the various conversions of the word "surface"—such as 'soil-face' and 'surfeit'—which hold the stanza together while diversifying its meanings. This interruption by conversions of "surface" (rather than empty spaces, as discussed above) in the composition is unique to this stanza, underscoring the transformability ('convertibility') and continuity of the earth's surface, in contrast to the porosity of soil within the earth.

The continuity of the surface is signified in the stanza:

> the fronds of surface (distributive trust) become goads of plenty branching out but only as nodal as horizon was condensity of the flat sheen surface population, what ripples is the transfer from every other density

(Larkin, *Lessways Least* 141)

While 'branching out', the surface of the earth does not break, since it is not merely constituted of the top layer of soil but is a condensed expression of its 'population' ('depths'). 'What ripples', then, is not the surface itself but the energy 'transferred from every other density' of the earth.

The imagery of 'ripples' evokes a (un)broken surface of water, whose expressions of turbulence are inseparable from its mass. In a similar vein, Sarah Howe describes Larkin's composition in "What the Surfaces Enclave of Wang Wei" as 'a "pleating" or "interfolding" of surfaces where the "lost" material remains present but enclosed within the rippling folds.' According to Howe, Larkin's composition of 'rippling folds' distinguishes his poetry from earlier avant-garde practices of 'excision' and 'erasure'; its incomplete, incoherent composition is not broken but gestures toward an enfolded,

unknown world. By comparing Larkin's reworking of Wang Wei's poem to Robin's translation of it, Howe argues that while the latter sacrifices the culturally specific profundity of the original text for literal coherence and accuracy, Larkin regenerates the excised depths of meaning in Robin's translation through a process of selection and rearrangement—or, in Larkin's words, 'gathering' and 'tasking'—of the source materials. As Larkin reflects on his reworking of Wang Wei's poem:

> Some of my texts were never conscious designs as such…but simply coalesced out of disparate or vagrant notes arising from reading something (and seeing new combinatorial patterns for the words on the page but which stayed within the horizon of the book).

Echoing his poetics of "scarcity" as 'a necessary paucity of mediation', Larkin's composition is sourced from and stays close to what's given (see Section Two). Scarcely mediated, his poetry is thus 'originary', derived from and dedicated to the inexhaustible, and therefore unrepresentable, natural world, rather than to the subject of mediation (Larkin, "Fully From, All Scarce To").

In this view, returning to the composition of *"Roots Surfacing Horizon",* the re-presentation of a rippling surface in the stanza quoted above is a "promise" of the mysterious depths of the earth. As argued in the second section, Larkin's poetry promises an inexhaustible, mysterious nature through a negative poetics of "scarcity" built on the intimacy between the poetic and the material, the subjective and the natural. As Larkin explains in his interview with Edmund Hardy:

> Scarcity as a practice seems to oscillate between two poles for me: on the one hand I don't write from a blank page but have to collect and knead together a lot

> of prior material, most of which has no organic connection with the direction of my writing; on the other, the 'too little' is also a 'too much' just as it eludes any self-grounding of its own and so has to have recourse to such gestures as promise, offer, dedication etc which are right on the margins of how any material poetica can sustain itself.

Placing poetic mediation in the "margin" between humans and nature, Larkin signifies the inverse correlation—the relations of "scarcity"—between how little can be seen and how much there is. In other words, the "scarcity" of poetic mediation—or the poetics of "scarcity"—in Larkin's work is a 'promise, offer, dedication' to the infinite mystery of the natural world. Likewise, the surface of the earth is an expression 'less than' the earth itself; its uneven texture is a "promise" of the inexhaustible and densely populated depths of the unknown. In this sense, Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" is a mode of speculation sourced from and embodying ecological life, particularly the arborescent and rhizomatic life of trees both above and below ground.

To sum up, this section explores Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" in the poem *"Roots Surfacing Horizon"* and its eco-ethical implications. I first argued that the poem's porous and variform composition embodies the irregular structure of soil and enacts the inhabitation and communication of tree roots with others in the earth. Then, shifting attention aboveground, I showed how Larkin's composition re-presents the uneven surface of the earth and gestures toward its hidden depths through a poetics of "scarcity". Pivoting on the physical materiality of roots and earth, marked by continuity and extensivity, as well as a poetics of "scarcity", 'the production of space' (Lefebvre) in Larkin's poetry takes place both above and underground, mediating between the surface

and the depths of the earth. Larkin's composition is eco-ethical, not least because it re-enacts the inhabitation and communication of trees in the earth, but also because it foregrounds the relations of "scarcity" between the soil surface and the subterranean world. In these ways, it provokes a rethinking of the relationship between human and ecological ways of being, as well as between the inhabitants of the earth and the inexhaustible depths of the earth itself.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter argues that Larkin's poetry enacts an eco-ethical knowing and being with trees both on and in the earth. Through an examination of his work collected in *Lessways Least Scarce Among* along with the landscapes of its making, I propose four interpretations of his poetics of "scarcity". The first section, "Scarcity in the Crossing", proposes that the term and poetics of "scarcity" signify the ambiguous—scarce yet inseparable—relationship between constructed oppositions, such as human and ecological ways of life, both within the composition and in the landscape from which it is sourced. The second section, "Scarcity in the Margin", suggests that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" may be understood as a "marginalisation" of the subjective and the mediated in the poem to promise an inexhaustible natural world. The third and fourth sections focus on the ecological and recuperative nature of Larkin's poetry and argue that it enacts what Lefebvre calls a revolutionary and reconstructive production of space, transforming the composition into a lively textual environment that is material and meshed, as opposed to abstract and linear representations of landscape in modern thought and practice. Highlighting the granularity, porosity and diversity of his composition, I argue that

Larkin's poetry signifies the uneven, entangled and extensive make-up of the earth, as well as the life it sustains beyond human perception.

All four sections argue that Larkin's poetry is a practice of eco-ethics, enacting a radical reimagining of the natural world as well as the place of humanity within it, while remaining rooted in the contexts of its composition—both specific landscapes and the wider cultural and material environment of the contemporary world. Resonating with Tarlo's proposal of radical landscape poetry, Larkin's work demonstrates the eco-ethical significance and potential of embedding poetic mediation and innovation within "landscapes" as both the physical and ideological grounding of human thought and practice, in poetry and beyond. As shown in this chapter, drawing on the physical materiality of trees as well as the generative indeterminacy of the term "scarcity", Larkin's poetry embodies an eco-ethical dwelling in nature—one that does not aim to exhaust or extract but participates mindfully, promising mystery rather than knowledge.

Chapter Three

Weaving Kinship: The Sensuous, The Magical and The Eco-Political Threads of Maggie O'Sullivan's Poetry

Introduction

This chapter explores the practice of eco-ethics in Maggie O'Sullivan's poetry through a close reading of her works, including *red shifts*, *In the House of the Shaman* and *murmur*. As with those discussed in previous chapters, creative agency in O'Sullivan's poetry does not reside in the poet or any singular subject but is instead diffused in the "landscape" as a field of relations and interactions among various subjects and objects. In a word, the creative agency in O'Sullivan's poetry is material and ecological. Rather than serving as a mere background to human activities, the landscape re-presented in the poem—as well as the place of the page itself—is a site and event of mutual constitution and transformation among its compositional actors, human and nonhuman, verbal and nonverbal. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry becomes a practice of weaving kinship among the earth's inhabitants, recovering the relationship between human and ecological beings on ideological, emotional and physical levels. It is thus a practice of eco-ethics.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Donna Haraway urges environmental scholars and activists to 'stay with the trouble' in order to imagine a future on this damaged earth. According to Haraway, the "trouble" we face today encompasses both ecological and metaphysical disturbances, as our understandings of what it means to be human and to be alive continue to be challenged by a changing, 'mixed-up' world (Haraway 1). This

leaves us with the primary task: to 'make odd kin'—to recover and reimagine our relationships with other lifeforms on earth. In Haraway's words, to 'stay with the trouble' is to 'learn to be truly present … as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings in our difficult relationships' (1). Rather than being 'tied by ancestry or genealogy', the task of 'kin making is making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans', but as "composts" within interconnected earthly communities (103). Therefore, the task of 'making odd kin' entails two components: first, the deconstruction of entrenched human ideologies and identities; and second, the reconstitution of human beings as "composts" of the world. Building on this, I argue that O'Sullivan's poetry enacts such kin-making by weaving together the human and the nonhuman, the discursive and the material, within a shared process of co-becoming—both in the poem and in the world beyond.

O'Sullivan's poetic and eco-ethical practices emerge from her physical and emotional intimacy with nature. In a conversation with Redell Olsen, O'Sullivan reflects on the effects of living in a rural environment on her work.:

> Living in a place that is in close relation beside other-than-human sentience has deepened my trust in the provisional, the precarious, in the precisions of the transient - of "what is not yet known, thought, seen, touched but really what is not. And that is" ... having a feeling of being part of an intimate, boundless, round-me turning of "Non, nothing, everything" - aware of the sky as an infinite environment of ephemeral vice versa imperatives and winged pathings - nature particularly at transitional times of great energy such as spring and autumn... and the blizzards, the driving, horizontal rains and the battering winds. And the sonic

> plunging of water to the earth, into the becks, springs and falls...such breaking up and breaking apart within utterances and hearings, de-constructing/re-constituting-as-(being)-heard is embodied in my poetics...

Being close and closely related to nature, O'Sullivan's poetics enacts a 'deconstructing' and 'reconstituting' of the subject—their body as well as their sense of self—as part and as "compost" in the process of worldmaking (Haraway).

O'Sullivan's belief in the "transient" resonates with Stacy Alaimo's concept of "trans-corporeality" (O'Sullivan-Olsen; Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*). Both terms highlight the vitality and transformability of matter and the environment, in which humans participate rather than exercise mastery. As Alaimo argues, the "trans-corporeal" space between human bodies and more-than-human natures is not only physical but also epistemological, political and ethical: by emphasising the corporeal interconnections and exchanges among various subjects and objects, "trans-corporeality" necessitates an intellectual openness that recognises the substantiality and agency of nonhuman actors as part of worldmaking. Likewise, as I will show in this chapter, O'Sullivan's poetry both signifies and occurs within an "inter-realm" between the subject and the environment, the human and the ecological, thereby opening an epistemological, political and ethical space for the natural within cultural discourse.

This chapter is structured in three sections: "the sensuous", "the magical" and "the eco-political". Exploring O'Sullivan's poetry through these lenses, I argue it is a practice of eco-ethics, enacting a mutual constitution and transformation between the subjective and the objective, the human and the nonhuman, within both the poem and the natural world. In the first section, I underline the sensuousness of O'Sullivan's poetry

through a close reading of her poem *red shifts*. The engagement and performance of "the body" in O'Sullivan's work are crucial to understanding both her poetics and her practice of eco-ethics. Through 'deconstructing' and 'reconstituting' (O'Sullivan–Olsen) language into a composition of words, marks and sounds that are not only read but also seen and heard, O'Sullivan presents a sensuous experience of the environment—both in place of the poem and in the represented landscape. This 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language further enables a 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of the subject by opening their senses and sensibilities to other compositional bodies/subjects within the environment.

In the second section, I examine the "magical" thread of O'Sullivan's poetry. The supernatural element in her work endows it with ideological and emotional capacities that are 'not otherwise available in our everyday life' and expands our understanding of eco-ethics as a practice of knowing and relating to the more-than-human world (Bernstein). By configuring a landscape that is both sensuous and magical, O'Sullivan's poetry deepens and extends the connection between human beings and the ecological world. As I will demonstrate with her poems collected in *In the House of the Shaman*, the presence of the supernatural transforms both the landscape and the poem into a site and event of mutual transformation between humans and animals, in which their kinship is recovered.

In the final section, I explore the eco-ethical and eco-political implications of O'Sullivan's poetry through the multimedia composition of *murmur*. Within the framework of Karen Barad's "agential realism", *murmur* functions both as an "embodied apparatus" and as a "phenomenon" in itself, its significance emerging through an ongoing "intra-activity"—a processual (un)weaving of its sonic, visual and textual components (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"). As a confluence of innovative poetics, eco-ethics,

and feminist and posthumanist thinking, O'Sullivan's poetry weaves together not only the discursive and material makings of the poem as forms of worldmaking, but also diverse disciplines and the aims of socio-political transformation. In this sense, it embodies what O'Sullivan terms 'an eco/ethico politics of the earth' (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

To add, although O'Sullivan has been identified as a radical landscape poet by Harriet Tarlo, she 'was the only poet asked who did not want to be included in the anthology', *The Ground Aslant* (Tarlo, "Open Field"; *The Ground Aslant*). In the following discussion, I will note both the connections and disconnections between O'Sullivan's poetry and the work of Harriet Tarlo and Peter Larkin, as examined in the previous chapters. By turning to O'Sullivan at the midpoint of this thesis, I aim to shift the focus beyond Tarlo's term and grouping of "radical landscape poetry". In particular, by articulating the trans-sensual and trans-heuristic qualities of O'Sullivan's poetry, I explore the experimental and eco-ethical practices of contemporary poetry in re-presenting and reimagining the environment beyond formal and spatial experimentations. Interweaving textual and bodily performances, as well as natural and supernatural elements, within a landscape where human and nonhuman beings coalesce, O'Sullivan's poetry contributes to a composition of eco-ethics that is transformative and open-ended, while remaining rooted in the phenomenal and physical realms.

I. The Sensuous

This section examines the sensuous thread of O'Sullivan's poetry, focusing on how it engages and enlivens the sensory experience of readers and audiences. As mentioned above, O'Sullivan describes her poetics as 'a deconstructing/reconstituting-as-(being)-

heard, in the sense that as we hear, we also are heard in an interweaving of potential exchange of hearing-(being)-heard of other-than-(as well as human)-sentience' (O'Sullivan–Olsen). As I will show below, this involves a 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of both language and the subject as hearing as well as being heard. Rather than functioning as an exclusively human and symbolic discourse, language is reconstituted as word-sounds that flow between—and weave together—various subjects engaged in the poem, such as the performing poet, the audience and the voice(s) embodied in the composition. In Barad's terms, the agency of expression and communication embodied in O'Sullivan's poetry is diffused in the phenomenon of the poem, among the various "intra-acting" bodies it brings into relation (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"). The poem becomes an event of mutual exchange among embodied subjects, rather than a one-sided address of meaning or ideas. In this way, a physical and primordial sense of connection—kinship—is formed through O'Sullivan's poetry among its compositional actors, both human and nonhuman, within and beyond the frame of the page.

In the Introduction, I traced the poetical and eco-ethical roots of radical and experimental landscape poetry to late modernism—particularly Olson's open-field poetics, which emerged in mid-century US—through their shared belief in the phenomenological continuity between the poetic and the natural "field", and between the body subject and the physical environment. In his canonical essay "Projective Verse", Olson identifies two key components of open-field poetry, emphasising the importance of "the body" in the process of composition:

> Let me put it baldly. The two halves are
>
> the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE

the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE

Instead of the mind, which is often associated with 'the head' and 'the heart', Olson foregrounds 'the ear' and 'the breath' as modes of composition—understood as the transfer of energy from the physical landscape to the poetic field through the body subject, the poet. The poem, like other objects of natural creation, is open to the world because it acquires, through the poet's body, 'the kinetics of the *thing'* [emphasis added] (Olson). In other words, the connection between the natural and poetic fields is established on a 'shared phenomenality' among all "things", including the material world, the poet's body and the "solidified" verses (Widger, "Specific Evidentness" 365; Olson). This alignment of the poem and the poet with natural objects, which Olson calls "objectism", challenges the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, the subjective and the objective, and lays the foundation for the practice of eco-ethics in radical and experimental landscape poetry, as it continues Olson's critique of the 'egotistical-ecstatic' mode of perceiving and representing nature, while maintaining 'a strong sense of the body' in the field (see Introduction; Tarlo, "Open Field" 136). Put simply, both Olsonian open-field poetry and its British trajectory are bodily and eco-ethical practices.

The engagement of the body is also central to O'Sullivan's poetry. As she explains in a conversation with Redell Olsen:

> My work has always been body-intensive—writing by hand, redrafting the words by hand—bending, sticking, cutting, shaping marks, shaping sounds into the recorder, pain(t)ing and building—all inscriptions of my body's breathing.

Corresponding to the engagement of the body in O'Sullivan's creative process, the presentation of her work is also 'body-intensive', whether on the page or in public

performance, emphasising the bodily presence of the poem. In doing so, her poetry engages the reader and audience through their bodily senses—through ears and eyes—rather than solely through the mind. By "bodying forth" the poem through both composition and performance, and by situating the experience of the poem in the "body" of the reader and audience, O'Sullivan's poetry negotiates the boundary between the symbolic and the semiotic, the verbal and the nonverbal processes of meaning-making (Kristeva). This recalls the eco-ethical composition of Harriet Tarlo, as discussed in Chapter One. Later in this section, I will address both the similarities and differences between O'Sullivan's and Tarlo's practices in relation to their engagement with and re-presentation of the body in the poem.

In the Introduction, I argued that the performance of breathing in the composition of O'Sullivan's poem *red shifts* enacts a sense of body on the page. Building on this, I connect her poetry to Olson's open-field poetics and, consequently, to radical and experimental landscape poetry. To begin this section, I return to *red shifts* and the performance of breathing in its composition, in order to underline the engagement and re-presentation of the body in O'Sullivan's poetry. The composition of *red shifts* is to be sensed—sounded out—by the reader, which in turn enlivens the reader's senses. The process of sense-making thus becomes a process of interaction and "intra-action" between the reader and the text—more precisely, between the body of the reader and the composition as a 'bodytext' (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"; O'Sullivan, *murmur*).

As Mandy Bloomfield observes, when engaging with *red shifts*, 'the "where" of reading is located not in the reading body but rather in an exchange between the space of the page and the "somatic locus" of the reading body' (14). This sense of transience, or

the ‘PLACELESSNESS’ of the poem, is the result of O’Sullivan’s ‘de-constructing/re-constituting’ of language as sounds ‘(being)-heard’ (O’Sullivan-Olsen). To return to the passage examined in the Introduction, for example:

broke

breaking —raised arms –

cant hold my breath/ my breath

sobbing

savage

tonguesbled

sh- - - sh - - - sh - - - sh - - - -

hurrish - - -

—upped – up—up -up –

any bare syllable STARE -

incendings –

thresh – tilt /

The breaking ‘voicings/breathings/existences’ of the poetic subject are embodied and performed through the “erring” language of the composition (O’Sullivan–Olsen). At the beginning of the passage, readers are told that the voice of the poetic subject is ‘breaking’; they are ‘sobbing’ and struggling to hold their breath. Corresponding to this physical state, the passage itself is fragmented and incoherent. The linguistic fragmentation in the passage embodies the breaking voice of the poetic subject. The composition becomes a performance—a bodying forth of the subject. It is, therefore, a ‘bodytext’ (O’Sullivan, *murmur*).

This performative re-presentation of the body in composition through experimental language is central to O'Sullivan's poetry. In the above passage, for instance, the repeated digraphs "sh" evokes both the slushing sound of blood and the noises made by the subject's bleeding tongue, incapable of articulation. The speech of the poetic subject becomes indistinguishable from the sounds of their body, so they are heard and understood as one. Additionally, the consonant "sh" (a sound produced by restricting the flow of air through the mouth—essentially, by breaking one's breath) lacks a vowel to form a complete word. This "impairment" reduces it to a sign and a sound, even a noise, so that when the reader encounters a verse composed of repeated consonants, they hear the "sh" sounds without semantic baggage. In other words, the syllables are stripped of meaning; they are 'bare syllables'—both 'star[ing]' at and being 'stare[d]' at by the reader. The letters in O'Sullivan's composition are no longer silent units of written language, but embodied sounds of the poetic subject—both sounded out and heard by the reader. In this sense, to "read" is also to "listen to" the poem; the reader cannot grasp its meanings so much as sound out its composition. Rather than serving as a passive object of apprehension, the poem—composed of 'bare syllables'—engages and 'enlivens' the sensory experience of the reader as much as the reader enacts the sounding of the poem (Abram). The encounter between the reader and the poem thus becomes a sensuous exchange—between the reader and the poetic subject embodied in the composition, as well as between the reader and the composition itself as a 'bodytext' (O'Sullivan, *murmur*).

Resonating with the language of Tarlo's poetry examined in Chapter One, the reconstituted language of O'Sullivan's poetry embodies both symbolic and semiotic

modes of significance, negotiating the boundaries between verbal and nonverbal—visual and sonic—experiences of the poem. As noted, to "read" O'Sullivan's poetry is not only to interpret symbols but also to see and sound out the letters of the composition. In this process, the senses and sensibilities of the reader are interwoven with the composition; both emerge as embodied subjects, hearing and being heard. I have argued that the digraphs "sh" in the above passage embody the slushing sound of the bleeding tongue and give body to the inarticulate poetic subject. Beyond such sonic re-presentation, O'Sullivan also composes a visual configuration of the breaking voice. The digraphs "sh" are linked by hyphens, forming a verse line in themselves. This porous line enacts a flow between the text and its surrounding space, not only resonating with the imagery of 'tonguesbled' in the previous line but also gesturing towards an interweaving of the text as embodied poetic subject and the page space as environment—the discursive and the material, the subjective and objective. Moreover, in the next line, the word 'hurrish' may be read as a portmanteau of "hurry" and "hush", suggesting both urgency and suppression: the poetic subject is likely being silenced by an external force. The "sh" sounds thus emerge both inside and outside the subject's body—from the bleeding tongue and from the hushes of others, which signifies once again the fluid continuity between subject and environment. In O'Sullivan's composition, language is neither exclusively human nor purely symbolic, but rather an "echo" between the body subject and the external world.

This simultaneous symbolic and semiotic operation of language is also enacted in Tarlo's composition. By deconstructing the conventional, coded discourse of language and reconstituting it into word-objects and word-sounds, both Tarlo and O'Sullivan

resituate poetic composition within the material world, negotiating the boundaries between the discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. As argued in Chapter One, through formal experimentation, Tarlo enlivens—gives both meaning and substance to—the space of the page, transforming the composition into a spatial and poetic field that is "equal", yet not equivalent, to the natural field outside (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*; Olson, "Projective Verse"). The poetic and natural fields—the perspectives of the reader and the poet—are both phenomenally continuous and critically distanced. This simultaneous signification of intimacy and distance in their relations corresponds with Tarlo's relations outside, as she walks and works with others in the field, and contributes to a perception of the environment that is embodied and situated, yet dynamic and provisional. In this way, Tarlo's poetry re-enacts a way of knowing the environment grounded in the walking body and the field.

By contrast, O'Sullivan's poetry does not emphasise the sense of body in the place of the page or the represented landscape (the poetic or the natural field), but rather the bodily presence of the composition itself in the environment of its presentation. As argued above, O'Sullivan's poem takes place in a sensory exchange between the reader and the composition as two embodied subjects. Although also situated within the physical and phenomenal realms, O'Sullivan's poetry does not follow Tarlo's embodiment of the page space to enact a real sense of place in the composition. Instead, by reconstituting language into word-sounds that echo between the reader and the composition, it enacts a sense of the transient within the poem and emphasises the "trans-corporeality" between subject and environment (O'Sullivan–Olsen; Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*). In the second section of this chapter, I will mark the difference between Tarlo's and O'Sullivan's re-

presentation of landscape as one between the "real" and the "transient", highlighting the supernatural element in the latter. Here, I aim to emphasise the sensory exchange between the reader and the composition enacted by O'Sullivan's poetry, and to continue exploring her poem as both site and event—rather than, as in Tarlo's case, a spatial field—of mutual transformation and communication among various bodies/subjects it brings into relation.

As indicated by the interweaving of letters and lines in the above passage, the verbal and nonverbal means of signification are inseparable in O'Sullivan's poetry. In her more recent publication *red shifts* (2001), the line 'breathing-in-breathing-out' is arranged on the page into two inverted V shapes: 'b-r-e-a-t-h-i-n-g-in' on the left and 'b-r-e-a-t-h-i-n-g-out' on the right. The edgy form of the lines, the present continuous tense of the word "breathing" and the lines between its letters together signifies the sharp, stifled breath of the poetic subject. In this process of signification, the meaning, shape and sound of the text are intertwined. With this in mind, the next line, '—upped – up—up -up –', appears self-contradictory: the horizontality of the line, along with the dashes between the words, undermines its denotation of ascension. Such a juxtaposition of verbal and visual signification creates a visceral sense of imbalance in the line, which serves at once as a force of displacement—propelling the affect of the composition beyond the page space—and as a force of absorption, demanding a sensorial response from the reader. Correspondingly, the word 'tilt' at the bottom of the passage affirms the sense of imbalance within the composition. The slash that follows 'tilt' in the line is not only visually awry but also grammatically erred; since there is content only on its left, the slash's symbolic function—to signify alternation between two sides—is left impaired.

The visual and verbal significations of the text, along with the senses and sensibilities of the reader, are both relational and tensional. Recalling the juxtaposition of words and images, poetry and painting, in the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work, the relation and tension between the verbal and the visual modes of sense-making here, too, position the reader/viewer at the edge between the inside and outside the artwork. The reader/viewer is both engaged within the poem—sensorially immersed in the composition—and, through the poem, engaged in the immediate, physical environment of their encounter. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry negotiates the boundaries between subjective and objective, discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. Like the work of Tarlo and Tucker, her composition is an eco-ethical re-presentation of the environment—not by representing it within the poem, but by invoking what Nancy terms 'the sensibility of exteriority', gesturing towards a natural world that both encompasses the poem and extends beyond it (see Chapter One).

In addition, the visual configurations of the composition not only contribute to the embodied expressivity of the poem but also transforms the composition into a score for its oral performance. Like dynamic markings and notes on a musical score, the visual variations in the composition indicate the musicality of O'Sullivan's poetry. The carefully placed and spaced punctuation marks, along with the emboldened, displaced and capitalised words in the composition, all suggest changes in the voice it embodies. In public readings, O'Sullivan always performs her work with shifting volume, tone and rhythm, as though she is not reading but sounding out—and singing—the page.[14] The changes in voice—whether performed by O'Sullivan or embodied in the composition—

[14] See "A Reading by Maggie O'Sullivan." *YouTube*, uploaded by Kelly Writers House, 30 July 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOZDYxt9aQ4

highlight the bodily presence of the poem and foreground the reader's or audience's experience of it in their bodies and in the physical environment in which the poem is presented/performed. The repeated phrases "breathing in" and "breathing out" of *red shifts* also recall the instructions of a guided meditation, encouraging readers and audiences of the poem to focus on their own breathing and to ground themselves in the present. In a word, presented/performed in a sonic, music form, the poem is understood as it is heard. Corresponding to the interweaving of visual and verbal significations in O'Sullivan's poetry, its musicality also signifies the presence of the poem as both an expressing body and an embodied expression in the physical environment of its presentation/performance.

As seen in *red shifts*, O'Sullivan's composition is both a bodily and textual performance; it is 'half sung/half said' (O'Sullivan, Reptiles 59). This bodily presence and performance is crucial to understanding her poetics and her practice of eco-ethics as an embodied and situated, yet nonetheless radical, reimagining of the natural world and humanity's place within it. Since the body is where and how the subject perceives and understands the environment, O'Sullivan's poetry—by engaging and enlivening the sensory experience of the reader or audience in their encounter with the poem—enacts the exchange between subject and environment, or, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, the subject's 'participation in and kinship with the visible [world]' (*Visible* 138). In the rest of this section, I will examine the ways O'Sullivan's poetry weaves together the body subject and the natural world through the lens of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

Merleau-Ponty devotes the opening chapters of *The Phenomenology of Perception* to discussing the enigmatic functioning of the body as both consciousness and thing.

Arguing for the 'intentionality and sense-giving powers' of the human body as it navigates the natural world, Merleau-Ponty rejects Cartesian division of mind and body, and of the human subject and the natural environment (202). As he writes:

> I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them. The scope of this inclusion is the measure of that of my existence; but in any case it can never be all-embracing. The space and time which I inhabit are always in their different ways indeterminate horizons which contain other points of view. The synthesis of both time and space is a task that always has to be performed afresh (*Phenomenology,* 161).

The task of "inhabitation" is how the body subject participates in and forms kinship with the external world, a task that can never be completed but is continually performed through the ongoing formation of habits. In acquiring a habit, the subject 'reworks and renews their body schema' in order to "understand" the environment in which they are situated (167). In Merleau-Ponty's view, to "understand" is not to subsume a sense-datum under an idea, but 'to experience the harmony between what [one] aim[s] at and what is given, between the intention and the performance' (167). 'A habit is formed, and the body has understood [the environment] when it has absorbed a new meaning and assimilated a fresh core of significance' from it (167). Put simply, to "inhabit" the world (space–time) is to "incorporate" it into one's own body schema and to adjust one's existence according to what one senses from the given.

This phenomenological understanding of "inhabitation" subverts the conventional dynamic between subject and environment. In this view, when "inhabiting" the world, the

subject does not merely occupy an objective space–time with their body; rather, they are transformed and habituated by the particular environment in which they are situated (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*). Merleau-Ponty's reinterpretation of "inhabitation" also blurs the boundary between being in and understanding the environment by defining both as transformations of the subject's body—rather than the mind—by what is given. In contrast to an objective sense of space and time, a phenomenological understanding of the environment holds that it can only be partially understood and inhabited as it is incorporated into a unique body schema. In short, the subject and the environment co-become through the act of "inhabitation". It is this mode of "inhabitation"—as a bodily effort of attuning to and making sense within the environment—that is enacted in O'Sullivan's poetry.

In her interview with Scott Thurston, O'Sullivan emphasises the importance of the audience's participation in both the performance and the composition of her work:

> I just hope that an audience would listen with open ears. Again I feel that the actual making, the constructing of a work continues into its performance. I've performed pieces and have gone back to the texts after my performance, developing them as a result of the audiences' response. I just hope that in the listening, seeing and inhabiting, the audience are taking part in the construction of a work.
>
> I've had strong palpably physical feelings from an audience, when I feel there's been a great degree of openness and they've inhabited a work with me. But on the

> other end of the spectrum I've had terrible experiences when I felt the audience hadn't heard me or refused to hear.
>
> (O'Sullivan-Thurston 245)

Being open in one's body is the precondition for one's "inhabiting" and understanding both the poetic work and the natural world. It is only when the audience is listening, when their body is engaged in and attuned to O'Sullivan's performance, that the poem becomes meaningful to them. In return, O'Sullivan responds to the audience's response and continues to develop the poem accordingly. O'Sullivan's poetry thus involves a processual (re)making of the poem as a mutual transformation among herself, the composition and the reader/audience. As seen in the performance/presentation of *red shifts* on the page, O'Sullivan invites the reader to participate in—to "inhabit" as well as "understand"—the poem by 'deconstructing/reconstituting' language as sounds that flow between—and weave together—the hearing subject (the reader) and the speaking subject embodied in the composition (O'Sullivan-Olsen). In contrast to the conventional mode of reading, the reader must see, listen and attune to the word-marks on the page in order to make sense of—and make sound from—O'Sullivan's work. Rather than 'subsuming a sense-datum under an idea' and conveying that idea through language as discourse, O'Sullivan shares the sense-data with the reader and invites them to experience it in their own sensory terms (Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology 167). In this way, as in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, O'Sullivan's poetry rejects the Cartesian divisions of mind and body, and the subjective and objective processes of worldmaking. On the contrary, it enacts an eco-ethical mode of understanding through bodily experiences—what one

senses from the composition, signifying mutual participation—kinship—between the body subject and the natural world.

To add, in Chapter One I argued that Tarlo and Tucker's artmaking constitutes a practice of eco-ethics through field-walking and field-working. Their creative process is grounded not only in the bodies of the artists and their material environment but also in collaboration and conversation with other inhabitants, thereby enacting an embodied, situated and dialogical mode of artmaking and worldmaking. In alignment with this, O'Sullivan's poetry also emphasises the co-becoming of subject and environment—or what Alaimo calls their "trans-corporeality" (*Bodily Natures*). Nonetheless, the relations between oneself and the surrounding subjects and objects fostered in O'Sullivan's poetry are not only those of partnership but also of kinship—that is, a physical and emotional affinity grounded in flesh and blood, without being confined by genealogy (Haraway). In this sense, O'Sullivan's poetry adds a sensuous dimension to the practice of eco-ethics, as not only embodied and enactive but also affective.

The difference between the partnership signified in Tarlo and Tucker's work and the kinship in O'Sullivan's lies in their respective approaches to bringing various bodies/subjects into relation and dialogue. As noted in Chapter One, Tarlo and Tucker preserve the autonomy of discrete perspectives and voices in the field by maintaining a critical distance between them. In this way, they are able to bring multiple subjects into relation and dialogue without collapsing their differences. While O'Sullivan's poetry also enacts a "communication" between subject and environment, it seeks to signify their concurrence—or the inhabitation of one within the other—thus recovering the kinship between them. In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty emphasises that the

act of “communication” is phenomenal rather than purely cognitive, and is possible only when all actors are embodied and present in a shared physical setting. In the act of “communication”, the spoken word, like any other expression of the body subject, is ‘a genuine gesture’ whose meaning ‘is not given, but understood, that is, recaptured by an act on the spectator's part’:

> The whole difficulty is to conceive this act clearly without confusing it with a cognitive operation. The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture which I witness outlines an intentional object. This object is genuinely present and fully comprehended when the powers of my body adjust themselves to it and overlap it. The gesture presents itself to me as a question, bringing certain perceptible bits of the world to my notice, and inviting my concurrence in them. Communication is achieved when my conduct identifies this path with its own. There is mutual confirmation between myself and others (215).

Authentic and genuine speech is initiatory: it affirms the existence of the hearing subject alongside the speaking subject. Put simply, by speaking to you, I acknowledge that your existence—embodied and intentional—is of the same kind as mine. Through communication, I adjust my way of being in accordance with yours, so that your intentions may inhabit my body, and mine yours. It is this mutual affirmation and transformation between two beings—alongside the exchange of their intentions—that is enacted in the act of communication. Language, then, as one means of communication,

'must be put back into this current of intercourse' (217). That is, speech must be understood as gesture—the embodied expression of the subject, as opposed to a purely symbolic discourse. In the words of Merleau-Ponty, languages are 'ways of "singing" the world'; their function 'is not to represent things, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract and literally express their emotional essence' (217). This emotional and embodied use of language is exemplified in O'Sullivan's poetry.

For example, *red shifts* enacts communication as concurrence among various bodies and subjects—both within the place of the poem and the represented landscape. The language of its composition adopts the obscurity of music and 'is only accessible through direct contact' (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 175):

breathing—in—breathing—out

tear of the wind

windfella

why d'who alls? ruptures crossing

hoove lost? –

rent – parture –t'tide

INEXACT

locutions

sutured, detonates

averting utt

err fasting

many. a sour suffix – wove, unwove –

FLED}

in the hand

hazeling

Once again, the intelligibility—or rather, the sensibility—of the poem is bound to the empirical presence of the words as marks and sounds. The composition, as an embodied expression and/or an expressing body (text), is not only a script for singing but also singing the world itself. In its performance of singing, various bodies/subjects—both within the place of the poem and the represented landscape—concur and form one 'nexus of live meanings' (175).

Moreover, O'Sullivan's poetry embodies both a phenomenological and a post-phenomenological view of landscape. As Wylie points out, from a post-phenomenological perspective, landscape cannot be understood as a horizon of dormant objects but as 'entwined materialities and sensibilities with which we act and sense' ("A Single Day's Walking" 245). Likewise, in the passage above, the landscape is presented as the entwined 'voicings/breathings/existences' of various human and nonhuman body-subjects (O'Sullivan-Olsen). The acts of breathing and 'utt/err [ing]' are performed not by any individual subject but by the entire composition. There is no way of telling who's speaking or who's heard: 'hoove', 'hazel' and 'windfella', the human and nonhuman—all bodies/subjects are 'gouged' and 'sutured', being 'wove[n]' and 'unwove[n]' in the poem as they are in the landscape. Whether interpreted as a gesture of 'singing the world'

(Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 217) or as a re-presentation of landscape as 'entwined materialities and sensibilities' (Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking" 245), O'Sullivan's poetry enacts an exchange—communication as well as mutual transformation—between subject and environment, negotiating the boundaries between the subjective and objective, the human and nonhuman, in the composition of the poem and the world beyond. It is both a phenomenological and a post-phenomenological imagining of the environment—embodied, yet also 'radically non-subjective' (Wylie, *Landscape*).

As O'Sullivan explains, her poetics embodies 'a breaking up and breaking apart within utterances and hearings, de-constructing/re-constituting-as-(being)-heard' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). By deconstructing and reconstituting' language as marks and sounds, O'Sullivan emphasises the phenomenality of speech and puts language back 'to a current of intercourse' between the speaking subject and their physical environment (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 217). As seen in *red shifts*, the sense and sensibility enabled by the composition are not exclusive to linguistic discourse or to a single subject, but are interwoven with its various compositional bodies—verbal and nonverbal, human and nonhuman. Then, in "singing" the composition to the reader or listener, O'Sullivan invites them into this "communication" as a concurrence between the speaking and the hearing subject within a shared physical environment—the natural world. As such, O'Sullivan's poetry is a practice of eco-ethics, weaving together various bodies/subjects—both inside and outside the poem—through a sensuous thread.

To sum up, this section has presented a close reading of O'Sullivan's poem *red shifts* and compared its experimental, eco-ethical composition with that of Tarlo's work. By 'deconstructing/reconstituting' language into marks and sounds, O'Sullivan blurs the

boundary between sensing and understanding, turning language into an echo that flows between the body subject and their environment, rather than functioning as purely symbolic discourse (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Moreover, this 'deconstructing/reconstituting [of language] as (being) heard' is also a 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of the subject, whose materiality and sensibility are entwined with—and mutually transformative of—those of other bodies and subjects in the environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Finally, by inviting the reader or listener to engage with the poem—and with the world beyond—through their bodily senses, this 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language and subject gives rise to the distinctive sensuousness of O'Sullivan's poetry and forms an elemental thread in her poetics and practice of eco-ethics as an enactment of kinship—mutual participation—between subject and environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

II. The Magical

As shown in the first section, O'Sullivan's presentation of the poem—and her re-presentation of the landscape—is sensuous: it is hearing and being heard. Being made of 'entwined materialities and sensibilities' (Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking" 245), the entire composition—rather than any individual subject within it—of the poem and the represented landscape is embodied and present, "singing" with the reader/audience and drawing them into this concurrence (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*). Such a re-presentation of the landscape as a site and event of mutual participation and transformation is not only sensuous but also magical. By weaving together various bodies/subjects—human and nonhuman—in the environment—inside and outside the poem— it challenges our everyday sensibilities, which are often bound to our own bodies and constructed identities. As O'Sullivan explains in conversation with Olsen, the place

of the page is ‘a place of existence, journeying. A sacred space of undiminishment. Of dream. Of ritual. Of magic.’ In this section, I continue my analysis of O’Sullivan’s poetry, tracing the “magical” thread of her poetics and her practice of eco-ethics.

The performance of dream, ritual and magic in O’Sullivan’s poetry is often associated with shamanism and with the German performance artist Joseph Beuys (e.g., Mortuza, *The Figure of the Shaman*; Bloomfield, “Unsettling Sustainability” and “Landscaping the Page”). Particularly, the title of O’Sullivan’s collection *In the House of the Shaman* alludes to Beuys’ work, *Houses of the Shaman*. In this collection, O’Sullivan shares with her readers a quote by Beuys: ‘To stress the idea of transformation and of substance. This is precisely what the shaman does in order to bring about change and development: his nature is therapeutic’ (28). In agreement with Beuys, O’Sullivan believes that in modern societies the artist assumes the role of the shaman, serving as an aesthetic healer for both human and nonhuman commons of the earth. A key to this therapeutic nature of art—or, in O’Sullivan’s words, its power of ‘salvage, retrieval and recovery’—is its conduct of transformation, which Beuys calls “bewegung” (movement) (O’Sullivan-Olsen; Rosenthal). That is,

> The principle of resurrection, transforming the old structure, which dies or stagnates, into a vibrant, life-enhancing and soul and spirit—promoting form. This is the expanded concept of art. Hence, *bewegung* is an agent of art (Rosenthal 25).

In other words, the power of art to transform the world is not confined to the aesthetic but extends into the physical and socio-political realms, recalling the commitment to formal experimentation in late modernist, experimental poetry (see Introduction). The pursuit of

social transformation through art is evident in Beuys's practice. Having experienced and participated in the Second World War, Beuys often incorporated his wartime memories into his projects, seeking to heal not only his own trauma but also that of others. He also 'collected individuals to his various political causes' and 'even proclaimed himself the chief of a political party for animals, since they could not speak for themselves' (Rosenthal 13).

Likewise, as a woman poet and a descendant of Irish heritage living in the UK, O'Sullivan's work also carries significant socio-political potency—an aspect I will examine further in the next section. In this section, however, I will focus on the ecological and ethical implications of O'Sullivan's work, exploring how her poetry enacts mutual transformation among various bodies/subjects in the landscape and in the place of the poem. Through a close reading of poems from *In the House of the Shaman* and *Palace of Reptiles*, I argue that O'Sullivan's work contributes to a radical reimagining of the natural world as dynamic, agential and sentient—a world in which the human and ecological realms are deeply interwoven.

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram foregrounds the ecological dimension of shamanism as practiced among Indigenous communities—an aspect often overlooked by Western anthropologists due to cultural bias. When studying and living with the peoples of Bali, Indonesia, Abram came to understand that their tribal shaman was not merely a spiritual figure, but 'acts as an intermediary between the human community and the larger ecological field',

> ensuring that there is an appropriate flow of nourishment, not just from the landscape to the human inhabitants, but from the human community back to the

> local earth (14). …His magic is precisely this heightened receptivity to the meaningful solicitations—songs, cries, gestures—of the larger, more-than-human-field (16).

This intermediary function of the shaman is also explored by Zygmunt Bauman in *Legislators and Interpreters*. Examining the role of intellectuals in premodern and modern societies, Bauman argues that while modern intellectuals seek to impose universal truths and shape society through rationality and science, premodern 'knowledge-bearers'—such as shamans—mediate between the supernatural and the natural, guiding human communities through conflict and trauma by drawing on both local traditions and spiritual wisdom. Attending to the ecological, social and spiritual life of the Earth, the shaman thus embodies the figure of the intermediary and healer.

To reiterate, the shaman serves as an intermediary between the human and the ecological, the natural and the supernatural realms of life on Earth—and it is this role that O'Sullivan assumes as a poet. The magical, "supernatural" element of O'Sullivan's poetry is sourced in and attributed to the "natural" world. The power of transformation does not belong to the poet, the shaman, or any individual human subject. Rather, the shaman-poet brings forth the transformative power of nature by interweaving and mediating between human and more-than-human sentiences through close attention to both language and the living world. As O'Sullivan explains:

> What making-unmaking is a mattering of materials (motivations & practices)
> living to live in that learning – uncertain, Uncurtained Tonguescape
> SUNG, SHUNT. ARM WE. Living Earth kinships on the
> vast-lunged shores of the Multiple Body imbued with

wide-awake slumbering & cavortings. Constructions.

Intuitions. Transmissions. Radiations. Thinking.

ATTENDING.

(O'Sullivan-Olsen)

The magic of O'Sullivan's poetry is enacted in its listening to—and "singing" with—other bodies/subjects in the environment as our earthly kin (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*). In the poem "Naming", for example, O'Sullivan invites the reader to become, speak and hear 'fish':

water

they unlidder

shrieve hurtled

folded,

suffixes – Dots. Dashes. Scraping fowls

Unescorted, Blade Goes Them

From a far orange

DRAGON,

plum-BURR

plum-BURR

plum-BURR

Be come.

Be spoke.

Be eared.

…

laid into rivers, nails of similarly blood-fine hatching

this is called/

fish.

(*Shaman* 32)

Collected in *In the House of the Shaman*, in the section "Kinship with Animals", this one-page poem embodies an act of "naming" fish. Yet it withholds this purpose at the outset; the word 'fish' is omitted from the title and does not appear until the final stanza, as the last word of the composition. Placed at the far end of the page, the word 'fish' signifies its detachment—its status as a mere symbol—from the actual being of fish as enacted in the main body of the composition. In contrast to the delayed placement of 'fish', the composition begins with the word 'water', foregrounding its performance in the habitat of the fish, so that neither the fish nor the act of naming is "extracted" from the physical environment but situated within it. In this way, the composition re-enacts the fish's being-in-water, rather than offering a verbal representation of it.

Situated within the physical environment, the presentation of the fish in the poem is both sensuous and synaesthetic. Recalling O'Sullivan's poetics of 'deconstructing/reconstituting as-(being)-heard', as discussed in the previous section with reference to *red shifts*, the composition of "Naming" likewise enlivens and entwines the senses of the reader with those of the fish through the interweaving of words, sounds and

visuals—the verbal and nonverbal means of signification (O'Sullivan-Olsen). For example, the phrase 'plum-BURR' is deconstructed/reconstituted into two parts: the colour 'plum' and the whirring sound 'burr'. On the page, the phrase is repeated three times, stacked in a column and offset from the rest of the poem. This configuration of lines enacts a transformation in the composition, turning the words into a figure of crowd and chaos while simultaneously pointing to another compositional element of the phrase—the adverb "plumb"—by embodying its connotation of verticality.

As noted in the previous section, and echoing the eco-ethical composition of Harriet Tarlo (see Chapter One), O'Sullivan juxtaposes the verbal and nonverbal significances of words in her composition to negotiate the boundaries between the discursive and material processes of artmaking as worldmaking. Nonetheless, while Tarlo's composition embodies a spatial field 'equal to the "real"' (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*; Olson, "Projective Verse"), O'Sullivan's poem takes place in 'the transient': its composition weaves together not only various senses—visual, sonic and cognitive—of the reader, but also various bodies/subjects inside and outside the poem, residing in the inter-realm between human and other-than-human sentiences (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Taking place in 'the transient', O'Sullivan's poetry not only embodies 'the great energy of nature' at 'transitional times', but also acquires the power of the shaman to exchange and transform substances. In a word, it is both natural and supernatural. As the appearance of 'DRAGON' in the poem "Naming" indicates, O'Sullivan's presentation of fish-in-water is not only sensuous but also magical. The supernatural element is essential to O'Sullivan's composition, which not only re-presents but also reanimates the natural world.

To illustrate both the sense and the state of transience in O'Sullivan's poetry, I will examine another poem, "Of Mutability", from *In the House of the Shaman*, in the section "Kinship with Animals", for example:

Mice-things

Hawk-heard

Wash fox

Track out to & fro Lodges of shifting skuld cut words,

Droving

droving the breath drinks/both faces the skin

pre.tending Bird begun, painting-in ab, AB-Sing Water

plumage the face the face lamey milks joint by

joint white risen to full poppy *tapty tapty tapty*

tapty tapty

(O'Sullivan, *Shaman* 36)

The mythical figure 'Skuld' appears at the start of the passage. As one of the three Norns—goddesses from Norse mythology—Skuld is often depicted sitting in the shadows of the great ash tree, Yggdrasil, spinning the threads of fate. This imagery connects to the origin of the word "norn", which means to twine, and to the word "nyrna", meaning to communicate secretly. Correspondingly, the appearance of 'Skuld' in O'Sullivan's poetry is related to its 'cut[ting]' and '[dis]lodg[ing]' of words from their usual forms and meanings—in other words, the 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language—so that language, as a means of "communication", is put back into a 'current

of intercourse' with the natural world, rather than remaining a verbal representation of it (O'Sullivan-Olsen; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 217; see Section One).

In O'Sullivan's re-presentation of the landscape, meanings, colours and sounds—as well as human and nonhuman beings—merge into a fluid, oozing reality; it is thus a landscape "of mutability". For example, the verse 'white risen to full poppy' enacts the imagery of white water ('milks') shifting into red poppy—an effect that may result either from the water being infused with blood (of an unknown body subject) or from the perceiving subject shifting their gaze from the water up to the flower. Also, following the verse, the echoic 'tapty' sound extends the line below like a dripping tap, signifying the continuous soundscape and the flow of water in the landscape. The processual exchange and transformation—or 'mattering'—of materials in the natural world is re-enacted in the 'uncertain' signifying process of the composition (O'Sullivan-Olsen). The 'droving' of things in the landscape—including ecological and animal bodies, or their body parts—is entwined with, and enacted through, the droving of words and syllables in the composition, without ever arriving at final definitions. As Shamsad Mortuza observes, 'O'Sullivan is not struggling to give meaning to her thoughts; instead, she is displaying the kinetic process where the visual and verbal negotiates the deferral of meaning' (157). The kinetics in O'Sullivan's 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language come to embody—and become entangled with—the exchange and transformation of natural substances (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

This mutual animation of language and the landscape disrupts the reader's enchantment with symbols by emphasising their materiality, while simultaneously restoring their enchantment with the material world. In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram

argues that, in modern literate societies, alphabets have become the primary medium through which the subject experiences the outside world:

> For to read is to enter into a profound participation, or chiasm, with the inked marks upon the page. In learning to read we must break the spontaneous participation of our eyes and our ears in the surrounding terrain (where they had ceaselessly converged in the synaesthetic encounter with animals, plants, and streams) in order to recouple those senses upon the flat surface of the page. …We hear spoken words, witness strange scenes or visions, even experience other lives. …This is a form of animism that we take for granted, but it is animism nonetheless—as mysterious as a talking stone.
>
> And indeed, it is only when a culture shifts its participation to these printed letters that the stones fall silent. Only as our senses transfer their animating magic to the written word do the trees become mute, the other animals dumb (83).

To return animism to materials and the environment, Abram urges us to attend to 'the intertwining of human speech with calls and cries of the local earth' and to 'root the language, as it were, in a particular ecology, a particular terrain' (90). Echoing Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, Abram believes in the authenticity of poetic language—particularly in its potential to recover a genuine, unmediated relationship between humans and nature (see Introduction):

> Every poet is aware of this primordial depth in language, whereby particular sensations are invoked by the sounds themselves, and whereby the shape, rhythm and texture of particular phrases conjure the expressive character of particular phenomena (90).

This invocation of sensation through language—rendered as embodied expression, as phenomenon rather than purely symbolic discourse—is evident in O'Sullivan's work. As discussed in the first section, O'Sullivan's poetry is sensuous; it enlivens the sensory experience of the reader/audience by 'deconstructing/reconstituting' language into marks and sounds. The composition of *red shifts*, for example, embodies the breaking breath and voice of the poetic subject—sounded out and heard by the reader. The poem is thus a mutual participation between embodied subjects such as the reader and the composition—'bodytext' (O'Sullivan, *murmur*).

Similarly, the meaning—or rather, the senses—of "Naming" and "Of Mutability" emerge from the mutual participation and "communication" between the attentive, listening subject and the expressive landscape (Abram; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*). The language of both poems is both symbolic and semiotic, situated in the inter-realm between the human being and the ecological environment. As shown above, O'Sullivan's use of language—re-enacting the colours, sounds and kinetics of the specific landscape—is deeply rooted in the topography and ecology of the local earth (Abram). Her poetics of 'deconstructing/reconstituting [language and subject] as-(being)-heard' is, in Abram's words, a way to 'turn [them] inside-out'—that is, to resituate the subjective within the objective, the human within the more-than-human world (O'Sullivan-Olsen; Abram 157). Calling readers to make sense of the poem without breaking their sensory connection to the natural world, the language of O'Sullivan's poetry is not only "authentic" but also eco-ethical, restoring and reflecting on the relationship between subject and environment, as well as between the textual and material compositions of the world (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*; Abram 83, 90). Weaving the sensuous with the magical, and the human

with the ecological, O'Sullivan assumes the role of the shaman to recover our 'kinship with animals' (O'Sullivan, *Shaman*).

Furthermore, the magical thread running through O'Sullivan's poetry opens new possibilities for practising eco-ethics in experimental landscape poetry as a mode of thinking and dwelling in the natural world. When introducing O'Sullivan before her reading at Kelly Writers House, Charles Bernstein remarked:

> I've thought of to take the road not taken as an evangelical minister to talk about the power of the word… what happens when the word goes beyond the literal thing on the page and takes on flights not just of angels but also of devils, of demons, monsters, saints and just of "everyday people" of the landscape, of those things that fly of those thing that crawl on the ground of that are under the ground all somehow emanating from the words which by themselves just seem dead, lifeless, just unanimated objects seemingly disconnected one from another and yet out together with the animation of poetic spirit. They provide a possibility not otherwise available in our everyday life ("A Reading by Maggie O'Sullivan" 3:20-4:19).

As argued in the Introduction, radical and experimental landscape poetry is both a continuation of and a departure from the late modernist pursuit of poetic and social transformation, as it emerged in mid-century America. As argued in the previous chapters, the work of both Harriet Tarlo and Peter Larkin, for example, interrogates the relationship between humans and nature by negotiating the boundaries between poetic and natural fields, and between discursive and material processes of meaning-making and worldmaking. In alignment with this, the element of shamanism in O'Sullivan's poetry

adds a new, magical dimension to this practice of eco-ethics, further exploring the connection between language—as both a practice and an embodiment of the human subject—and the more-than-human world.

As Peter Middleton observes, O'Sullivan's poetics maintains a 'more self-conscious and critical' relationship with modernist tendencies in contemporary poetry; its use of neologism cannot be 'reduced to linguistic effect', but

> calls attention to the scandal of neologisms for our beliefs about language, and even some of our most advanced theories of textual condition, but its mode of inquiry is pre-programmatic. … Emotional intensity, its demands for recognition and transformation, its pointers towards intellectual possibilities and mistakes, is her preferred mode of poetic working (120).

Middleton's observation of O'Sullivan's poetry echoes Larkin's call to re-embed poetic innovation in real—material and cultural—contexts, rather than focusing solely on 'exemplary techniques' ("Innovation Contra Acceleration"; see Chapter Two). In line with Tarlo, Larkin advocates for a radical pastoral poetry that is both formally open and materially grounded. Likewise, as shown above, O'Sullivan's poetic innovation—her 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language and subject—is grounded in the topography and ecology of specific landscapes, rather than in a 'programmatic desire to shock readers and overturn conventions' (O'Sullivan-Olsen; Abram; Middleton 120).

Moreover, recalling Larkin's composition and his poetics of "scarcity", the senses of openness and liveliness in O'Sullivan's work are also closely tied to acts of violence and the vulnerability of natural bodies (see Chapter Two). For example, in the poem "Naming", the phrase 'scraping fowls' depicts a murder of fowls scraping the water with

their claws as they attempt to catch the fish. This startling image incites the fright and flight of the fish enacted in the poem, who, sensing the approach of danger, exclaim 'DRAGON' and 'plum-BURR' into the water. The colour 'plum' possibly emerges from their bleeding 'wound[s]' of 'decapitation' (O'Sullivan, *Shaman* 32). Similarly, in the poem "Of Mutability", there is a recurrence of 'damage, savagery, pain, silence' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). For example, the following passage presents a scene of murder:

> they are one to the body
>
> FIRST BITTERN. BARK, FIELDARE. RAG-A-HAND,
> MOOR-DOUBLE HARE-TWISTING
>
> rib, gravel-ears, Dog
> Shielded are the axes blue vomiting voltages
> tilled.me.this.i.then.
> tilled.me.bloodshot.wander.
>
> DISTILLING NIGHT-SHADES. HEN-BANE. THORN-APPLE.
> Blood-wakes, eat-on
> Skull
>
> weeping
> without cease.
>
> (O'Sullivan, *Shaman* 37)

Later in the composition, O'Sullivan remarks on such violent happenings in the poem and/or the re-presented landscape: 'this is the nature this is the making' (O'Sullivan, *Shaman* 38). Both the subject and meaning of this remark are ambiguous: 'this' may refer to the natural world and its making outside the poem, and/or to the poem itself and the poet's making on the page. In other words, O'Sullivan is aware of the savageries in nature as well as her own participation in them. As discussed, O'Sullivan's poetry emerges from the mutual participation between the attentive subject and the expressive landscape, while the reader or audience—whose senses are engaged and entwined with the composition—is incorporated into this concurrence with the natural world. The mutual participation enacted in the poem does not exclude acts of savagery; "we" are all implicated in 'this'—both 'the nature' and 'the making'.

However, it is through such self-awareness and self-criticality that O'Sullivan's poetry acquires its powers of recovery. As she states, 'the place of the page' is not only 'a place of damage, savagery, pain, silence', but 'also a place of salvage, retrieval and recovery' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). At the end of the poem "Of Mutability", the re-presented landscape turns into a gilded open field:

on rock / flooding lips

(diffuse)
in an open field
Heather-Out-
Wind

GOLD

Is Recovered.

(O'Sullivan, *Shaman* 40)

The violent extremities and their eventual recovery in the composition reveal the emotional and ideological expanse of O'Sullivan's poetry, which not only bears witness to the brutalities of nature but also acknowledges the brutalities of its own making. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry embodies a new approach to eco-ethics—one that neither incriminates the human nor victimises the natural, but interweaves the two realms on equal ground, each both responsible for and vulnerable to change, whether healing or harmful. What is recovered at the end of the poem is not the broken bodies of animals, but the felt bonds of flesh and spirit—the kinship between "us" and the wounded bodies of the natural world, held in a shared vulnerability that threads through all living things.

Notably, in Chapter Two, I argued that Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" is ecological and recuperative, as his writing re-enacts and restores the vitality of trees in compromised landscapes. As shown, in both Larkin's and O'Sullivan's renderings of nature, openings are accompanied by—or even result from—violences and vulnerabilities. However, while Larkin uses innovative language to signify the "scarce" relations between humans and the natural world, O'Sullivan uses language to signify the "kinship" between the two. Rather than being "promised" by relations and poetics of "scarcity", the connection between humans and nature is recovered and deepened in O'Sullivan's work through a deconstructing and reconstituting of the subjective within the objective— that is, a resituating of language and its senses within the physical environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Also, diverging from the "radical landscape poetry" of Tarlo and Larkin,

O'Sullivan's re-presentation of the landscape is, though physically grounded, rich with imagination. As seen in "Naming" and "Of Mutability", the presence of the supernatural is central to the presentation and animation of landscape in O'Sullivan's poetry, and to its interweaving of human and nonhuman sentiences. In the remainder of this section, I offer a close reading of O'Sullivan's poem "Narcotic Properties" to further delineate her magical and eco-ethical composition as a form of performance that is not only textual and bodily but also ritualistic.

The poem "Narcotic Properties" is collected in O'Sullivan's *Palace of Reptiles*, and later in Out of Everywhere—an influential anthology of 'linguistically innovative poetry by women in North America and the UK', edited by Wendy Mulford and O'Sullivan herself. The poem begins by giving "us" instructions for an unknown ritual. The materials for this ritual include a table, some lead animals, a small pale-cream bowl and 'a large square white cloth'. First, the poet/instructor tells "us" to place the bowl on the tabletop in front of "us" 'to signify abundance', without specifying what to fill it with—or whether it is filled at all. Then, in the following stanza, we are instructed to wash the lead animals with 'songering-a-rung', which suggests the bowl may be used for the washing and is either filled with water or empty, serving instead as an acoustic instrument. After washing and chanting the animals, we are asked to dry them 'in turn' with 'a portable hair-dryer' and place them, one by one, on the white cloth. The 'large square of white cloth' used in the ritual recalls the square of the white page, and the act of placing the lead animals on the cloth evokes the compositional process of late modernist poetry, particularly Olson's field composition, where words are arranged as objects on the page, free from linguistic and formal constraints (see Introduction). Resonating with

this allusion to writing, the animals used in the ritual are made of lead—a heavy metal known for its malleability and conductivity. Because of these properties, lead is widely used in manufacturing, such as the making of batteries, weights and ammunition. In this view, the term 'lead animals', resonating with 'dead animals', also points to the environmental destruction caused by humans, particularly the alarming death toll among both wild and domesticated animals due to lead poisoning. In alignment with this association between making—whether poetic or industrial—and injury, the imagery of 'the red-bloodied stain seeping out' from the centre of the white cloth further reinforces the prominence of violence in the poem, both as a performance of ritual and as writing.

The ritual "we" are instructed to perform in the poem is also that of composing the poem itself. As in "Of Mutability", the composition of "Narcotic Properties" demonstrates self-awareness and self-criticality towards its own making. Placing the lead (dead) animals on a white cloth, the ritual instructed and enacted in the poem mimics the composition of modernist poetry, especially in the second half, where its compositional form and narrative give way to actions of content/animals (as I will demonstrate later), while simultaneously critiquing its own performance. The process of composition is transformed into a performance of ritual, where animals are savaged and sacrificed for an unknown purpose. This recalls Middleton's observation that O'Sullivan's poetics and practice have a 'self-conscious and critical' relationship with modernist traditions. Whether through placing lead figures on a cloth or words on an empty page, the process of representing animals is inevitably reductive and violent. By instructing "us" in the ritual, the poet/instructor implicates the reader in this process as well. In doing so, they negotiate the boundaries between the poetic/performative and the real/affective, reflecting

on the agency as well as the accountability of making and damaging, salvaging and savaging.

Nonetheless, the poem/ritual attempts to bring the lead (dead) animals to life, enacting a process of representation and re-animation. Having instructed "us" to place the lead (dead) animals on the bloodied white cloth, the poet/instructor warns us:

HOWEVER, DO NOT

CORRECT THE OUTWARD URGE OF THE STAIN AND DO NOT HASTEN THE DRYING OF THE ANIMALS. ENSURE THAT ALL OF THEM ARE PLACED COMFORTABLY ON THE EXPANSE OF WHITE CLOTH, AWAY FROM THE BLOODIED ENLARGING CENTRE. THEREMUST BE NO OVER-CROWDING.

PLACE A LIGHTED MATCH TO THE BLOODIED STAIN ON THE CENTRE

OF THE WHITE CLOTH. Watch as the stain ignites and

SPREAD EVER MORE OUTWARD TO THE EDGES OF THE WHITE CLOTH.

WATCH AS THE CLOTH CRUMPLES, FALLS IN TOWARDS ITS CRIMSON CENTRE.

(O'Sullivan, *Everywhere* 68-69)

The capitalised letters signal the importance of this part of the ritual. The poet/instructor warns against attempts to 'correct' the expanding stain or hasten the drying of the animals. Instead, in order to 'save' the animals, we are told to set fire to the bloodied stain on the cloth, so that the 'crimson' in the centre is no longer the colour of blood but

that of fire. This ignition is an act of both salvage and savagery. The fire reintroduces force to the 'lead figures'—the animals as well as the words—by destroying not only the stain but also the cloth itself, resulting in a scene of transformation and chaos.

Following the ignition, the place of the poem/ritual—the page as well as the tablecloth—becomes filled with violence and clamour. In the second half of the poem, the "form" of the composition crumbles in the fire along with the cloth. The voice of the poet/instructor, who had been directing "us" step by step, disappears into the composition/performance. The language of the poem is, once again, deconstructed and reconstituted into word-sounds (O'Sullivan-Olsen). For example, in the passage:

SOLSTITIAL, STRUCK-NINE

(whatll wattle wambs

Wha

White

Whe

Who)

leadings out

animals gone

(O'Sullivan, *Everywhere* 69)

The first line remains in capitalised letters, yet below it, the passage immediately falls into a cascade of word-sounds, each beginning with the digraph "wh", enclosed in parentheses. The 'lead figures' are 'unfixe[d]' and reshaped by the force and heat of fire. As indicated in the last two lines of the passage 'leadings out / animals gone', the animal

are no longer dead figures on a white cloth nor words on a page. Rather, they are reanimated and returned to real life. However, they are now burning in the fire, too. The animals that had been lined up on the cloth—and on the page—become 'the skewered trampling of the doomed / animals'. As the form and order of the event (both poem and ritual) crumble with the cloth in the fire, 'animals' and 'amulets', 'letter' and 'liver', 'life' and 'doom' become interchangeable, and "we" (the readers), who have set the fire, are also involved, like the animals, being transformed in this magical and 'maddled' event (68).

> The poem remains in this state of fusion and confusion until the final line:
>
> conks clays-under splashing. Abundance. weeps.
>
> (O'Sullivan, *Everywhere* 71)

While the words 'conks' and 'weeps' express violence and mourning, 'clays' and 'abundance' evoke objects and properties. The line's tone shifts between sympathy and apathy, as the animals oscillate between being sentient and being objectified. This "schizophrenic" expression reflects the state of the poem and its compositional bodies/subjects—letters and lead figures of animals—which, having undergone an event of transformation between life and death, become "narcotic properties". Similarly, in reading and participating in the poem/ritual, "our" senses of self are 'meddled' with these "narcotic properties" (68). By incorporating "us" (the readers) into the poem/ritual, the poet/instructor transports us from a place of detachment into the event of transformation, where "we" and the animals, our bodies and the lead (dead) figures, become physically and emotionally entangled. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry is magical and eco-ethical,

weaving together the human and the animal, the lifeful and the lifeless, the poetic/performative and the real/impactful.

Moreover, the performance of ritual in "Narcotic Properties" recalls the ritual of kin-making in human societies, as theorised by Sylvia Wynter. According to Wynter, human beings are born twice: first into physical existence, and second into culturally specific narratives of origin. Through the second birth,

> we are no longer, as individual biological subjects, primarily born of the womb; rather, we are both initiated and reborn as fictively instituted inter-altruistic kin-recognizing members of each such symbolically re-encoded [cultural]-specific *referent-we.* This is to say we are all initiatedly reborn…to subjectively experience ourselves as subjects of the same encoded symbolic life kind. …… for all [cultural]-specific subjects who are reborn from the same eusocializing origin myth and/or cosmogony, their genetically encoded individual biological life and its attendant imperative of naked self- preservation must at the same time be, via initiation, aversively experienced as symbolic death (Wynter and McKittrick 34).

Echoing Kristeva's argument in Revolution in Poetic Language (see Chapter One), Wynter underlines the "death" of the body subject in the creation of the social-symbolic subject, who is required to enter 'the symbolic contract' and follow, then reinforce, the ideologies and orders pre-established in society, such as the hierarchical order between men and women, and between humans and nonhumans in the modern world. In resistance to this sacrifice of the biological for the symbolic, the natural to the social, Kristeva establishes a dialectic between the semiotic and symbolic modalities of significance and calls for 'a revolution in poetic language' against the symbolic order inscribed in modern,

coded uses of language. Such revolutionary and poetic language, Kristeva argues, is exemplified in experimental poetry that signifies the dynamic interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic, the material and the discursive, processes of meaning-making and worldmaking, which, as I have shown in Chapter One and earlier in this chapter, is evident in the poetry of both Tarlo and O'Sullivan.

Again, echoing Kristeva, Wynter draws on Aimé Césaire's essay "Poetry and Knowledge" and calls for 'a new science of the word'—a poetics that unsettles the hegemony of Western and Westernised models of being human in the modern world, and rewrites the origin, and thus the future, of human beings. In Chapter Four, I will further explore such a poetics as it is embodied in the work of Vahni Anthony Capildeo, and expand on Wynter's argument on the making of the modern subject and social order through complementary processes of "the emancipatory" and "the subjugating" in colonial and neocolonial contexts. Here, I wish to highlight that the interplay of life and death in the ritual and the initiatory rebirth of the social subject, as outlined by both Kristeva and Wynter, parallels the interplay of life and death, salvaging and savaging, performed in the poem/ritual "Narcotic Properties"—the latter acting as a subversion of the former. As shown above, in "Narcotic Properties", the poet instructs "us" to perform a ritual that transforms its participants from lead (dead) figures to live animals, and from live animals to livestock. Like a shaman, the poet challenges the division between life and death, subject and object, human and nonhuman existences/sentience. "Our" ignition of the white cloth/page 'displaces' and 'unfixes' the 'lead figures'/words—symbols—of the animals, reanimating them in the fire (O'Sullivan, *Everywhere* 68). In other words, in contrast to the birth/initiation of social subjects, the animals in the poem/ritual become

symbolically dead but biologically reborn. As such, O'Sullivan's poetry enacts not only a transformation of compositional bodies/subjects but also a subversion of the symbolic ordering of animals as mere natural resources for human use, thereby opening up possibilities for kinship between humans and animals. As seen in "Narcotic Properties" and other works discussed above, through 'deconstructing/reconstituting' symbolic materials of the poem into embodied beings that are heard and sensed rather than understood, O'Sullivan extricates language from pre-existing orders—both linguistic and beyond—which separate it and the social subject from the biological and ecological realms of the world (O'Sullivan-Olsen). In contrast to a purely symbolic discourse, O'Sullivan's textual practice is bodily, performative and even ritualistic, enacting mutual constitution and transformation among various actors, human and nonhuman, inside and outside the poem. It is a practice of kinship-making between human and more-than-human worlds. In this sense, O'Sullivan's poetry is ecological and ethical.

To summarise, this section traces the practice of eco-ethics in O'Sullivan's poetry, following its magical thread. By incorporating supernatural elements into its presentation of landscapes and animals, O'Sullivan's poetry is not only grounded in the phenomenal and physical realms of the world but also reimagines it as a place of 'dream', 'ritual' and 'magic', where human and nonhuman beings harm, mourn and become one another (O'Sullivan-Olsen). As with nature, its making is both savaging and salvaging, embodied and magical. Assuming the therapeutic and intermediary roles of the shaman, O'Sullivan opens possibilities for kinship between human and more-than-human worlds that are unavailable in our everyday life (Bernstein). In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry both aligns with and diverges from what Tarlo calls "radical landscape poetry" as well as

its practice of eco-ethics, further challenging our understandings of language, humanity and the environment.

III. The Eco-Political

The final section of this chapter explores the eco-political implications of O'Sullivan's poetry, focusing on her poem *murmur*. Examining its multimedia composition through the lens of Karen Barad's agential realism, I argue that it enacts what O'Sullivan describes as 'an eco/ethico politics of the earth' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). As a confluence of innovative poetics and feminist and posthuman thinking, O'Sullivan's poetry not only enacts the exchange and transformation of substance in the place of the poem and the represented landscape but also engenders ideological and socio-political transformations that projects towards an eco-ethical future. In particular, by highlighting material agency and creativity, O'Sullivan's poetry forges an alliance between natural and female bodies in resistance to modern systems structured by linear and dualistic thinking.

In their introduction to *Material Feminisms*, Alaimo and Hekman call on scholars to 'bring the material back to feminist theory and practice' and underscore the importance of 'deconstruct[ing] the material/discursive dichotomy that retains both elements without privileging either' (5). The most daunting aspect of this feminist, eco-ethical and eco-political project lies in the task of 'radically rethink[ing] materiality, the very "stuff" of bodies and natures' (6). In other words, the project of 'deconstructing the material/discursive dichotomy' is crucial to reconstituting environmental ethics and politics, as it demands a shift in focus from the search for epistemic objectivity and objective value in the natural world to the real—ecological as well as social—

consequences of human thought and practice in the contemporary world (see Introduction; Norton). It is this project of 'deconstructing the material/discursive dichotomy' through a radical rethinking of materials and materialities that is enacted in O'Sullivan's poetry. As shown above, in O'Sullivan's work, the natural environment and its substances are re-presented as transformative and sentient, composed of 'entwined materialities and sensibilities with which [readers] act and see', rather than as a horizon of dormant objects (Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking" 245). Building on this, the following analysis examines how the boundaries between the discursive and the material, the subjective and the objective, are negotiated in *murmur* as a multimedia performance. Focusing on the varied lines and materials of its composition as a processual (un)weaving, I argue that *murmur* challenges dominant cultural discourses and offers an alternative model of meaning-making and worldmaking—one that foregrounds the agency and transformability of materials.

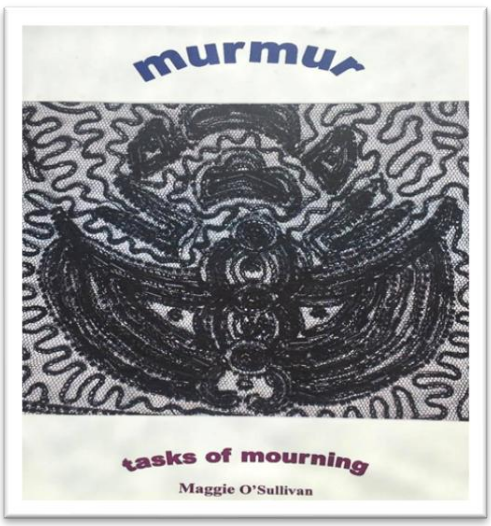


Figure 3.2

Firstly, the title and cover image of *murmur* point to two things: a piece of black lace and a murmuration of starlings (see figure 3.1). The black lace recalls the black veil traditionally worn by women at (likely Catholic) masses and funerals as part of their 'tasks of mourning', evoking a sense of solemnity and loss (O'Sullivan, *murmur*). The pattern of the lacework appears to depict three figures in a boat, their bodies interwoven and leaning out over one side, as if reaching towards the water or towards something they have lost to it. The lacework also embodies a distinctive weave, with the textile composed of both holes and threads. This style of textile-making corresponds to experimental text-making, in which a composition is shaped by both spaces and lines. For example, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, the compositions of both Harriet Tarlo and Peter Larkin involve an interplay of spatial and verbal configurations. By incorporating "space" into the patterning of the textile, the porous composition of the lacework—like that of experimental poetry—embodies the interweaving of discursive and material processes of creation. Similarly, in a starling murmuration, countless birds gather to form a shifting, twisting pattern. The edges of the formation are indeterminate and dynamic, interlaced with the space of the sky. Whether through the image of lacework or a starling murmuration, the cover of *murmur* signals to the reader that it is a work of art woven into the physical environment of its presentation. In Timothy Morton's words, it is an "environment-poem" that operates through a poetics of "ambience", connecting space and significance within and beyond its framework by emphasising their shared materiality (33, 34).

Like the examples discussed in the previous sections, *murmur* takes place in the inter-realm between the human and the ecological (e.g., the black lace and the starling

murmuration), and between the discursive and the material (e.g., lines and space). As O'Sullivan describes her first public installation and performance of *murmur*:

> I cradled the seventy-page stack of specially enlarged A3 pages on my left arm. I stood and performed each page and then stooped to place it, face-up, on the floor. I stepped forward and did the same again and again for all the seventy pages. I weaved *murmur/murmur* weaved me over the floor space created by the circle of seated people (many were sitting on the floor) until there were no pages left on my cradling arm (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

The act of "weaving" highlights mutual participation in the place and event of the poem—across the performing subject, the compositional pages, the space and the audience of the performance. O'Sullivan did not perform *murmur* by reading the text to the audience, as if simply disseminating ideas from the page to their minds. Rather, the performance of *murmur* is enabled by multiple actors, including the poet, the audience, the space of the performance and the pieces of paper that carry its content. Each performance is thus 'specific to that particular physical location, that situation'—in a word, situated in the environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen). As O'Sullivan performed *murmur*, placing each of its seventy pages on the floor one by one, its composition was deconstructed and reconstituted within the environment of the performance, interwoven with other bodies/subjects present. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry is an open-ended practice—both discursive and material—whose significance does not precede its conception in another body, time or space.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Barad builds on the physicist Niels Bohr's principle of complementarity to develop an ontology of "agential realism". In this view,

reality is not composed of individual things, but of 'things-in-phenomena'. There are no things prior to phenomena; rather, phenomena are the fundamental ontological units through which the world is both conceived and perceived. Importantly, phenomena are indivisible; their composition cannot be pre-divided into agential (subjective) and non-agential (objective) matters. Instead, a specific "intra-action"—not "interaction", in which actors possess inherent boundaries and identities—within the phenomenon enacts an 'agential cut' that determines the subjective and objective actors of its composition. In other words, matter becomes differential, intelligible and meaningful through its ongoing 'intra-activity' within the phenomenon. A further key point in Barad's "agential realism" is her reconceptualisation of the "apparatus": not as instruments of knowing, but as dynamic configurations through which the world unfolds. In her elaboration of Bohr's theory, Barad argues that apparatuses are not detached from the phenomena that constitute the reality we inhabit; they are neither fixed nor neutral instruments with which we observe or manipulate the world. Rather, they are phenomena themselves—embodied and entwined in the world's becoming. In short, both phenomenon and apparatus are 'dynamic (re)configurings' of the world (Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" 816). Just as the boundaries and intelligibility of matter are enacted through specific intra-actions within a phenomenon, so too are the boundaries and intelligibility of a particular phenomenon or apparatus enacted through their intra-actions within the world.

In Barad's terms, *murmur* is both an apparatus and a phenomenon— 'always in the process of intra-acting with other apparatuses' and 'perpetually open to rearrangement, rearticulations and other reworkings' (Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" 817). Resonating with Barad's posthuman phenomenology, O'Sullivan's

poetry challenges assumed boundaries between the discursive and the material, the subjective and the objective, within the making of the poem, as well as between the making of the poem and the making of the world. Her poetry is an open-ended practice or performance situated within a particular physical environment, and it is through performance—where the composition intra-acts with other bodies and subjects present in that environment—that 'local semantic and ontological determinacy' is enacted; the matter involved in the poem as a phenomenon becomes differentiable and intelligible (817). In other words, it is an embodied and continuous process of meaning-making that takes place within the intra-actions among various compositional actors within the poem, as well as between the poem and other embodied apparatuses, such as the reader or audience.

For example, in O'Sullivan's performance of *murmur*, she 'weaved murmur [and] murmur weaved [her] over the floor space created by the circle of seated people' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). The subject and the environment of performance—the performer and the audience, the pages of the poem and the floor space—were interwoven. In this performance, *murmur* was enacted by multiple actors, including the audience, the performer, the pages and others; its significance emerged through the intra-actions among them in that particular time and place. Likewise, when readers encounter the poem in private, they intra-act as embodied apparatuses within the particular time and place of their reading, and the significance of the poem emerges as they make sense *with* the composition through their specific intra-actions.

In what follows, I examine the composition of *murmur* and the intra-activity among its embodied and dynamic configurations, arguing that its significance is transient

and trans-sensory, entwined with its shifting materiality and form. In doing so, it enacts an alternative model of meaning-making as well as worldmaking—one that is both discursive and material, relational, nonlinear and open-ended, like a processual (un)weaving of varied, embodied lines. As such, O'Sullivan's poetry constitutes a practice of eco-ethics and eco-politics.

O'Sullivan uses the verb "weave" to describe her act in the first public performance of *murmur*, highlighting the intra-actions between the poem, the poet, the audience and their physical environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Similarly, in the composition of *murmur*, there are repeated references to the act of weaving—such as 'plaiting', 'braiding', 'threading', 'lattice' and 'WEAVing', among others. The act of weaving is thus central to the performance of *murmur*. In her book *Weaving the Word*, Kathryn Kruger explores the relational tension between weaving and writing, particularly as it relates to the social and ideological categories of the feminine and the masculine. Historically and culturally associated with women, weaving—as a craft of textile production—has often served both as a metaphor for and as a contrast to writing as a means of textual production: as women to men, material to symbolic, private to public. For instance, in literature and literary criticism, weaving is often used to describe writing—just as textile is to text—in order to highlight the materiality of the latter. Nonetheless, although the metaphor of weaving risks reinforcing the dichotomy between the material and the discursive, the feminine and the masculine, Kruger reclaims the term to highlight female agency and creativity in cultural production by emphasising its transversiveness.

The act of weaving is not merely metaphorical but embodied and performative. The varied and shifting expressions of lines, like threads, are interwoven with and intra-acting with the poem's textual configurations, from which its significance emerges. In this way, murmur foregrounds a material creativity and transformability in meaning-making as weaving and crafting, challenging the dichotomies between material and discursive, feminine and masculine, embedded in Western metaphysics. This deconstruction of the material/discursive dichotomy, as noted above, is a central task for feminist and materialist thought, and is crucial to developing an environmental and material ethics that attends to the marginalised actors of worldmaking and to the *real* consequences of modern systems (Alaimo and Heckman; see Introduction). Building on this, the final section of this chapter explores the eco-ethical and eco-political implications of O'Sullivan's poetry by examining the performance of weaving in *murmur* and the ways it deconstructs the material/discursive dichotomy. In response to O'Sullivan's enactment and depiction of weaving, I identify three archetypes in the composition of *murmur*—the assembly (loom), the lines (threads) and the weaving motions—which structure the analysis that follows.

The enactment of weaving in *murmur* is performative and self-referential. For example, in the section "premonitions and return", the structure of the composition recalls the assembly of a weaving loom. As shown in Figure 3.2, the boxes, yellow threads and words on the page form an asymmetrical yet iterative pattern that constitutes both the content and the form of the composition. The boxes of text are framed and threaded by yellow lines, alluding to the poem's pages themselves, similarly threaded

with lines—verbal or otherwise. This presentation—and self-presentation—of the poem reinforces the interconnection between content and form, writing and weaving.

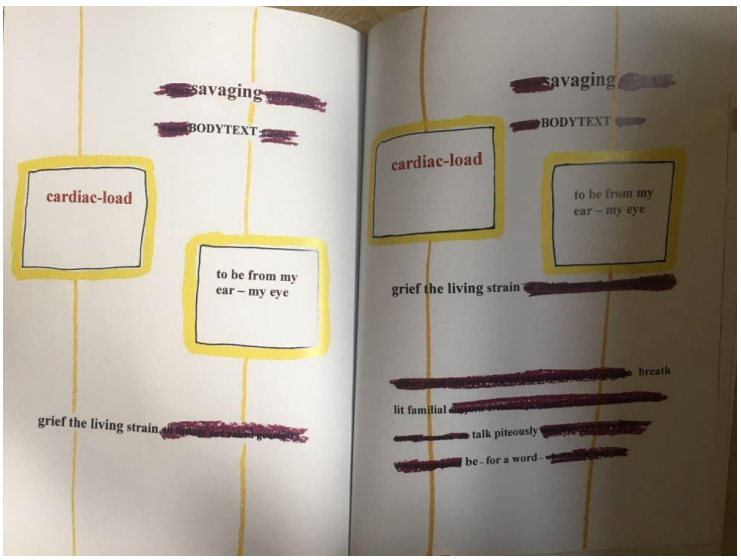


Figure 3.3

Nonetheless, in contrast to a real working loom, the boxes, threads and words are neither straightened nor aligned but spread across the pages, displaying the apparatus and process of composition and turning them inside out. Resonating with this self-referential and self-deconstructive display, the texts outside the boxes are partially obscured by purple strokes, which signal and embody gestures of correction and negation while enacting the verse ‘savaging / BODYTEXT’. Once again, the form and content of the poem are entwined in its performance of weaving. The ‘unkempt’ structure and markings signify both the provisionality and the ‘erroneity’ of the composition, presenting it as an open-ended assembly of materials and meanings—or, in Barad’s terms, ‘a dynamic configuring of the world’ rather than a fixed construction (“Posthuman Performativity”)

In short, the composition of *murmur* is an assembly in process. As shown in Figure 3.2, the materials and space of the page are being (un)woven together with verbal

and visual "threads". The yellow lines wrap around the boxes, separating them from the page space and highlighting their shape and self-containment as the 'framework'—or loom—of the composition. At the same time, they thread the boxes together across the pages, producing a sense of continuity in the composition and reinforcing its overall pattern. Similarly, yet in counterpoint to the function of the yellow lines, the repeated verses inside and outside the boxes serve as verbal threads that weave the boxes into the surrounding page space, deconstructing the composition's pattern and framework and resituating them within the physical environment—the space of the page. In this interplay of act and counteract, the verbal and visual threads of the composition are both distinguished and entangled. And through this intra-activity and entanglement of threads, *murmur* becomes at once embodied and significant. Having identified the assembly of murmur, I next turn to its "threads" and "threading". Woven with various, intra-acting lines as threads, *murmur* embodies a transforming sensibility and materiality. Its composition demonstrates an embodied, relational and dynamic mode of worldmaking—or, in O'Sullivan's words, 'an eco/ethico politics of the earth' (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

As argued in the first section, O'Sullivan's poetry is both verbal and nonverbal; it is 'half sung / half said' (O'Sullivan, *Reptile* 59). By 'deconstructing/reconstituting' language into marks and sounds, her poetry engages and enlivens the reader's sensory experience in their encounter and interaction with the composition as a 'bodytext' (O'Sullivan, *murmur*). This 'heuristic trans-forming'—from verbal to nonverbal means of sense-making—is also central to embodying the bodily presence of *murmur*, as well as its condition and sensibility of transience. The varied and shifting expressions of lines on the page foreground a material creativity and transformability in the composition, turning

the poem into a bodily practice akin to hand-drawing and handcrafting. To return to O'Sullivan's statement quoted above:

> My work has always been body-intensive—writing by hand, redrafting the words by hand—bending, sticking, cutting, shaping marks, shaping sounds into the recorder, pain(t)ing and building—all inscriptions of my body's breathing. This heuristic trans-forming has become paramount in *murmur* where I am using the sight/site of the ear/page as a foundational textu(r)al, sonic, visual bodily dimension to move out from (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

The pages of murmur are not numbered; the organisation of the book is neither linear nor geometrical but multidimensional and 'immersioning' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). The poem is an organic synthesis that resembles a body—a 'bodytext' (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*; O'Sullivan, *murmur*). In Barad's terms, it is an open-ended discursive-material practice, whose sensibility and materiality emerge through its intra-actions with other embodied apparatuses—such as the reading body subject—as such. This sensuous signification—or signification of the sensuous—gestures towards the phenomenological, natural world inhabited by both the poem (as 'bodytext') and the reader. At the same time, it presents a post-phenomenological, even "magical" world, where the sensibilities and materialities of various bodies/subjects are entwined and mutually transformative (Wylie, "A Single Day's Walking"; see Section Two). Like a natural "landscape", the sensibilities and materialities of substances on the page of murmur are intertwined and co-transformative. The boundaries and intelligibility of its compositional matter are enacted through specific intra-actions rather than pre-determined (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"). As shown in Figures 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, words and images are woven

together on the page, so that readers cannot determine whether they are encountering a work of text, image or textile. The 'heuristic trans-forming' lines contribute to the materiality and transformability of the composition, situating it within the realm of the physical as well as the transient.

The composition of *murmur* is multidimensional and multimedia not only because it contains both verbal and nonverbal elements but also because it gestures towards the diverse materials involved in its making. For example, the light-purple and light-yellow streaks in Figures 3.3 and 3.6 have a watery texture and appear to be painted with watercolour, whereas the magenta marks in Figure 3.3 have a waxy texture and seem more likely to have been made with crayon. In addition to these textured markings, the criss-crossed lines in Figure 3.5 demonstrate a physical reconstitution—or 'handcrafting' (O'Sullivan-Olsen)—of materials by the poet. The lines on the page are not merely marks but materialised threads of the composition: two wrinkled pieces of paper stitched together.

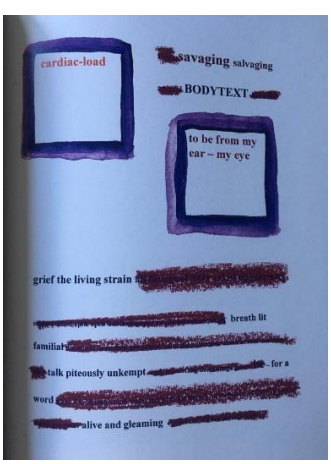


Figure 3.4

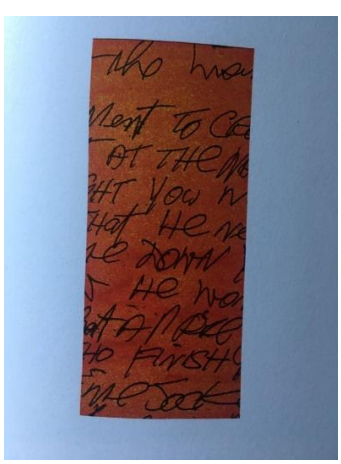


Figure 3.5

Figure 3.6

The composition of *murmur* entails a "crafting"—a 'deconstructing/reconstituting'—of language and image into an open assembly of lines and colours, where matters and meanings are mutually (un)formed (O'Sullivan-Olsen). For instance, on the first page of *murmur*, the word "booming" is divided by hyphens between each pair of letters and spelled out as 'b-o-o-m-i-n-g'. Recalling the enactment of breaking voice in *red shifts*—in the lines 'b-r-e-a-t-h-i-n-g-in' and 'b-r-e-a-t-h-i-n-g-out'—this technique of 'deconstructing/reconstituting' language into letters serves as an enactment of weaving in *murmur*, a rethreading of the letters in the word "booming". This enactment of weaving recurs throughout the composition. Letters are threaded together by lines that vary in length, function, texture and colour, including linguistic symbols (such as hyphens, dashes, strikethroughs and underlines in the text), gestural expressions (such as the painted streaks in Figure 3.3) and visual depictions of stitches (such as the criss-crosses in Figure 3.5 and the dotted lines in Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.7

This enactment of weaving—through the (re)threading of words and letters in *murmur*—is both salvaging and savaging, as suggested in the following stanza:

punctured

blue billow & slang

scale-figuration-re-threading

metronomic apparel

vermilion amassish ----------

spill, prior, pierce ---

step up the hearing" -------

(howl-

stagger –

crawl on ---

The 'bodytext' is 'punctured' in the poem's making, through the 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of language. At the start of the stanza, the poet introduces a 'figuration' into the text through the 're-threading' of words, clothing them with cadence—that is, 'metronomic apparel'. Yet, shortly after, the line 'vermilion amassish ----------' conjures an unsettling image of expanding redness (see Figure 3.7)—like a haemorrhage of the 'bodytext'. The '-ish' tailing the word "amass" transforms the verb into an adjective for "vermilion" and adds a slushing sound to the sense of its expansion. The hyphens and dashes in the stanza embody, first, the '(re)threading' of words in the 'bodytext', and then the continuous spilling of redness—as blood—from the 'punctured' 'bodytext' as a result of (re)threading.

Figure 3.8

The act of ‘re-threading’ may be salvaging—suturing the wounds of the ‘bodytext’—or savaging, creating new wounds or openings within it. The half-quotation and half-parenthesis marks in the final lines of the stanza signify both the porosity of the ‘bodytext’—having been punctured and wounded—and its vital fluidity, which, though ‘howl[ing]’ and ‘stagger[ing]’ from its open wounds, ‘crawl[s] on’.

To reiterate, the ‘re-threading’ of language in murmur creates a ‘pierced’ and ‘punctured’ ‘bodytext’ within its composition. While associated with the imagery of bleeding wounds, these punctures are also openings—sites through which the text is woven into, and intra-acts with, other verbal and nonverbal figures of the composition. The varied expressions of “threads” and “threading” in *murmur* are central to its composition and transformation, as well as to its ‘heuristic trans-forming’ between textual and bodily dimensions (O’Sullivan-Olsen).

In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva proposes the notion of “negativity” and emphasises the ‘trans-symbolic materiality’ within the process of worldmaking

> The notion of negativity, which may be thought of as both the cause and the organising principle of the process, comes from Hegel. The concept of negativity,

> distinct from that of nothingness and negation, figures as the indissoluble relation between an ineffable mobility and its particular determination. Negativity is the mediation, the supersession of the pure abstractions of being and nothingness in the concrete where they are both only moments. Although negativity is a concept and therefore belongs to a contemplative (theoretical) system, it formulates the static terms of pure abstraction as a process, dissolving and binding them within a mobile law (109).

The notion of "negativity" foregrounds the concreteness of moments and transitions in the world's unfolding, opposing the abstractness of fixed terms. For Kristeva, the relationship between the subject and the world is not determined by a pre-existing symbolic order. Rather, symbolic discourses (such as language) are driven by the ongoing differentiation and interrelation between the embodied subject and the external world. The corporeal becoming of the subject within the environment exceeds the triadic model of thesis, antithesis and synthesis proposed by Hegel, calling for 'the fourth "term" of the dialectic'—'negativity'—as an embodied and relational way of being and becoming in the world. Put simply, by drawing on the concreteness and materiality of transformation—or on the transformative materials and bodies of the natural world—Kristeva reveals and challenges the construction of symbolic orders.

This force of transformation, embodied in the 'trans-symbolic materiality' of the world's unfolding, can also be found in O'Sullivan's poetry. As shown above, the composition of *murmur* is multimedia and multidimensional, enacting a trans-heuristic model of signification. The process of meaning-making and mattering in the poem is sensuous and transient, emerging from the ongoing intra-activity of its various lines

(threads) and figures. In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry deconstructs the dichotomy between the discursive and the material processes of worldmaking and, in turn, contributes to an eco-ethics and eco-politics that are both radical and attentive to the "real" consequences of human thought and practice (Alaimo and Heckman).

Furthermore, beyond the multiplicity and intra-activity of lines embodied in the composition, the eco-ethical and eco-political implications of *murmur* are also embedded in its erratic expression through lines. For instance, Figure 3.8 shows a page from the section "Premonitions and Return" composed of assorted lines and figures.

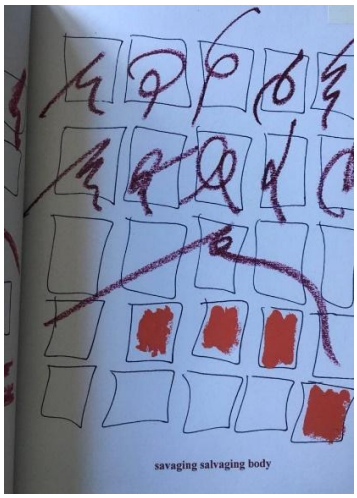


Figure 3.9

Eleanor Perry interprets the boxes that structure the page as a form of guideline, which the mourner(s) are asked to fill as they perform their 'tasks of mourning' one by one (O'Sullivan, murmur). However, the lines hardly stay inside the boxes—both of which appear to be hand-drawn—transgressing their guidelines. In Perry's analysis, this presentation of lines is gestural, embodying the motions and emotions of mourners that cannot be regulated or understood in linear ways. In short, the erratic expression of lines disrupts the linearity imposed on both the act of mourning and the mourning bodies.

This association of irregular lines with lived experience and resistance to imposed linearity resonates with Ingold's arguments in *Lines: A Brief History*. In this influential work on lines, Ingold begins his discussion with two questions: What is the difference between speech and song, and what is the difference between writing and drawing?[15] The answer, according to Ingold, lies in "the imposition of linearisation" on human thinking: linearised thought generates a model of 'point-to-point connections' between place and place, people and people, and between people and places (5). In this conception of the world, the map loses its past, and the page loses its voice:

> For modern readers, … the text appears imprinted upon the blank page much as the world appears imprinted upon the paper surface of a cartographic map, ready-made and complete. To follow the plot is like navigating with the map. Yet the map effaces memory. Had it not been for the journeys of travellers, and the knowledge they brought back, it could not have been made. The map itself, however, bears no testimony to these journeys. They have been bracketed out, or consigned to a past that is now superseded (24).

In contrast to modern readers who 'navigate' a text, premodern readers 'inhabit' the text as they inhabit the physical world, through 'wayfaring'. As they read, they are immersed in the world presented in the map or the text; their experiences unfold in real time and space. Echoing Merleau-Ponty's thesis in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Ingold uses the term "inhabit" to highlight the reader's encounter with a piece of text situated in a physical and phenomenal realm, as opposed to a purely symbolic one. Premodern readers, like readers of O'Sullivan's poetry, encounter and make sense of both the text

[15] As discussed earlier in this chapter, O'Sullivan's poetry similarly asks these questions, persistently negotiating the boundaries between the verbal and the nonverbal, the symbolic and semiotic processes of signification.

and the environment through direct, sensory engagement, enabled by the multiplicity and 'trans-symbolic materiality' of the lines that constitute both (Kristeva).

However, in modern societies, amid the rise of technoscientific practices—such as mass printing, cartographic map-making and "scientific" forestry—the rich diversity of lines has been reduced to a stark binary: 'lines that are straight and lines that are not' (154). This oversimplification of lines—and, by extension, of our understanding of the world—leads to a tendency toward binary and linear thinking, in which "straight lines" are privileged as symbols of order, control and efficiency, while other forms of lines—and the rich, embodied experiences they signify—are relegated to the margins of significance. In counteracting this, the composition of *murmur*—with its erratic and varied expression of lines, as well as the real motions and emotions embodied in these expressions—restores an ecology of lines: one that privileges relation, diversity, contingency and sensory experience. As shown in Figure 3.8, the lines on the page are variable and transgressive, gesturing toward bodies and experiences of mourning that cannot be kept in straight line nor in a box.

In addition, the boxes—arranged linearly yet askew—embody both the guiding structure and the hand-drawn quality of the composition. As noted at the beginning of this section, the composition of *murmur* is self-referential, enacting an interplay of form and content. Figure 3.2 (examined earlier in this section) and Figure 3.8 show two pages from *murmur*, both composed of crooked lines and squares. These layouts highlight the nonlinearity of "lines" and the deformity of "form", challenging the modern aestheticisation and valorisation of straightness. The irregularity of the lines and squares allows them to interconnect and entangle with one another, enacting a dynamic interplay

between content and form, expression and constraint, without ever settling into a fixed or final state. This processual (un)making of the poem and its meanings harnesses a transformative force—both physical and ideological—disrupting and reconfiguring the symbolic order of modern societies founded on linear and dualistic thinking.

In short, through diverse and erratic configurations of lines, O'Sullivan's poetry challenges the 'imposition of linearisation' on human thought and practice (Ingold, *Lines* 5). As shown above, the lines of *murmur* appear in various forms, colours and textures—as threads, drawings and linguistic symbols. Woven with these varied, embodied and entangled lines and threads, the composition of *murmur* is transformative, trans-sensory and multidimensional—in O'Sullivan's term, 'heuristic trans-forming' (O'Sullivan-Olsen). It embodies an 'eco/ethico politics of the earth' by deconstructing the dichotomy between the discursive and the material, along with its extensions into the dichotomies of straight and non-straight, meaningful and meaningless, and by reincorporating marginalised bodies and expressions—those deemed non-straight or irrational—into the process of meaning- and world-making (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

Finally, having discussed the assembly and the lines (threads) of *murmur*, the remainder of this section continues with its enactment of weaving, focusing on the sense and dynamism of reeling within its composition. Through producing a pattern of weaving across 'textu(r)al, sonic, visual' dimensions, O'Sullivan transforms the page space of *murmur* into an animate and agential environment, where various actors converge and diverge, (re)configuring the composition through their ongoing intra-activity. For instance, in Figure 3.9, the symbolic and semiotic significances of words contrast and intersect, forming a 'lapping planarity' within the composition.

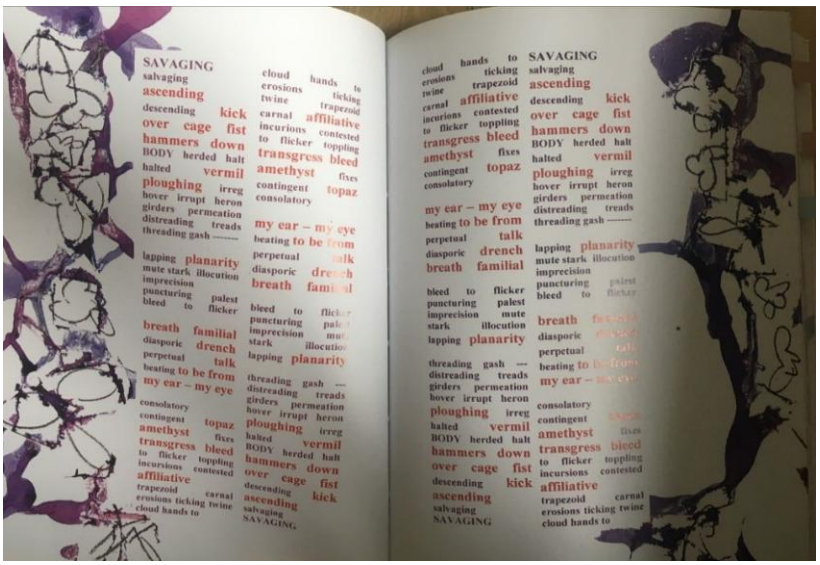


Figure 3.10

The text is arranged in four comparable columns across two pages, with words that are simultaneously connected and juxtaposed. The juxtaposition of words plays out across multiple registers: through denotations that alternate between advance and retrieval, savage and salvage; through colour shifts between red and purple; and through variations in font size, alternating between large and small. These dichotomous patterns contrast and complement one another, enacting an open-ended process of (un)weaving. In this sense, *murmur* performs the task of deconstructing the material/discursive and semiotic/symbolic dichotomies embedded in Western philosophy (Alaimo and Hekman). To illustrate, in the first column on the left, the word ‘SAVAGING’ appears at the top in large, bold, uppercase letters, immediately followed by ‘salvaging’ in a smaller, lowercase form. The contrast in size and case underscores their semantic opposition—destruction versus recovery. Below them, ‘ascending’ and ‘descending’ continue this oppositional pattern, mirrored visually and conceptually. Just beneath ‘descending’, the preposition ‘over’ is rendered in the same red colour and size as ‘ascending’, suggesting a

subtle alignment or echo between the two. Such echoes among words form irregular lines of connection both within and across the columns, functioning as weaving threads within the composition. In addition to this, recalling the black lace motif on the cover of *murmur* (see Figure 3.1), the empty spaces between the words—like the holes in lace—signify the interweaving of text and page-space, as well as the interplay between the discursive and material dimensions of the composition.

The pages shown in Figure 3.9 are (un)woven with various threads—lines of connection among words based on their colours, sizes and denotations. By following these entangled and winding lines (threads), readers come to understand and "inhabit" the text in a reeling motion (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*; Ingold, *Lines*). Owing to the irregularity of these lines (threads), readers are invited to return to the pages repeatedly to (un)make connections and patterns within the text. In this way, the place of the page is neither plane nor still but presents a 'lapping planarity', which engages the senses and sensibilities of the reader, enfolding them into the composition as a 'dynamic configuring' of matter and meaning (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"). Meanwhile, in this 'dynamic configuring', the senses and sensibilities of the poem 'move out from' the plane of the pages, reaching towards the reader and the real, physical environment of their encounter (O'Sullivan-Olsen). In a word, the pages of *murmur* present a sensuous and animate environment through a motional and momentous weaving of the symbolic with the semiotic, and the discursive with the material.

In addition to the cylindrical configuration of the text shown in Figure 3.9, the sense and motion of reeling are also enacted through the centralised arrangement of lines

on the pages of *murmur*. To take a short stanza from the section "would a yellow do?", for example:

perfused

rousable etched water

"hid"

ill –

umination –

dis-

solution

stutt

The text is 'perfused' in 'rousable etched water'; what is otherwise 'hid[den]' becomes both illuminated and dissolved—then momentarily woven together by a centripetal force. Once again, the varied dashes at the end of the verse lines signify the fluidity of the environment—the page-space as 'etched water'—as well as the continuity within the text. Words are broken into fragments and then re-threaded; from this, a kinetic energy emerges, heightening the connectivity across the lines of the stanza. Meanwhile, this (re)configuration of text points to a force of dissolution within the watery environment—one that overwhelms the momentum of coalescence and coherence embedded in language. Rather than conforming to conventional linguistic orders, language is deconstructed and reconstituted within the environment of its composition—within the place of the page. As Middleton observes, the centre justification of lines in O'Sullivan's composition 'turns every line into a phrase unit whose initiating moment of stress and intonation, the usual ways of voicing a metric, is delayed until the entire line is known

and the reader has to negotiate this uncertain launch into the middle of its affairs' (118). The textual configurations body forth a milieu of water, signifying its position and state in 'the transient' throughout the section "would a yellow do?" (O'Sullivan-Olsem). Words such as 'tilting', 'overlippage', 'declivity', 'levied', 'stoop', 'askew' and 'verti diz', among others, suggest that the 'bodytext' is situated within a motional and watery environment, along with the nausea that results from it.

Echoing the image on the cover of *murmur*—which is both a lacework and a depiction of humans either falling into or reaching toward water (see Figure 3.1)—the composition of *murmur* enacts a process of weaving and evokes a watery environment. In other words, the motion of weaving in *murmur*'s composition is situated and mirrors the movement of water, in contrast to the mechanical regularity of weaving on a traditional loom. Mechanical weaving involves the interplay between two basic components—warp and weft, the vertical and horizontal threads—with the warp fixed on the loom, serving as a set of "guidelines" for the linear motions of the weft. However, the force and movement of weaving on the pages of *murmur* are multitudinous; its patterns—both material and meaningful—are not produced by the crossing of two lines (threads), vertical and horizontal, but emerge from the ongoing intra-activity of various lines (threads) that are crooked and textured, visual and verbal, emotional and motional, as well as from the dynamic interplay between lines and space, content and form. There are no fixed lines—whether boundaries, guidelines or frameworks—within or of the composition of *murmur*. Its materiality and sensibilities are entwined with—and continually intra-acting with—other bodies/subjects in the environment, both on and beyond the page.

In brief, on the pages of *murmur*, the (body)text and the page-space—as body-subject and environment—are mutually constituted and transformative. Whether in the form of separate columns or centralised lines, the cylindrical composition of *murmur* enacts a pattern of weaving and transforms the place of the page into an animate and agential environment—like 'lapping planarity' or 'etched water'. This animation of the page-space resonates with the animation of landscape in O'Sullivan's poetry, as discussed in Section Two. In both cases, the senses and sensibilities of the poem are not attributed to any individual subject—neither the poet nor the reader—but are diffused throughout the environment and the intra-actions among its compositional bodies/subjects. The creative agency embodied in O'Sullivan's poetry is thus material and environmental, embedded in the ecological becoming of the world.

In attributing the agency of formation and transformation to materials and the environment, O'Sullivan's poetry performs the task of deconstructing the discursive/material dichotomy through the 'radical rethinking of materiality' called for by feminist and posthumanist thinking (Alaimo and Heckman). In particular, its renderings of the watery environment and the fluid composition—both textual and textural—within the page space highlight the mutual constitutionality and transformativity between bodies/subjects and the environment, or what Alaimo terms "trans-corporeality". In *Bodies of Water*, Astrida Neimanis develops the concept of the "hydrocommons" within the framework of feminist and posthuman phenomenology. Building on ideas such as Alaimo's "trans-corporeality", Barad's "agential realism" and theorisations of queer bodies by Luce Irigaray and Donna Haraway, Neimanis proposes what she calls 'a posthuman politics of location' (4)—a 'refiguring of our (always more-than-human)

embodiment' grounded in the watery constitution of bodies and our entanglement in 'a hydrocommons of wet relations' (3–4). For Neimanis, attending to our watery bodies and environments is not simply a matter of viewing water as a medium of corporeal exchange; rather, it becomes a way of 'thinking with water'—embracing its fluidity and gestational potential:

> Water is articulated as always both "being" and a process of "becoming"—gathering water from certain bodies and flowing back into others in return. According to this onto-logic, water is also both body and milieu; water is what comprises bodies but also that which bathes bodies into being. Being and becoming are also proliferations of the different and the new (68).

From a feminist and posthuman phenomenological perspective, the world's unfolding is not driven by heterosexual reproduction but emerges through the mutual constitution and transformation of diverse bodies and their environments—together forming a 'hydrocommons of wet relations' (4). By thinking with water, Neimanis underscores the creativity and interconnectivity of matter—organic and inorganic, feminine and masculine, human and nonhuman.

This radical rethinking of bodies, materials and the environment through water is also enacted in the poetry of O'Sullivan. For example, in *murmur*, in the section "would a yellow do?", O'Sullivan renders the place of the page as 'etched water' to signify both the animate and agential environment of the composition (the 'bodytext') and its dissolution within—intra-action with—the page space. Engaging and disorienting the senses of the reader, the dissolved and fluid composition of *murmur* enacts a motion of reeling— 'lapping', 'tilting'—which moves its significance out of the page space,

gesturing towards and reaching into the world beyond the place of the page. Like Neimanis, O'Sullivan challenges the notion that agency, creativity and intelligibility are exclusive to autonomous, subjective bodies, instead locating them within the 'ongoing intra-activity' of matter (Barad; O'Sullivan, *murmur*). This reconfiguration of the subject into an embodied, relational and fluid way of being and becoming within the environment bridges environmentalist and feminist thinking to take on the task of deconstructing the linear, binary logics of modern thought and practice, which give rise to dichotomies such as discursive/material, subjective/objective, male/female, man/nature, and so on.

To repeat, the enactment of (un)weaving in *murmur* is multidimensional: it both embodies the transformation of materials and enacts ideological transformation. The convergence of innovative poetics, eco-ethics, feminism and posthumanism in O'Sullivan's work enables it to disentangle entrenched patterns of thought and to reconnect the human and ecological realms, alongside diverse disciplines and the aims of socio-political transformation. In this sense, O'Sullivan's poetry enacts 'an eco/ethico politics of the earth' (O'Sullivan-Olsen)

To sum up, this section examined the eco-ethical and eco-political implications of O'Sullivan's poetry through a close reading of her poem *murmur*. Following its metaphorical and performative weaving, I discussed the structure ("assembly"), lines ("threads") and "weaving motions" of *murmur*, and argued that its significance and form are both embodied and relational, emerging from the ongoing intra-activity among various lines and between lines and space. Rather than a formal production of text, the composition of *murmur* embodies a dynamic configuring of text, images and textiles; its making is multidimensional, multimedia and bodily intensive—akin to handcrafting

(O'Sullivan-Olsen). Building on this, and through the lens of feminist and posthumanist phenomenology, I argue that O'Sullivan's poetry resists the linear and binary logics embedded in modern thought and practice. It deconstructs dichotomic models—such as the discursive and the material, the linear and the nonlinear, form and substance, human and nonhuman—by situating them within a processual (un)weaving of lines and patterns. Woven with various materialities and sensibilities—'textu(r)al, sonic, visual'—the pages of *murmur* become a phenomenon interwoven with the physical environment in which it is presented or performed (O'Sullivan-Olsen). In this way, O'Sullivan's poetry is both trans-forming and a transforming force within modern systems, participating in the process of the world's unfolding.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined O'Sullivan's poetry and argued that it constitutes a practice of eco-ethics because:

1. it engages and enlivens the sensory experience of the reader or audience, resituating language—both its operation and significance—within the physical and phenomenal realm;
2. it enacts the mutual constitution and transformation of subject and environment, human and more-than-human worlds, and recovers a sense of kinship between them;
3. it re-presents the natural world as animate, agential and meaningful;
4. it deconstructs the discursive/material dichotomy, as well as the dichotomic mode of thinking embedded in Western philosophy.

In resonance with the eco-ethical practices found in the work of Tarlo and Larkin, O'Sullivan's poetry embodies an open and dialogical way of knowing and being in the environment, while remaining grounded in physical and phenomenal experience. Through a sensuous, magical and eco-political 'deconstructing/reconstituting' of the subjective within the objective, and the human within the more-than-human worlds, it enacts a radical reimagining of both the human and the environment (O'Sullivan-Olsen). As O'Sullivan describes it, the place of the page is:

> a place of damage, savagery, pain, silence: also a place of salvage, retrieval and recovery. A place of existence, journeying. A sacred space of undiminishment. Of dream. Of ritual. Of magic. Also a reconstituting-as-(being)-heard in the sense that as we hear, we also are heard in an interweaving of potential exchange of hearing-(being)-heard-of-other-than-(as well as human)-sentience (O'Sullivan-Olsen).

In reading O'Sullivan's poetry, readers "inhabit" such a place; their senses and sensibilities are mutually constitutive and transformative in relation to other bodies/subjects both inside and outside the poem. As such, O'Sullivan's poetry is eco-ethical: it is a practice of unmaking stubborn relations and forging new kinships among the beings of the earth.

Nonetheless, distinct from the poetries of Harriet Tarlo and Peter Larkin discussed in the previous chapters, O'Sullivan's rendering of the environment is trans-sensual and transformative. It is not only a phenomenological re-presentation of landscape but also a shamanistic animation and re-enchantment of the natural world. By combining experimental poetics with performances of the body, ritual and handcrafting—practices

often associated with women and nonhumans—O'Sullivan foregrounds marginalised subjects and expressions in the process of meaning- and world-making. In this sense, her poetry both aligns with and expands the possibilities of radical and experimental landscape poetries and their compositions of eco-ethics.

Chapter Four

The Act and Art of Relating: Reading Anthony Vahni Capildeo and Experimental Landscape Poetry

Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis examines the poetry of Anthony Vahni Capildeo, focusing on its environmental, socio-political and philosophical implications. Capildeo, a Trinidad and Tobago-born writer based in the UK, navigates a multicultural literary practice shaped by their identity and lived experiences as an immigrant, mediating between Caribbean and British traditions of thought and writing. Focusing on Capildeo's transcultural and transnational reimagining of the human, the environment and human–nonhuman relationships, this chapter once again highlights the intellectual openness of experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and its role in shaping environmental ethics in the contemporary world. Drawing on their work collected in *Like a Tree, Walking*, I argue that Capildeo's poetry enacts movements and relations among diverse landscapes, subjects and narratives across the earth, resonating with what Kamau Brathwaite terms 'tidalectics' and what Édouard Glissant calls a 'poetics of relation'.

Mirroring the ecological making of the earth, the dynamic and diverse composition of Capildeo's work presents an open and dialogical view of world(s) woven from various materials and ideologies. Through this practice of eco-ethics, their poetry may be aligned with ELP. The alignment between Capildeo's poetry—for its multiculturalism, particularly—and ELP expands the horizon of the latter and its practice of eco-ethics by relating them to nonlocal, yet nonetheless real, locational perceptions

and experiences of the environment, further interweaving environmental and socio-political reflections on our relations within the earth.

As argued in the Introduction, radical and experimental landscape poetry, being both formally open and rooted in the "field," provides a site for connecting various practices across genres and nations—experimental and traditional, American and British. In her essay "Open Field", Harriet Tarlo draws on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'the rhizome' and explores the interrelations among poets and practices across American and British open-field traditions. In doing so, she proposes a new grouping for contemporary poetry concerned with 'place, locality and "nature"'— "radical landscape poetry"— which embraces both the specificity and extensiveness of "field" (Tarlo, "Open Field"; *The Ground Aslant* 7). Similarly, rhizomatic thinking, as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, is the principle behind what Glissant calls 'the poetics of relation', 'in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other' (11)—I will expand on this statement in the main body of this chapter.

In parallel with this poetics and practice of relating, suggested by both Tarlo and Glissant, Capildeo connects—dynamically—distinctive narratives across the earth in their composition. Their ecological and multicultural imaginings provide a way to bridge alternative, non-Western traditions and bodies of thought with the ecological and ethical thinking embedded in American and British open-field poetry (see Introduction). Having immigrated from Trinidad and Tobago to the UK, Capildeo's poetry embodies a unique and nonlocal perspective on both British poetry and British landscapes, unsettling dominant nationalist narratives of subject and environment. Echoing their travels between the British Isles and the Caribbean Antilles, the narratives of Capildeo's poetry are not

only alternative but also continuously alternating. In doing so, their poetry fosters a translocal, transhistorical and transcultural imagining of the world that resists authoritarian and linear thinking embedded in modern—colonial and neo-colonial—systems, emphasising instead the diverse and dynamic composition of the earth. In this way, Capildeo's poetry aligns with the practice of eco-ethics in radical and experimental landscape poetry while challenging the national borders that delimit its scope.

In short, my alignment of Capildeo's poetry with ELP serves two purposes. First, I seek to extend Harriet Tarlo's grouping of "radical landscape poetry," as suggested in The Ground Aslant, by linking open-field poetics—practised in twentieth- and twenty-first-century North America and Britain—to the work of Caribbean writers—including Capildeo, Glissant, Brathwaite and Sylvia Wynter—that are often positioned as the "peripheries" of the West—through their shared ecological and ethical thinking. Second, in moving from the "metropolises" to the "peripheries" of Western cultures, I also aim to highlight the intimacy between environmental and postcolonial thinking and practices in their reflections on the position and future of humanity on the earth.

On these two levels, this chapter responds to efforts to expand the boundaries of ecocriticism to include non-Western traditions of writing and thinking about nature and nature-human relations, as articulated in edited collections such as *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* (Huggan and Tiffin), *Beyond Nature Writing* (Armbruster and Wallace) and *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (DeLoughrey, Didur and Carrigan). In alignment with Buell's commitment to "environmentality" and to the entangled material, sociopolitical and ethical concerns of literature and the world, relating

ecocriticism to postcolonialism helps to produce more historically and geopolitically attentive accounts of environment and environmental ethics (see Introduction).

Capildeo's identity as an agender, Indo-Trinidadian and Tobagonian writer living and working in the UK ensures that their poetry—reflecting on the relationship between self and other, and between human and more-than-human worlds—responds not only to poetic innovation but also to wider socio-political and philosophical transformations. This is not to imply that the work of other poets discussed in this thesis can be approached solely for their linguistic or literary qualities, as each is deeply shaped by its engagement with both the cultural and natural environments of the contemporary world (see Chapter One on Harriet Tarlo, Chapter Two on Peter Larkin and Chapter Three on Maggie O'Sullivan). However, Capildeo's relationship with landscape—particularly British landscapes—is fraught with colonial and neo-colonial discourses. Thus, examining the relationship between subject and environment in Capildeo's poetry requires an exploration of environmental ethics alongside social justice, calling for the emancipation of land and life—human and nonhuman—from reductive representations.

Before proceeding further with an analysis of Capildeo's poetry, I wish to address the controversy surrounding my starting point. On the one hand, the historic injustice inscribed in the relationship between the Caribbean and the British Isles means that Capildeo's poetry offers unique insights into the constitution of an eco-ethics that connects human and nonhuman bodies within the modern and (neo)colonial schemes of exploitation, extraction and exportation. On the other hand, emphasising the Caribbean origins of Capildeo's practice risks reducing my analysis to the poet's ethnic and political identity, positioning Capildeo, along with their poetry, outside mainstream British literary

culture. This tension between emphasising the alterity of non-white, nonlocal voices and reducing their voices to those of alterity echoes wider socio-political concerns within the UK. As Peter Middleton observes, a significant disparity persists between the contributions of Black poets and their underrepresentation in critical and creative publications: 'white British racism and insularity has hindered recognition of the work of black poets and hearing the complexity of identity in the collective noun' ("Poetry After 1970s" 780). Similarly, Sarah Welsh traces how Black poets in Britain have struggled to move from voicing themselves 'in a racist and often-exclusionary mainstream society in 1960s and 1970s Britain' to reclaiming their voices from the reductive stereotypes that, after the 1970s, frequently confined their work to political or performative categories (179). In a word, framing minority poets by their ethnic and political identity places their voices and bodies in a boxed spectacle, thus restricting their potential to effect real and radical change within the mainstream.

Writing within and against this socio-political context, Capildeo reflects on the impact of identity politics in literary culture and the publishing industry in an interview with Tom Sutcliffe:

> I found that marketing and identity politics were combining to crush, like in the Star Wars trash compactor, the voice, the voice on the page, the body, the history. […] You had to choose, you had to be a sort of documentary witness wheeled around and exposing your wounds in the marketplace.

This statement by Capildeo is cited by Sandeep Parmar in her essay "Still Not a British Subject", where she critiques the reductive reception of poets of colour in the UK, arguing that it results from the collusion between lyricism and nationalism in shaping the

ideal national subject. This 'conceptualising of otherness', Parmar contends, 'namely in the marketing of immigrant and diaspora poets, those foreigners who forever properly reside "elsewhere" in the Englishman's imagination', demonstrates 'the most disturbing confluence of whiteness and nostalgia' (36). In contrast to these foreign bodies, the ideal national subject of the UK, as the lyric "I" of mainstream poetry, is characterised as 'local, original and nostalgic', apprehensive and rejective of the changes in national culture and space brought by modern foreign influences. This national subject of the UK is exemplified in the poetic subject of Philip Larkin's poem "Going, Going", discussed in the Introduction, who laments an England lost to modernity and urbanisation.

Referencing Philip Larkin's "Going, Going" and Matless's critique of the poem in *Landscape and Englishness*, I also noted in the Introduction the link between the national imagining of an ideal subject and that of an ideal landscape. Echoing Matless, Vron Ware points out the constructedness of both ideals in "Ghosts, Trails, and Bones". Particularly, the association of Englishness with whiteness and tradition is embedded within a racialised discourse that simplifies the national and cultural heritage of the UK, silencing and erasing the multicultural histories of the country from the very beginnings. Comprising England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom has been a composite nation since its establishment, not to mention its imperial and colonial histories and their enduring influence on cultures across the globe, and vice versa. Highlighting inter-racial and inter-cultural relations within the UK, Ware argues,

> conservative and imperialist versions of English national identity have produced a nostalgic version of England that is white by birth and by right. This means that a great deal of subversive labour has to be undertaken in order to cast England in a

> different light and as more resilient to the allure of purity and essentialism that is intrinsic to race-thinking (209).

As I will show in this chapter, Capildeo's poetry contributes to this 'subversive labour': their enactment of relations and movement between diverse narratives across the earth challenges (neo)colonial discourses such as nationalism and racialism. Likewise, by incorporating Capildeo's poetry into this thesis centred on the practice of eco-ethics and ELP in the UK, I seek to subvert the exclusivity of "radical landscape poetry" as framed by Harriet Tarlo in *The Ground Aslant*—an anthology that challenges the divisive and categorical thinking of poetry and landscape, such as between traditional and experimental, rural and urban, human and nature, yet includes no poets of colour.

That said, alongside the collusion of 'identity politics with marketing' and 'nationalism with lyricism' highlighted by Capildeo and Parmar, the exclusion of minority poets from the mainstream—both literary culture and beyond—also manifests in the attempt to purge the socio-political from discussions of "art". For instance, in her book *Thinking Its Presence*, Dorothy Wang interrogates the entrenched opposition between aesthetics and politics in literary studies. In the book's opening, Wang presents 'a few snapshots of the current state of poetry reception', the first case being:

> In the January 2008…the official publication of the Modern Language Association (MLA) sent to more than thirty thousand members in one hundred countries … a cluster of essays by eight distinguished literary critics [16]appeared under the title "The New Lyric Studies." The pieces took as their jumping-off point the eminent poetry critic Marjorie Perloff's MLA presidential address, "It

[16] Virginia Jackson, Yopie Prins, Jonathan Culler, Rei Terada, Robert Kaufman, Stathis Gourgouris, Brent Edwards and Oren Izenberg.

> Must Change," given in December 2006 at the annual convention in Philadelphia and later reprinted in the May 2007 issue of PMLA. In that talk, Perloff asks, "Why is the 'merely' literary so suspect today?" (original emphasis), contending that "the governing paradigm for so-called literary study is now taken from anthropology and history (1).

This opposition between the literary and the cultural/political, indicated in Perloff's statement, Wang argues, reflects a popular yet often unspoken sentiment that:

> because of "politically correct" cultural-studies-ish pressures in the academy, presumably the detrimental legacy of both 1960s activism and the culture wars of the 1980s, worthy, major, and beloved works of literature—whose merits are "purely literary"—are being squeezed out of the curriculum by inferior works penned by minority writers, whose representation in the curriculum is solely the result of affirmative action or racial quotas or because their writings have passed an ideological litmus test, not literary merit (7).

Put simply, many contemporary poets and critics believe that the 'scholarly overconcern with the cultural and the political' is perceived as a threat to the supposed "purity" of literary studies, as the 'unworthy, marginal and unloved' works of minority writers are seen to displace the 'worthy, major and beloved' works of non-minority—traditional and local—writers (Wang; Perloff). In this view, the call to purge cultural and political concerns from literary studies is a coded expression designed to prevent the work of minority writers from occupying more space and receiving more attention than is deemed acceptable.

So, entangled in the discourse of nationalism and imperialism, literature and literary studies have performed a political function: preserving and producing the 'local and original' ideologies of English-speaking, Anglo-American countries, shielding them from new and 'foreign' influences, whether by subordinating the literary value of the work of minority writers to their cultural and political identities or by separating the cultural and political dimensions from 'the proper study of the literary, specifically poetry' (see Introduction; Parmar; Wang; Perloff). The responsibility of receiving minority poets thus lies in the challenge of neither ignoring nor reducing one's reading to their socio-political status, as both approaches risk perpetuating discrimination against both the poets and their work. Instead, to subvert the imposition of dominant ideologies onto poets and poetry, the critical reader must attend to the ways minority poets negotiate their own identities, engaging with the cultural specificity of their work while thinking beyond it. This calls for a cross-framework approach to literary criticism that interweaves postcolonial and environmental criticism, literary and cultural studies without prioritising either, allowing them instead to inform and transform each other. In this way, the radicalism embedded in marginal and experimental literatures may provide a "real" challenge and bring change to dominant ideologies, rather than being engulfed by them (Wang).

Having established this, in the next section, I will outline the hybrid, theoretical framework for my reading of Capildeo's poetry in this chapter. Interweaving literary and cultural studies, I will show how incorporating the work of minority poets—namely, Capildeo—into the existing discussions of this thesis on ELP and its practice of eco-ethics may generate new insights into poetry and the world beyond.

I. Reading Capildeo and Experimental Landscape Poetry

In the previous section, I discussed the political and literary responsibilities involved in reading minority poets. Building on this, I now explore how Capildeo's poetry expands the scope of experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and its practice of eco-ethics to consider nonlocal subjects and alternative experiences of the environment.

As noted in the Introduction, the divide between mainstream and experimental poetry in 20th-century UK is rooted in a broader cultural conflict between the foreign and the local, the innovative and the traditional, as the country enters modernity and the global market. Given the rhizomatic roots of radical and experimental landscape poetry in the UK and the US, as well as its commitment to renewing established forms of meaning-making, the radicalism embodied in radical and experimental landscape poetry is not oppositional—reacting against the traditional and the mainstream—but resists such divisive and categorical thinking altogether, in both poetry and the world beyond, contesting oppositions between traditional and experimental, as well as other entrenched binaries in Western philosophy, most notably the division between cultural and nature. In reading Capildeo as an experimental landscape poet, I foreground this radicalism as an open and dialogical way of thinking present in their work, which aims to deconstruct pre-existing systems of knowledge production by incorporating the views of "others"—both human and nonhuman.

That said, the exclusivity of voices in both traditional and experimental poetry persists in radical landscape poetry in the form of 'clinging to its hold on the local and physical world' and to its origin "from here" (Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant* 7; Skoulding).

While groups within experimental poetry, including that of "radical landscape poetry", critique conventional forms of composition as vehicles for cultural and moral assimilation, they frequently fail—despite their self-awareness—to confront the exclusion of poets and people of colour from literature and literary communities (See Introduction). In the views of cultural and postcolonial thinkers, this stigma of exclusivity emerges not only from contemporary socio-political realities but also from a system of knowledge production deeply rooted in Western cultures. To explain in Sylvia Wynter's terms, the simultaneous production of 'the other' and 'the ideal subject' in both mainstream and experimental literatures is part of 'the dichotomous, negative/positive markings' maintained by Western ontology (*Why We Cannot Save Ourselves*). Within this ontology, 'whatever is a criterion of life must be marked by opiate-inducing signifiers, [and] this can only be marked if there is a negative, if there is a group that functions as the negative of that group' (Wynter). Hence, the divisions between women and men, whiteness and blackness, self and others.

This theorisation of the imposed divisions and hierarchies on living bodies in modern societies resonates with the thinking of Julia Kristeva—whom Wynter describes as providing 'the most central insight that the feminist perspective has contributed to human self-knowledge' (Why *We Cannot Save Ourselves*). As mentioned in Chapter One, Kristeva identifies the role of women in 'the symbolic contract' between society and individual subjects, remarking that, due to their childbearing and child-rearing 'functions,' women are often associated with the biological and the maternal, as opposed to the symbolic and public/political realms of life associated with men. It is through this othering of women—who are seen as embodiments of the semiotic—that the symbolic

order of society is upheld. This mode of thinking also applies to the othering of nonhuman as opposed to human, as well as objects as opposed to subjects, in modern societies (which, as discussed in the Introduction, Val Plumwood identifies as the underlying logic of environmental and social exploitation). Consequently, scholars from feminist, postcolonial and environmentalist perspectives face a shared question: how can a group that is 'negatively marked' or othered in societies challenge the symbolic order that has marked them as socially and symbolically "dead" from the outset? The answer, according to Kristeva and Wynter, lies precisely in the marginalised position of these groups and in their specific lived experiences as women, natives, nonhumans, and so on. It is the uniqueness and substantiality of their lives that enable marginalised subjects to deconstruct the symbolic order imposed on them, which seeks to reduce their physical existences to abstract representations.

Moreover, this project of deconstruction is not exclusively embodied in Capildeo's poetry because of their minority status. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the compositions of Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin and Maggie O'Sullivan all embody momentum aimed at unsettling pre-established constructs in modern thinking and practice, such as the atomistic subject, inert matter and the bordered place. This momentum of deconstruction, or radical reimagining of the world, is channelled in Tarlo's poetry through the practice of walking and working with others in the field; in Larkin's, through the physical materiality of trees and landscapes; and in O'Sullivan's, through interweaving textual practice with bodily and ritualistic performances. The transformative force enacted in ELP comes not only from its poetic innovation but also from its eco-ethical practice—unique in the work of each poet—as an ideologically open

yet physically grounded mode of knowing and being in the world. In keeping with this, I argue that Capildeo's poetry enacts a radical reimagining of the sense of subject and environment, along with the relationship between them, shaped by their lived experiences as a minority writer as well as a writer for minorities in the UK. Mirroring their travels between the Caribbean and the UK, Capildeo employs a parataxis of forms and frameworks in their composition to initiate movement and dialogue among various linguistic and cultural discourses across the globe. In this way, Capildeo's poetry unsettles dominant discourses of meaning-making and world-making, particularly those that impose orders and borders on living bodies and natural environments, while re-presenting the dynamic and diverse creation of the earth.

While acknowledging the cultural specificity of their work, readings of Capildeo's experimental landscape poetry should not be confined to the experience and identity of the poet as an immigrant. As I will show in this chapter, travels and movements are re-enacted in Capildeo's poetry as crossings not only of geographical borders but also of ideological ones imposed on both human and nonhuman beings. In the modern world, where regimes of capitalism and globalisation simultaneously trespass upon and reinforce geopolitical borders, Capildeo's poetry enacts movements and relations between various landscapes and discourses across the earth. By creatively engaging with narratives of "the other", it embodies an eco-ethical—what Deleuze and Guattari call 'rhizomatic', or what Brathwaite terms 'tidalectic'—mode of connecting subjects and environments without collapsing their distinctiveness into a discourse of assimilation or generalisation. In this way, Capildeo's poetry not only aligns with the practice of eco-ethics embodied in ELP in the UK but also opens a pathway for

connecting these practices to other, nonlocal perceptions of the environment. Sourced in the poet's identity and experience as an immigrant, the art and act of relating in Capildeo's work expands the scope of ELP both within and beyond the socio-political framework. I go on to show how a cross-framework approach to Capildeo's poetry—interweaving postcolonial and environmental criticisms, and cultural and literary studies—contributes to a radical reimagining not only of modern social structures but also of humanity's place and relationship within the natural world.

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis adopts a (post)phenomenological view of landscape as a field of relations and tensions, within which the subject—their body, as well as their embodied sense of self—is not only situated but also (un)formed through the act of perception and in relation to what is perceived. In the previous chapters, I demonstrated how this view of landscape is re-presented in the work of Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin and Maggie O'Sullivan as a discursive and material process of co-becoming between subject and environment, and between human and nonhuman beings. While Capildeo's poetry shares this view of landscape, as well as a relational and fluid understanding of subjectivity, it extends these further by enacting movements and relations not only within a single place but across multiple and varied places and times. In doing so, it expands both the geographical and conceptual scope of ELP, furthering its radical reimagining of the environment by transversing diverse spatial-temporal frameworks and fostering a transformative view of the natural world that is not only agential and animate but also trans-locational, transcultural and transhistorical.

As captured in the term 'tidalectic'—coined by Brathwaite and taken up by Capildeo—Capildeo's poetry embodies processes of revealing and erasing patterns of

thought by creatively and dynamically connecting them, transversing between them like tides ebbing and flowing across the shore. Enfolded within these processes are ecological modes of intersubjective and interspecies co-becoming—not merely within, but of the earth—a natural world that, in its very existence, resists all forms of enclosure. Recognising this overflowing force of nature is a crucial aspect of ecological thinking—one that challenges the tendency in modern thought and practice to subordinate the natural to the human. In *Inhuman Nature*, Nigel Clark offers a radical account of nature and the rise of human civilisations, portraying humanity as both deeply and precariously situated within the currents of the planet and the cosmos. Reflecting on real-life disasters—such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and Hurricane Katrina—Clark underscores the radical asymmetry between the natural environment and human bodies, contrasting the boundless cosmic energy of the former with the vulnerability of the latter. Drawing on Levinas, Clark argues that acknowledging one's limitations in the face of the radical alterity of the other and the outside contributes to opening our being to the pre-ontological existence of the world—an opening that forms the precondition for ethical relationships between self and other, humans and nature (see Introduction). In other words, recognising the radical asymmetry between nature and humans forms the foundation of eco-ethics—a position that, as shown in Chapter Two, aligns with Larkin's poetics of "scarcity" and his practice of eco-ethical dwelling with trees.

Having established the radical asymmetry between humans and nature—and the importance of acknowledging it—Clark calls for a re-evaluation of dominant epistemologies within the humanities, which tend to explain natural phenomena in terms

of human reasoning. For instance, in discussions of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, critics frequently shifted attention away from the natural origins of the disaster to its social and political dimensions. Rather than acknowledging the 'literally exorbitant' force of the sea, they framed the suffering of local fishermen primarily in terms of economic and political inequality, arguing that their vulnerability stemmed from a lack of resources and systemic marginalisation (67). While Clark does not dispute the validity of these observations, he contends that an overemphasis on the socio-political dimensions of natural disaster risks becoming reductive:

> the structures of social injustice and inequality that are summoned to make sense of the disaster… convey the impression that the real disaster, the main event, is the divisive structuring of global social life, leaving the Tsunami as a derivative and superficial phenomenon, whose main function is to throw into the relief the more profound realities that underlie it (64),

In contrast to this tendency to reduce the natural to the human, materialist and ecological thinking approach matter and the environment as "vital" and "agential," understanding them not only as the conditions of human activity but also as active agents in shaping human and ecological life. Such an approach can be found, as previously discussed in this thesis, in the experimental landscape poetry of Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin and Maggie O'Sullivan, as well as in the theoretical work of John Wylie, Tim Ingold, Stacy Alaimo, Donna Haraway and others.[17]

[17] Besides the writers and critics discussed in previous chapters, Christopher Breu, in *Insistence of the Material* (2014), argues that material conditions—such as the body, built environments, and ecosystems—actively shape social structures and subjectivities. His work challenges the dominance of linguistic and discursive frameworks in critical theory by foregrounding the agency and resistance of materiality. Similarly, Timothy Mitchell, in *Carbon Democracy* (2015), contends that the political power structures of modern democracies have been shaped by their dependence on fossil fuels—particularly coal and oil—which have influenced labour movements, state governance, and global capitalism in ways that enable both democratic participation and authoritarian control.

In alignment with the materialist and ecological thinking that underpins this thesis, Capildeo's poetry signifies the reciprocal participation between the human and the natural, drawing on the shared materiality and vulnerability of all bodies to connect the minority and the mainstream, the human and the more-than-human world. For instance, as I will show in the second section through an analysis of the poem "Towards an Unwalking", Capildeo's poetry addresses the marginalisation of minorities, the disconnection between technologically mediated subjects and the natural world, and humanity's precarious position within a volatile environment—all conveyed through the shifting dynamics of emplacement and displacement experienced by the poetic subject. As such, it highlights the intimacy between environmental and postcolonial criticism in their shared reflection on the position and future of humanity on the earth. As Lawrence Buell argues, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* lies in

> pushing the field toward substantive engagement with issues of environmental welfare and equity, particularly those of pressing concern to the impoverished and socially marginalised, to landscapes marked by urbanisation, racism, poverty and toxification, and to the voices of witnesses and victims of environmental injustice (112).

Neither reducing natural disasters to socio-political explanations nor naturalising social divisions and injustices, new ecopoetry and ecocriticism embrace a state of precarious yet inquisitive openness, acknowledging the challenges and uncertainties brought by the changing world on both physical and ideological levels. In Haraway's words, in order to understand and to live on this troubled planet, we must learn to be present with our entangled—social and ecological—relations, and 'stay with the trouble' (see Introduction

and Chapter Three). Climate change operates on a global scale with unpredictable consequences, resisting full rationalisation or proportional understanding. Yet this does not mean that environmental challenges should be compartmentalised or distanced from socio-political concerns. On the contrary, recognising the limitations within current systems of thinking and practice creates possibilities for eco-ethical ways of dwelling in the world—ways that integrate human and ecological well-being. It is such possibilities that are created in Capildeo's poetry through its radical reimagining of the relationship between subjects and environments, as well as between socio-political and environmental concerns.

Furthermore, the combination of environmental and socio-political critique in literary and cultural studies is crucial to interrogating what Clark terms 'the divisive structuring of global social life' (64). The tendency to rationalise the irrational and reduce the natural to the human in modern thinking and practice aligns with the logics of colonialism and liberalism, which have historically—and continue to—facilitated the extraction and commodification of both biological and geological materials (Clark; Yusoff; Lowe). Postcolonial thinkers such as Lisa Lowe, Kathryn Yusoff and Sylvia Wynter have shown how (neo)colonial logics systematically categorise and divide human bodies by gender, race and class, through labels such as the irrational (as opposed to the rational), the savage (as opposed to the civilised) and the private (as opposed to the public)—producing, in effect, a hierarchical ordering of life into human, subhuman and inhuman forms of existence. This construction and imposition of hierarchy onto living bodies underpins both social injustice and environmental violence. As Yusoff argues in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, colonial practices of extraction and exploitation—

targeting natural, Indigenous and African bodies as "resources" to be mined, owned and used—operate through the same geo-logic that subordinates the geological to the biological and the nonhuman to the human.

The hierarchical division of life into the nonhuman and the human, the exploitable and the exploiter, the owners of capital and the capitalised, and so on, persists across the globe within today's liberal political economy. As Lowe argues in *The Intimacies of Four Continents*:

> Modern history and social science pronounce the universality of liberal categories of development yet omit the global relations on which they depended. Indeed, it is the pronounced asymmetry of the colonial divisions of humanity that is the signature feature of liberal modes of distinction that privilege particular subjects and societies as rational, civilized, and human, and treat others as the labouring, replaceable, or disposable contexts that constitute that humanity (16).

In this light, the tendency to rationalise the irrational and to explain natural disasters in human terms—as noted by Clark in *Inhuman Nature*—aligns with the logics of colonialism and liberalism, in which the so-called savage, subhuman and nonhuman must be managed and mastered by human laws. For instance, by classifying natural and certain human bodies as inhuman or subhuman through constructed categories such as species, race and gender, colonialists and slave traders historically legitimised their occupation, extraction and exploitation of Indigenous and Black worlds. In contemporary societies, the UK government legitimises its hostile immigration policies by associating immigrants with animals and portraying them as aggressive and disorderly. Similarly, by transforming "carbon"—a natural element intrinsic to the earth's composition, including

human bodies—into immaterial data or a form of universal currency through carbon trading schemes, global politicians and capitalists justify and reinforce technoscientific control over nature.

Capildeo's poetry interrogates the entanglement of environmental exploitation and social domination, inviting readers to consider how these forces reinforce one another within the modern socio-political framework, while also reflecting on their complex tensions and interrelations. For example, as I will expand on in the following section, in the poem "In Praise of Birds", Capildeo exposes the subjugation of immigrant communities in dominant narratives through hostile associations among the foreign, the animal and the erratic. However, rather than seeking to emancipate minority subjects by disentangling them from these associations with the animal—an approach that risks reinforcing the division and appropriation of nonhuman bodies—Capildeo emphasises and extends their interconnectedness with other subjects, minority or otherwise, across culture, space and time. Drawing on the ecological dynamics of the earth, their poetry carries a momentum to traverse and transform the fabricated symbolic order of modern societies. In this sense, Capildeo's poetry constitutes a practice of both environmental and postcolonial ethics.

Nonetheless, the construction of humanity and human progress through the hierarchical ordering of living bodies cannot be explained solely by colonial and liberal demands for resources and labour—an explanation that itself reproduces modernity's tendency to subordinate the natural to the socio-political realms of life. Instead, it must also be understood through, in Wynter's words, 'the laws of hybrid human auto-speciation'—that is, the "autopoiesis", or self-making, of the human through social

narratives (28). In her conversations with Katherine McKittrick, Wynter elaborates on her conceptualisation of the human as '*homo narrans*'*:*

> This means that as a species, our hybrid origins only emerged in the wake of what I have come to define over the last decade as the Third Event. The First and Second Events are the origin of the universe and the explosion of all forms of biological life, respectively. I identify the Third Event in Fanonian- adapted terms as the origin of the human as a hybrid-auto-instituting-languaging- storytelling species: bios/mythoi. The Third Event is defined by the singularity of the co-evolution of the human brain with—and, unlike those of all the other primates, with it alone—the emergent faculties of language, storytelling (25).

Put simply, contrary to the definition of human beings in the modern natural sciences as purely biological organisms, Wynter argues that the origin stories we fabricate are equally constitutive of the human—of both our subjectivity and our physicality. From this perspective, the division of life through 'dichotomous negative/positive markings' forms part of the autopoiesis of the modern human.

For instance, in the contemporary world, the discipline of capitalist economics has fabricated a Western bourgeois model—a liberal ideal—of the human being who 'strives on accumulation', which Wynter terms '*homo oeconomicus*' (10). Mirroring the role of theology in the pre-modern world, with its narrative of salvation and condemnation, modern politics and economics have replaced humanity's 'enslavement to original sin' with that of "natural scarcity", [18]such that 'the new and present plan of salvation is ... the unceasing mastery of natural scarcity by means of ever-increasing economic growth!'

[18] I discussed the construction of "natural scarcity" in Chapter Two, in relation to Peter Larkin's poetics of scarcity.

(26). As mentioned in Chapter Three, echoing Kristeva, Wynter argues that human beings are born twice: first from the womb, and second through an origin myth that transforms them from biological beings into social subjects—members of a symbolically encoded, culturally specific referent-we. This social and symbolic rebirth involves an interplay of life and death, salvaging and savaging. To become a member of '*homo oeconomicus*', the subject must participate in capital accumulation and seek salvation from their enslavement to "natural scarcity"—a condition fabricated and continually reproduced by global capitalism itself. Corresponding to capital accumulation as the ultimate signifier of symbolic life, 'poverty itself… is the "significant ill" signifier of ultimate symbolic death' (37). In this way, '*homo oeconomicus*' enacts a system of symbolic life and death in economic terms, in which human beings are categorised as the salvaged or the damned, the selected or the deselected, the wealthy or the dispossessed. The freedom of the human, under the self-definition of '*homo oeconomicus*', is thus reduced to economic freedom—equivalent to the "right" to own capital.

Notably, in highlighting the symbolic rebirth of human beings through socially constructed narratives, Wynter does not seek to subordinate the physical materiality of modern humans—or the material conditions in which they are situated—to the social or economic realms. On the contrary, she emphasises the entanglement of mythical, symbolic and social processes with biological, material and natural processes that are 'alchemically made *flesh* [emphasis mine]*'* in the praxis of being human. More specifically, Wynter suggests that the brain's neurochemical system is intimately linked to symbolic life-and-death narratives, in which opiate-rewarding (placebo) and opiate-blocking (nocebo) mechanisms are triggered in response to sociogenic codes that shape

lived experience. This means that our emotions, motivations and perceptions of reality are not only biologically regulated but also symbolically mediated. In proposing a hybrid (bios/mythoi) origin of humans, Wynter challenges the notion that humans are purely biological beings destined to overcome "natural scarcity", as coded by the narratives of '*homo oeconomicus'*, which compel individuals to pursue endless capital accumulation. By exposing the particularity and limitations of this narrative of the human, Wynter opens the possibility of rewriting both our origin story and our future toward a genuinely inclusive emancipation—a "salvation" not from "natural scarcity", but from the very structures that construct it. This is especially urgent now, as the global environmental catastrophe—driven by the laws and activities of '*homo oeconomicus*'—demands a fundamental re-evaluation of what it means to be human.

That said, the greatest challenge in rewriting the origin and future of humanity, Wynter notes, lies in the fact that we are all social subjects, whose knowledge of self and others is always already shaped by culturally specific symbolic codes. How, then, can we acquire a knowledge of ourselves that transcends this preconditioned self-consciousness? To address this impasse, Wynter turns to a peripheral, 'transcultural/transcosmogonical' perspective embedded in the post-slavery Caribbean, as exemplified in the work of W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon. Drawing on their lived experiences and their 'double consciousness' of self—as both alienated people of colour and renowned scholars within Euro-American worlds—Du Bois's and Fanon's writings offer critical insights into both the constitution of humanity through racial divisions and its potential deconstruction.

Resonating with Wynter's belief in 'transcultural/transcosmogonical' perspectives, Lowe likewise deconstructs the promises of freedom and progress

embedded in colonial and liberal discourses by tracing the entangled histories of exploitation and "development" across global contexts since the sixteenth century. Resisting the imperatives of the National Archives to 'classify', 'collect' and 'document', Lowe's practice of reading across archives focuses on recovering 'the intimacies between four continents' through their colonial and modern histories. In *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, she traces connections, for example, between 'settler colonialism in North America and the West Indies and the African slave trade'; 'the abolition of slavery and the importation of Chinese and South Asian indentured labour'; and 'the East Indies and China trades and the rise of bourgeois Europe' (5). By focusing on 'the circuits, connections, associations and mixings of differentially labouring peoples', Lowe unsettles the modern, Westernised model of humanity—as embodied in the liberal subject—by resituating it within 'the dynamic and unstable flux' of worldmaking and among diverse cultural, historical and material configurations of human beings and their relationships on the earth.

In alignment with Wynter's and Lowe's aspirations for a more inclusive account of humanity—its origins and futures—Capildeo's poetry enacts movements and relations across a range of subjects and narratives, including human and nonhuman, mainstream and marginalised, Western and Indigenous. In doing so, it presents a 'transcultural/transcosmogonical' imagining of the world (Wynter and McKittrick). As an Indo-Trinidadian immigrant and a Scotland-based scholar and writer, Capildeo's reflections on human societies and natural environments similarly manifest what Du Bois describes as a "double consciousness". Drawing on this, and on their experience of travelling between the Caribbean and the UK, Capildeo's poetry rejects fixed, singular or

regional understandings of subject and place. Through its resistance to modern systems that define, divide and dominate the natural world—and the ways of being and inhabiting within it—Capildeo's work becomes a vital site for both eco-ethical and decolonial practice.

In short, this section argues that reading Capildeo's work as ELP through postcolonial ecocriticism offers important insights into contemporary poetic practice and into perceptions of humans, nature and the narratives that shape them. With this context in place, the remainder of this chapter will present a close reading of Capildeo's poetry from *Like a Tree, Walking*, focusing on its enactment of movements and relations across various beings and narratives of—and across—the world.

II. Movements and Relations across the World

As previously mentioned, Capildeo's thinking and practice are multicultural, shaped by their experiences of being in and travelling across multiple places and cultures, including England, Scotland, Ireland, Trinidad and Jamaica. Mirroring their connections to and movements between the British Isles and the Caribbean Antilles, Capildeo's poetry embodies 'tidalectic' dynamics; the subject and the space-time of its composition are diverse and continually alternate across histories, cultures and geographies (Brathwaite, *ConVERSations*). In this way, it enacts an eco-ethical and decolonial practice of un-worlding—unsettling the rigid territorial and ideological borders imposed on the world by modern systems and presenting, instead, a fluid, relational view of subject and environment.

This emigrational (as opposed to national and regional) mode of knowing and being in the world is a significant theme in Capildeo's poetry, shaping both its composition and reception. At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that Capildeo is reflective and critical of the influence of identity politics in modern literary culture and industry, which reduces the works and 'wounds' of minority poets to commodified spectacles rather than recognising them as voices and forces of transformation. In the same BBC interview, "Language and Intervention" [19], Capildeo also discussed the curious asymmetry between the word "expatriate" and "migrant", as explored in their poetry collection *Measures of Expatriation*. When the interviewer asked them to expand on their differentiation between these two terms, Capildeo responded, 'That is really more of a political question', and answered with a counter-question: why is it that 'however long I lived in Britain, I would be considered a migrant rather than an expat Trinidadian, whereas however long a British person who lived in the Caribbean... they would be considered an expat?' The interviewer then pointed out the grammatical difference between the words "migrate" and "expatriate"—one being intransitive, the other transitive—and suggested that, contrary to these grammatical attributions, the latter implies a more elective position. To this, Capildeo added:

> Migrants is also a word sounds a bit more like the movement of animals, because when I was told when I was a child to distinguish very clearly between the emigrating and immigrating. Simply emigrating sounds rather like the herds of bison.

The asymmetry between the terms "migration" and "expatriation" stems from the former's association with animals and, by extension, with people of colour. This recalls

[19] BBC Radio 4 - Start the Week, Language and Reinvention

the animality attributed to colonised subjects during imperial encounters, labelling them as savage, which prefigures the othering and exploitation of those deemed sub- and in-human (Yusoff). Having indicated this reflection on "migration" and "migrants" embedded in their work, Capildeo then read a passage from their poem "Five Measures of Expatriation" (I quote the full stanza below):

> *Migrant.* Migrant geese or some such was where first I heard the word so as to note it, the word migrant actually not alone at origin, part of a phrase with white wings, and it is driven it is thoughtless it is magnetically on course steered by stars and obsessed with diving for food and likely to have secreted in its braincoils a chart for the way home. A cyclical, undependable word—a trait prettifying itself when observed by the other species whose skies it occupies—Migrant is all the birds of the air and I lack the balance to set off on a flight with a due destination and a warm or frosted prompting back. Migrant is cerulean and khaki and it has a lot to say for itself once encamped temporarily by a river that will do. All movement, this word. Out at elbows or tense-thighed: verbal. Absolute: adjectival. In the singular, it implies plurals: migrant isolate in so far as rising from or surrounded by settlers. The hunted, hunter, unconcerned.
>
> No, not that.

In this stanza dedicated to "migrant", Capildeo explores and highlights its transversality in many realms—including the ecological, biological, linguistic, political and anthropological—emerging from its original association with migratory birds that travel across the world seeking habitats, and as importantly, its transverse referentiality, signifying both animal and human, individual and collective, social and ecological beings

of the earth. However, while Capildeo recognises the (neo)colonial violence embedded in the term “migrant” due to its association with the animal and the inhuman, they do not attempt to disentangle it from these “negative” connotations. Rather, as seen in the stanza, they reflect on and reinforce the entanglement of the various significations of "migrant" across human and ecological realms. Their writing “captures” the complex meaning of the term by connecting subjects of the poem—the migrant, the birds, language and the lyric “I”—in movement and in the open, presenting a dynamic and relational view of the world that encompasses both human and more-than-human makings. In this way, Capildeo’s poetry simultaneously reveals and repeals the “negative markings” placed on migrants and animals, animating the symbolic "dead" to subvert the dichotomous symbolic ordering of life as inscribed in terms such as ‘itself’ and ‘other’, ‘migrant’ and ‘settler’, and ‘the hunted’ and ‘the hunter’ (Wynter; Kristeva). In what follows, I will further explore this enactment of movements and relations as acts of subversion in Capildeo’s work collected in *Like a Tree, Walking*, where “migration” functions as a source of poetic composition and innovation.

As its title suggests, *Like a Tree, Walking* explores the interplay between rootedness and mobility, signifying the counterintuitive movement of what is traditionally considered stationary. The cover of this book hints at a connection between the collected poems and the poet’s origin: amid a field of bright pink, a scarlet ibis—the national bird of Trinidad and Tobago—stands at the centre, its head bowed, as if deep in reflection or burdened by the inscriptions on its body. The first poem of the book, “In Praise of Birds”, continues to draw readers’ attention to the remarkable birdlife of Trinidad and Tobago, home to as many as 498 bird species. Nonetheless, this celebrated

national heritage transcends borders. Owing to their migratory nature, many of the birds found in Trinidad and Tobago, such as golden orioles and grackles, are also present in other countries with different geographies, climates and cultures. This signalling of multiculturalism and internationalism becomes evident in the second stanza, where the poet praises 'the hummingbird logos on the tails of propeller planes', a reference to Caribbean Airlines, which not only dominates air travel within the Caribbean but also connects the region to the wider world (Capildeo, *Like a Tree* 13).

Moreover, also in the second stanza, the poet celebrates 'adaptable birds', such as 'the herring gull that demonstrates its / knowledge of how to use a box junction and seems to want / to cross the road' (13). Although seemingly unrelated, both praises foreground the mobility of birds—particularly their ability to transgress national borders and species boundaries—highlighting the poem's transnational and multispecies sensibilities. Such a wide range of routes travelled by birds and aeroplanes—from crossroads to international seas, the biomimetic design of the "hummingbird" logo of Caribbean Airlines, and even the design of the plane itself—all point to the everyday interconnectedness of natural and human life, alongside the unnaturalness of "borders" between places and beings in the world. This brings forth the thesis of my reading of the poem: the transgression of ideological and physical borders imposed on natural environments and beings by modern systems.

That said, the poem's appraisal of mobility and transgression is not without reservation. From the third stanza onwards, the composition starts to include violent images such as 'birds eaten by aeroplane engines', suicidal doves crossing the roads, 'birds like fish smashing out of a bowl' and 'birds of exile', etc. (Capildeo, *Like a Tree*

13). Although these verses continue to “praise” the birds for their adaptability and mobility, they also emphasise the dangers of “free” movements, particularly those that transgress across national and species boundaries. The relations between the local and the foreign, the human and the nonhuman, are fraught with tension and violence as the poet forges a link between ‘death and communication’. For example, in the seventh stanza, ‘Garuda the almost-but-more-than-an-eagle vehicle of the darkly bejewelled and awfully laughing Lord of Deaths’ refers both to “Garuda Indonesia”—the flag carrier airline of Indonesia—and to “Garuda”—the mythological mount of Vishnu (the ‘all-pervasive’ Hindu god) (13). By pointing out the connection between “Garuda” and “Garuda Indonesia”, the poet mystifies the latter’s international reach—not only in relation to the expansive routes it offers but also to its colonial entanglement with Royal Dutch Airlines. Considering the colonial history of Indonesia, the phrase ‘birds of death and communication’ evokes the connection between colonial violence in the past and modern infrastructures, both of which connect Indonesia to the global world for the exchange of goods and people. In this sense, the “birds” signified and praised in the poem move not only across boundaries between nations and species, but also between symbolic and material, human and nonhuman realms. They are at once symbolic vehicles—such as the hummingbird logo of Caribbean Airlines—that convey meanings, and physical vehicles—airplanes—that transport people and goods. This dual signification of birds as vehicles complicates and burdens both systems of communication—language and transportation—with entanglements between the material and the immaterial, the historical and the modern, violence and development. In short, two types of movement are enacted in “In Praise of Birds”—one natural and the other symbolic—and the two

entwine and complicate one another, signifying the complexities of movement and relations between and across physical and ideological borders.

These complexities are embedded in the history and story of humanity, "our" being and becoming with those "othered" as nonhumans. Towards the end of the poem, the praises and references in the composition become less specific: the names of birds are replaced by more general terms such as 'fossil', 'women', 'thump' and 'slime' (Capildeo, *Like a Tree* 16). This shift in diction within the poem signals its enactment of an even broader range of movements and relations. For instance, three seemingly disparate elements are brought together in the line 'fine feathers, prophecies and export regulations' (16); their interconnectivity is suggested by their parallel positioning within the line. 'Fine feathers' recalls the beauty of birds but also gestures towards 'the cruelty of quills' (15) inherent in writing, from historical scriptures (e.g., 'prophecies') to modern legislation (e.g., 'export regulations'). This travel between past and present, enacted in the line, is also foreshadowed in the word 'prophecies' itself, which gestures toward multiple temporalities—not only through its plural form but also through the very nature of prophecy, which binds the present to a speculative future. Considering this ambiguity and multiplicity of time embodied in the line, the "prophecies" it denotes may be either ancient, speaking to the present (resonating with the word 'fossil' that appears earlier in the poem), or "prophecies" made in the present that speak to the future. The 'export regulations', which follow 'prophecies' in the line, are either being prophesied, or perhaps they themselves function as prophecies. More likely, the poet invites readers to hold both interpretations and temporalities of the line in tension, since the poem does not tell a single story but interweaves multiple time- and storylines, featuring diverse

subjects—including materials, women and animals—who are often excluded from official historical accounts.

As the authors of *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene* point out, 'in both the natural sciences and the humanities, twentieth-century frames denied the historicity of nonhumans,' viewing nonhuman nature as 'essentially static' (Tsing et al. 125), or, in Wynter's terms, as "negative markings" of human life. However, recent developments in scholarship and technology have enabled explorations into more-than-human histories. For instance, biologists can now trace the genetic histories of human and nonhuman organisms through DNA sequencing and their entanglements, which has heightened environmental scholars' awareness of the historicity of nonhuman creatures and how profoundly 'interspecies encounters shape beings' (Tsing et al. 126):

> Organisms change in relation to the worlds in which they find themselves, whether through genetic changes, epigenetic expression, adaptation, or company they keep, including their microbiomes. This makes them robust protagonists as subjects of history. History responds to their changing natures, even as they respond to history (127).

In alignment with this recent development in Environmental Humanities, Capildeo's poetry introduces multiple, alternative narratives of the world. For example, in "In Praise of Birds," elements from the natural and human, past and present worlds—such as 'quill', 'fossil', 'armour', 'Quetzalcoatl' and 'export regulations'—exist side by side and collaboratively shape the composition. In this way, the place of the poem is presented as a vibrant, imaginative field that traverses and transcends spatiotemporal frameworks. By interweaving multiple, alternative narratives across histories and cultures, Capildeo's

poetry disengages readers from the singular, linear senses of time and space constructed by dominant narratives or, in Capildeo's words, 'the unreeled horror of humanly meaningless time' (*Like a Tree, Walking* 14), and reengages them with the 'reeled-up', 'mixed-up' sensibilities and materialities produced in movements and relations across the world(s) (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*).

Informed by the (neo)colonial present and histories of the modern world, the dynamisms and relations enacted in their work are not only transgressive—crossing constructed borders between metropolis and peripheries of power, human and nonhuman ways of being—but also transformative, contributing to the 'subversive labour' Ware calls for in deconstructing the dominant narratives of modern societies. This projection towards socio-political transformation is evident in Capildeo's poetry. For example, in the last stanza of the poem "In Praise of Birds", the references become specific again as it praises:

> … rare and less showy doctors refraining from
> labelling immigrants as insane or aggressive, as more
> regularly spotted doctors may be observed to do.
>
> (16)

In contrast to earlier references, these lines directly critique the mistreatment of immigrants in the UK, particularly following the 2012 "Hostile Environment Policy" introduced by Theresa May's government. Designed to deter undocumented immigration, the policy created barriers to basic services such as healthcare, housing and banking. Until 2018, it required essential service providers, including the NHS, to share clients' or patients' data with the Home Office, enabling the government to track and target

undocumented populations. This hostile environment not only reinforced systemic exclusion but also effectively manufactured "illegal immigrants" within Britain, culminating in the 2018 Windrush Scandal. As a result of the "Hostile Environment", many Caribbean immigrants from the "Windrush generation"—who had arrived in the UK and gained citizenship under the British Nationality Act of 1948—were forcibly and wrongfully deported due to a lack of official documentation. Within this context, the poem's praise of nonjudgmental doctors also serves as a sharp critique of judgmental doctors and lawmakers for denying the legitimacy of immigrants' presence in the UK and neglecting their contributions to the nation's reconstruction after World War II.

Then, without transition and immediately following the praise of nonjudgmental doctors, the poem turns to commend "Suibhne":

> In praise of Suibhne, driven mad by the dinning of church
> bells, yearning for his dinner of unchlorinated cress.
> In praise of Suibhne's flights crossing land and water, and
> Suibhne's poetry crossing time and language, to and from,
> tidalectic praise.

(16)

This refers to the medieval Irish tale known in English as *The Frenzy of Suibhne*. The story takes place in the kingdom of Dál nAraidi in the 7th century, during the Battle of Mag Rath. One morning, Suibhne mac Colmáin, the king of Dál nAraidi, was enraged by the insistent sound of church bells. Seething with anger, Suibhne stormed out of his chamber, undressed, and set out to find the noisemaker. There, he encountered St. Rónán, the evangelist whom he had previously tried to expel from his kingdom. As Suibhne was

about to kill St. Rónán for disturbing his sleep, he was called back to the battlefield. Saved by this interruption, St. Rónán attempted to make peace between the two sides by blessing the armies at Mag Rath, including the king who had nearly killed him. However, his efforts were in vain, and the war continued. Worse still, his act enraged Suibhne once more, prompting the king to cast a spear at him, narrowly missing. Seeking revenge on the king who had tried to kill him twice, St. Rónán cursed Suibhne to wander the world naked until his death, also by a spear. When Suibhne tried to rejoin the battle, he found himself levitating, his feet lifting from the ground involuntarily. Suibhne fled, losing both the battle and his former life. From that moment, he began his wandering in the wild. For years, he could not return to his home or kin. He moved from treetop to treetop like a bird, and his body began to grow feathers. The king had become a madman and a bird as a result of a curse.

This medieval tale is woven with intricate tensions, such as between church and empire, blessing and curse, bird and man, madness and normality, wilderness and home, exile and legitimacy, among others. All of these tensions are entwined and embodied in the conflict between the foreign evangelist and the violent king, rather than in the binary opposition exemplified by war. Within the conflict between Suibhne and St. Rónán, the boundaries between victim and appropriator, powerful and powerless, are blurred. As Suibhne, the king of Dál nAraidi, is driven mad and exiled from his own country, then transformed into a bird by St. Rónán, his identity shifts from proprietor to appropriated, falling from the highest position in the traditional social and symbolic order (the king) to the lowest (the nonhuman). In this sense, the tale is a tragic account of Suibhne's symbolic and social "death". Yet, Suibhne remains the protagonist after his "death"—his

transformation into a bird—while those who stay within human society (e.g., St. Rónán, the queen of Dál nAraidi and the warfare itself) recede into the background of the tale. Considering this, the tale is not so much a tragedy as a subversive act. Challenging the symbolic order embedded in Western thinking, it makes the nonhuman the central subject of the story rather than human affairs. Following Suibhne's transformation from king to bird, the narrative shifts its affective and symbolic weight from human to nonhuman actors. In praising Suibhne—the bird, the frenzy and the exile—Capildeo re-enacts and extends this act of subversion, turning Suibhne's fall from human/sane to nonhuman/insane into an errantry to be celebrated.

Although in the last stanza of "In Praise of Birds" the praise of Suibhne follows immediately after the poet's critique of the UK's hostile immigration policy, the connection between the two references remains implicit. The connection between Suibhne and immigrants lies in the fact that both are labelled as 'insane' and 'aggressive' by the voices of authority—the storyteller and the judgmental doctors—in medieval and modern societies. Therefore, the praise of 'unjudgmental doctors' and Suibhne are both antiauthoritarian expressions that challenge 'official statements' and their biased labelling of individuals. By referencing them in the same stanza, Capildeo connects the (in)voluntary movements of immigrants to those of Suibhne, equating modern minorities with the medieval king through their shared experience of displacement. In linking both to the errant flight of birds, Capildeo empowers the marginalised across divergent contexts, subverting their displacement and exile from the West into a return to the natural world.

As argued above with reference to the poem "Five Measures of Expatriation", although Capildeo is aware of the hostility in the association between immigrants and animals, they do not attempt to disentangle it but instead emphasise their interconnectivity and extend it to all subjects of the poem. Likewise, in "In Praise of Birds", Capildeo does not attempt to disentangle immigrants from birds, nor the 'insane' and 'aggressive' king (Suibhne), despite recognising the political hostility of these labels. This is because dividing the human from the nonhuman, the normal from the insane, and the powerful from the powerless does not deconstruct but rather reinforces the hierarchical order imposed by dominant narratives. In Capildeo's poetry, immigrants and Suibhne are emancipated not by (re)claiming sovereignty over others, but by becoming (like) birds, whose flight embodies an ecological mode of being in the world that is free from 'measures of expatriation' or division (Capildeo).

Capildeo's praise of errantry in "In Praise of Birds" also invokes Glissant's discussion on "roots" in *Poetics of Relation.* Through a comparative examination of the concept of "roots" alongside "errantry" and "exile", Glissant distinguishes between totalitarian and rhizomatic roots, the latter serving as the basis for what he calls a 'poetics of relation':

> Roots make the commonality of errantry and exile, for in instances roots are lacking. We must begin with that.
>
> …
>
> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari criticised notions of the root and even, perhaps, notions of being rooted. The root is unique, a stock taking all upon itself and killing all around it. In opposition to this they propose the rhizome, an enmeshed

> root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently. The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the *Poetics of Relation*, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with other (11).

According to Glissant, the totalitarian drive for a single, unique root in certain cultures parallels their fixation on an identity established and 'legitimised' by a singular lineage tied to a specific territory. This is an identity formed not through a fundamental relationship with others—as embodied in the rhizome—but in opposition to 'the Other'. Such logic is most apparent in the psychology of conquerors (not limited to those of the colonial West). As the head of their lineage, the conqueror embodies 'the singular, unique root', and their movement into new lands ceases to be travel and instead becomes expansion, akin to an act of germination, through which the foreign land is occupied and remade. In this view, 'other' places and peoples become subjugated "clones" of the singular "original". For Glissant, the notion of the totalitarian root—and the linear thinking it perpetuates—constitutes the foundational logic of colonial expansion.

Moreover, anticipating Parmar's critique of the collusion between nationalism and lyricism—the construction of the ideal, national subject through the naturalised poetic subject in traditional British poetry—Glissant argues that the founding of a community's totalitarian root is often performed in "books" (e.g. *The Old Testament*, *The Iliad*, The Odyssey), which establish social norms through cautionary tales of exile and errantry. For example, in the tale *The Frenzy of Suibhne*, the king and the birds are polar opposites, each symbolising roots and flight. Suibhne's "fall" from the throne—both a consequence

and punishment for his violence and madness—is portrayed as his deviation from the human, the sacred and the normative. Through reinterpreting and rewriting such tales of exile and errantry, Glissant and Capildeo present and praise 'errantry' as an alternative model for moving between oneself and others, the human and the nonhuman—rather than those of expansion and colonisation. As shown in "In Praise of Birds", Capildeo's poetry departs from traditional storytelling centred on roots and flight, positioning the king and the birds in opposition as protagonist and antagonist. Rather, it enacts in the composition a rhizomatic relationship and errant movement across diverse human and nonhuman subjects (e.g. birds—purple bougainvillea, golden oriole, vultures, propeller planes and herring gulls; humans—women, immigrants, king and god), times (e.g., contemporary, modern, medieval and prehistory), places (e.g., the Caribbean, Indonesia, England and Ireland) and topics (e.g., international travel, immigration politics, climate change and religions). Interweaving birds and travellers (immigrants and exiles) from across the world and throughout history, the poem does not perform a singular discourse but instead 'alters' among various discourses, re-enacting the errantry of its subjects (Glissant 155).

To explain, the praise in "In Praise of Birds" does not follow any linear order, whether geographical, chronological, logical or formal. Skipping through time and space, each topic of praise, while reaching towards the other, remains rooted in the particular (Glissant). For example, in the poem's final stanza, the subject of praise shifts from 'non-judgemental doctors' to 'Suibhne', and the topic moves from the UK's immigration policy to the medieval Irish tale without transition. This distancing between immigrants and Suibhne preserves the particularity and authenticity of their experiences, preventing their stories from collapsing into one another, while connecting them through the

principle of errantry (Glissant). Thus, the poem's praise of errantry is not only evident in its reference to The Frenzy of Suibhne, but also embodied in the dynamism and form—or lack thereof—of its composition. Recalling what Glissant terms 'the other of Thought', this enactment of errantry—through unpredicted and continuous altering between discourses—eschews any scripted relations and routes in the composition, thereby preventing the subjects of the poem from being generalised or assimilated (155). And it is in this unscripted act of relating and movement that ecological and ethical relations become possible and are practised in the poem among its worldly subjects.

Lastly, returning to the text of "In Praise of Birds", Capildeo ends the poem with a two-word line: 'tidalectic, praise' (16). The absence of syntactical order in the line allows it to be read both as 'to praise the tidalectic' and as 'the tidalectic praise', embodying a final encapsulation of the poem, its ecopoetics and its 'poetics of relation' (Glissant). "The term 'tidalectic' can be traced to another established Caribbean poet, Kamau Brathwaite, who proposes the concept of "tidalectics" to signify 'the ripple and the two-tide movement' between theses, challenging Hegelian dialectics and its resolution in the third (Brathwaite, *ConVERSations*; Nwadike 59). By conjoining "tide" with "dialectics", Brathwaite draws on the natural rhythm and dynamism of the sea to counter the ideological closure embedded in Hegel's dialectical synthesis, arguing that it remains bound to a symbolic order rooted in dualisms. In short, rather than oppositions between twos and their transcendence in a third, 'tidalectics' embraces the cyclical and fluid dynamics of the ceaseless ebb and flow of the tides, signifying a dynamic relationship between oneself and the other—one that both mirrors and contributes to the ecological becoming of the earth. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey explains in *Routes and Roots*:

> Tidalectics engage what Brathwaite calls an "alter/native" historiography to linear models of colonial progress. This "tidal dialectic" resists the synthesizing telos of Hegel's dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean. Tidalectics also foreground alter/native epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases (2-3).

Likewise, the 'tidalectic, praise' enacted in "In Praise of Birds" resists the linear and dualistic thinking embedded in Western philosophy by interweaving—and thereby strengthening—'alter/native' narratives, or narratives of the minority, including those of the animal, the foreign, the female and the frenzy. Notably, the 'alter/native' narratives are never settled in the poem but partake in its continuous altering of discourse—or, a discourse of altering. This aligns with what Brathwaite terms "dialectics of alteration", where identities and meanings (of the Caribbean, for instance) are shaped through continuous shifts rather than fixed oppositions ("Caribbean Man"). In a word, the dynamism in the composition of "In Praise of Birds" both connects and distances the subjects of praise, ensuring that they cannot be generalised or assimilated into one another. Alternating between alternative narratives, Capildeo's poetry is open, diverse and dynamic, rejecting singular or simple determinations.

To add, this continual alteration of discourse in Capildeo's composition recalls the composition of Maggie O'Sullivan's murmur, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, embodies an 'ongoing intra-activity' between its components—an open-ended (un)weaving of various lines and space (Barad, "Posthuman Performativity"). In resonance with Capildeo's 'tidalectic, praise', the place of *murmur*'s presentation and performance is also rendered as a fluid and dynamic environment, where the body of the

composition is continuously dissolved and reshaped. Building on this, I have aligned O'Sullivan's poetics with feminist, materialist and posthuman thinking for their shared commitment to deconstructing the linear and dualistic thinking embedded in Western philosophy. Particularly, I argued that the composition of murmur embodies 'an eco/ethico politics of the earth', aligning its 'heuristic trans-forming' performance on the page with what Julia Kristeva terms 'negativity'—or 'trans-symbolic materiality'—as the fourth term of dialectics (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Both Kristeva's 'negativity' and Brathwaite's 'tidalectics' draw on the materiality, temporality and mobility of the natural world to challenge Hegelian dialectics and the fixity of the symbolic order from which it emerges. In alignment with this, and with O'Sullivan's poetics and practice of eco-ethics, Capildeo's poetry foregrounds the transformability, interconnectivity and diversity of the earth and enacts an eco-political and decolonial deconstruction of entrenched patterns in modern mainstream thinking by interweaving alternative narratives and epistemologies within the errant composition of "In Praise of Birds".

As mentioned, the title of Capildeo's anthology *Like a Tree, Walking* signifies a counterintuitive movement of the tree, which is traditionally perceived as rooted and stationary. However, the mobility of trees is not counterfactual, despite being often neglected—even negated—in Western metaphysics and science. In *Plants in Place*, Casey and Marder contest 'the opposition between human mobility and vegetal immobility' through which 'we … establish or re-establish our superiority over the flora', arguing that:

> vegetal being-in-place is not the opposite of movement. Plants move in the locales of their growth by virtue of growing, irradiating outward, unfurling themselves,

> and experiencing a lived time-space that does not predate them as an empty continuum and that coevolves together with and as them (vii, viii).

Among 'the emplaced varieties of movement in which plants excel', Casey and Marder employ 'the active presences of edges'— 'which carry a dynamism of their own that animates a plant in whole or in part'—to highlight the porosity of natural, living bodies and the unnaturalness of borders (36). In contrast to manmade borders that function on the principle of "exclusion", natural boundaries—such as the edges (e.g., roots and leaves) of plants—are active and responsive to others and to the environment. As argued in Chapter Two, this 'peripheral power' of plants is key to the practice of eco-ethics embodied in Peter Larkin's poetry. By re-enacting the phenomena of trees' growth both above and below ground, Larkin's poetry signifies the porosity, provisionality and interconnectivity of natural bodies, while challenging the artificial borders imposed on them by anthropocentric and capitalist schemes—whether through preservation, planning or plantation.

Similarly, in Capildeo's *Like a Tree, Walking*, the imagery of a walking tree anticipates the movements of natural bodies that are typically rendered inanimate or kept enclosed within modern systems. This imagery also evokes the spectral moment in Shakespeare's Macbeth when Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane, signalling both an inversion of the natural order and a subversion of the symbolic order, where the plant and the animal—the nonhuman—are no longer relegated to the static backdrop of human activity but are rendered mobile and agential. Nonetheless, while Shakespeare's moving forest presages destruction, Capildeo reclaims this inversive and subversive act of the tree as a creative force of deconstruction and transformation. As demonstrated above in "In

Praise of Birds", the mobilities of birds not only transgress but also transcend constructed borders between nations, cultures, histories and species. Their errant flights embody the movements and inherent freedom of natural bodies that are subjugated, displaced or enclosed within modern systems—including materials, animals, women and immigrants. In connecting these bodies in motion and alteration, Capildeo's poetry enacts an ecological and ethical mode of relations and movements that is not predetermined by any singular or linear order but instead mirrors—and is integrative to—the earth's diverse and dynamic makings. In this sense, it constitutes an eco-ethical and decolonial practice, presenting a radical reimagining of the world that is open and dialogical, grounded in its physical materiality.

To sum up, this section offers a close reading of "In Praise of Birds" and argues that Capildeo's poetry constitutes an eco-political and eco-ethical practice of un-worlding, unsettling the physical and ideological borders imposed on natural bodies and environments in the modern world. Building on Glissant's "poetics of relation", Brathwaite's "tidalectics" and "the dialectics of alteration", I contend that Capildeo's poetry enacts rhizomatic relations and tidalectic movements between diverse narratives and forms of existence in and of the world. In reconnecting and rewriting authoritarian, mainstream narratives with alternative, minority ones, Capildeo's poetry challenges their biased labelling of foreign and nonhuman bodies, as well as the dualistic and linearised thinking embedded in Western philosophy that underpins such biases. In contrast to the expansionist logic of (neo)colonial worlding—as seen in the spread of liberal values and economic systems under globalisation—Capildeo's poetry embodies an ecological and ethical mode of relating and moving between "worlds" on earth, one that eschews

assimilation and generalisation. In the next section, I further explore the practice of eco-ethical and decolonial reworlding in Capildeo's poetry, focusing on its act and art of relating across texts.

III. Movements and Relations across Texts

Like other Caribbean writers and scholars discussed in this chapter—namely Glissant, Brathwaite and Wynter—Capildeo draws on the geography of the Antilles and its creole culture to reimagine subject and environment beyond the confines of geopolitical borders and geo-logic ideologies constructed by the imperial West. Mirroring their travels between the British Isles and the Caribbean Antilles, Capildeo re-enacts 'tidalectic' movements in their composition, transforming it into a reimagining of the world that dynamically connects and alternates between histories, cultures and geographies (Brathwaite). As shown above, Capildeo's poetry foregrounds the diverse and dynamic composition of the earth and resists (neo)colonial tendencies to divide and define natural bodies as human and nonhuman, civil and savage, within modern systems. By aligning their work with experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and the practice of eco-ethics in this thesis, I emphasise the inseparability of environmental and postcolonial criticism, as well as the interconnectedness of environmental violence and social injustice.

Drawing on the multiculturalism of their literary practice and their lived experience of travel and immigration, I argue that Capildeo's poetry expands the horizon of ELP to include nonlocal and nonoriginal narratives of the environment. This multivocal sensibility is also central to the eco-ethical composition of Harriet Tarlo and her open, dialogical re-presentation of the environment, as examined in Chapter One. Yet,

in contrast to Tarlo's collaboration and conversation with local communities and those co-present in the field, the dialogue enacted in Capildeo's poetry takes place between local and nonlocal—or foreign—subjects of the Earth, as well as between their contrasting lived experiences. I return to a more detailed comparison of Tarlo's and Capildeo's poetry later in this section.

Capildeo's poetry often involves reworking an "original" text to varying degrees, from translation to rewriting. The composition of "In Praise of Birds", for example, includes references to and reinterpretations of narratives from other cultures and places, such as the Irish medieval tale *The Frenzy of Suibhne* and the immigration policy of 21st-century UK. In this section, I highlight this aspect of Capildeo's poetry—its enactment of intertextual movements and relations—through a close reading of two poems: "Stylish Deer" and "Towards an Unwalking". In their distinct ways, each engages with an environmental poem by an established Scottish poet: "Stylish Deer" is a remix of Iain Crichton Smith's "Deer on the High Hills" (1962), while "Towards an Unwalking" gestures toward Thomas A. Clark's "In Praise of Walking" (1998).

By engaging with the experiences and writings of "the other"—referring both to the minority subjects embodied in these poems and the established poets whose work is reworked—Capildeo negotiates the boundaries between the normative and the other, the mainstream and the alternative. As a New Scot, Capildeo introduces nonlocal perspectives to local landscapes and, more importantly, fosters a 'transcultural/transcosmogonical' imagining of humans and the natural world (Wynter and McKittrick). By situating divergent subjects and stories within the transformations enacted through composition, Capildeo's poetry connects (post)phenomenological

presentations of the environment—rooted in the local body subject and landscape, as previously identified in radical and experimental landscape poetry—to an expansive imagining of the earth. In turn, it contributes to a more inclusive and generative ecopoetics and eco-ethics, shaped by the experience of inhabiting today's volatile environment—an experience shared by all bodies/subjects, whether human or nonhuman, dominant or marginal.

III.1 "Stylish Deer"

"Stylish Deer" is a remix of Iain Crichton Smith's "Deer on the High Hills", composed using selective words from the original text and recounting an encounter between the poet and the deer. It is not their first meeting in "Deer on the High Hills" either. In lines 91 to 108, Smith recounts an earlier encounter between the deer and another poet, Duncan Bàn MacIntyre, who knew the deer 'intimately' yet 'nevertheless shot them' and wrote about their death:

> Duncan Ban McIntyre, the poet,
> knew them intimately, was one of them.
> ……
> Nevertheless he shot them also.
> Like shooting an image or a vivid grace.
> Brutality and beauty danced together
> in a silver air, incorruptible.
> And the clean shot did not disturb his poems.
> Nor did the deer kneel in a pool of tears.

They were simply there: the deer were simply there.

The witty gun blazed from his knowing hand.

Smith questions the ethics of MacIntyre's actions—not only for killing the deer, but also for composing a eulogy that aestheticises, appeases and ultimately erases the violence he has committed (Sanders). However, in the very lines where Smith recounts and questions MacIntyre's actions, he re-enacts the violence of the poet who 'elects' himself to tell the stories of others as though they belong to him. In other words, by recounting the encounter between the deer and MacIntyre, Smith also becomes the shooter-poet—one who turns the lives and experiences of others into material for his own work. With a solemn self-awareness, Smith's poem is built on the poet's repeated appropriation of "the deer" as an embodiment of wilderness. Poet and deer, killing and writing, 'brutality and beauty danced together' in 'the endless circle closing / unclosing, closing, a bewildering ring / of natural marriage' (Smith).

In "Deer on the High Hills", Smith continually displaces the imagery of the deer, replacing one image with another to emphasise the elusiveness of deer and wilderness, and perhaps also to re-enact the process of hunting. As Jon Sanders observes:

> The poem crowds in sense, each word claimed by multiple meanings as if their right: 'lucked', 'blood', 'gored', 'absolute'. These are dense, claustrophobic lines, even when stretching through a succession of adjectives, similes and metaphors. … Each vehicle displaces the last, rather than opening the tenor; each set of adjectives evicts those before it (3).

This 330-line poem concludes only when it is finally depleted of imagery—when 'there is no metaphor', when 'the flower is flowery and the sea is salty', 'the stars are starry and the rain is rainy', 'the stone is stony, and the sun is sunny'… (Smith).

And it is in this moment that 'the deer step out in isolated air' (Smith). This performed 'failure of representation' may be understood as a re-enactment of the deer's disappearance from human gaze—both the poet's and the reader's—thereby serving as a preservation of wilderness by keeping its mysteries unknown and thus unappropriated by human language (Watson). It may also be understood as an allusion to the ongoing ecological depletion of the Scottish Highlands since the eighteenth-century Highland Clearances[20], so that 'the deer step out' from their enclosures in language only to enter the 'isolated air' of an overrun, lifeless land. On this level, the displacement of the deer continues beyond the page. Through a depletion both of language and enacted by it, Smith signifies the violence of human activity against natural bodies and the environment, holding both poet and reader accountable, while seeking to 'preserve' the deer and the 'wild systems' they inhabit by gesturing towards a natural world that lies beyond representation.

Such an ecopoetics is re-enacted and renewed in Capildeo's "Stylish Deer", which remixes Smith's text using open-field poetics. Both Capildeo's and Smith's compositions, open-field or not, are tributes to nature. As noted in the Introduction, Charles Olson first proposed the idea of field composition in his canonical essay "Projective Verse". His concept of "objectism" and his development of open-field poetics established the eco-ethical foundations for experimental poetry in the second half of the

[20] The Highland Clearances (1750–1860) refer to the process of replacing traditional farming with large-scale sheep grazing in the Highlands, which led to the mass displacement of local communities and the transformation of local landscapes through deforestation, ecological depletion and biodiversity loss.

20th century and into the early 21st, including radical and experimental landscape poetry. In particular, by reconfiguring words as objects and employing their relations and tensions on the page to embody a "real" sense of space, Olson asserts a phenomenological continuity between poetic artifice and the natural environment. This effort to reconnect the poetic and the natural, as discussed in Chapter One, is central to both Harriet Tarlo's poetry and her practice of eco-ethics.

Whereas Olsonian open-field poetics seeks to reconnect poetic form with the physical landscape through formal and linguistic experimentation, Smith's ecopoetics enacts linguistic depletion to signal the breakdown of language itself. As he writes in "Deer on the High Hills":

> You must build from the rain and stone
> till you can make
> a stylish deer on the high hills,
> and let its leaps be unpredictable!

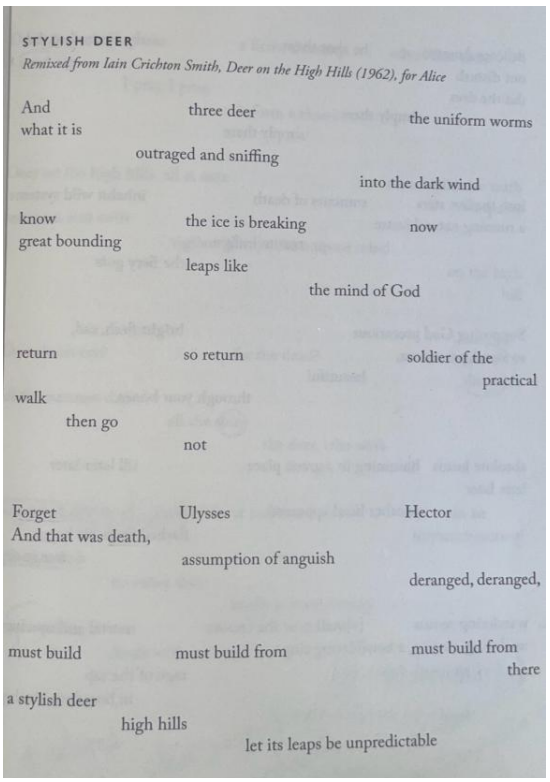
His insistence on building the 'stylish deer' from 'the rain and stones… in the hollow *roar* of the waterfall' [emphasis added] aligns more closely with Glissant's conception of poetic language as an "echo" of the chaotic world (*Chaos-Monde*) that 'recedes into a sabir of sabirs at the level of a *roar'* [emphasis added] (Smith; Glissant 123). In Glissant's view, the obscurity of language prevents integrative, simplified meanings and thus safeguards 'the poetics of relation', ensuring that its performance arises from the ever-shifting interplay of cultures, languages and histories, as well as the diverse and dynamic composition of the earth. In short, the interconnectivity and diversity of the world's natural making resist any attempt by a singular discourse—such as the

hegemonic, progress-driven paradigms of colonialism and liberalism—to impose certainty upon it.

The inability of a single linguistic discourse to capture or match the mystery, 'chaos' and 'fierce diversity' of wilderness is also central to Smith's work. As Smith states in the opening lines of "Deer on the High Hills": 'a deer looks through you to the other side / and what it is and sees is an inhuman pride'. Here, "you" refers to both the poet and the reader observing the deer, yet the deer *sees through* "you", suggesting an asymmetrical relationship between poet and deer, human and inhuman. Resonating with unequal relations, the poem later associates the "inhuman" (the deer) with the upper class ('debutantes'), the aristocratic and the sacred ('God'). That said, the "inhuman" (landscape) is also aligned with the deranged and the barbarous, positioned in opposition to 'ideas', 'metaphysics', 'mathematics' and other constructs of human reason. This contradictory depiction of nature—recalling the alignment of animals, immigrants and the king in Capildeo's "In Praise of Bird"—empowers the inhuman beyond the pre-existing symbolic order. "You" (or "us"), as a subject both produced by and participating in the symbolic order of society—and perceiving nature through the structured lens of language—is seen through by nature itself, suggesting that nature transcends, rather than is transcended by, their image. This asymmetry between "you" and the deer, human and inhuman, recurs throughout "Deer on the High Hills" and is enacted through the continual displacement of metaphors and images, demonstrating both the failure of language to represent nature and the failure of humans to fully comprehend it (Watson).

Despite a shared interest in recovering the natural within the poetic, the ecopoetics in Smith's work differs from that embodied in open-field poetics. While the

former employs linguistic depletion to signify the asymmetrical and burdened relationship between language and nature, human and inhuman, the latter seeks to establish an equivalence between them through a reconfiguration of language. Nonetheless, in "Stylish Deer", Capildeo combines these two forms of ecopoetics and carries forward Smith's signification of chaos within an open-field composition. Just as Smith depletes the meaningfulness of language to drive the deer out of their 'silent image' on the page and into their habitat in the wild, Capildeo similarly disrupts the conventions of language and meaning-making through open-field poetics, transforming their composition into a 'wild system' (Smith). The open-field composition of "Stylish Deer" 'let[s] its leaps be unpredictable', with remixed words on the page re-enacting the deer's erratic steps. Like Duncan Ban MacIntyre and Iain Crichton Smith, who drive the deer from the high hills and out of poetic images with their 'witty gun', Capildeo also assumes the role of 'the poet', positioning themselves as the poetic (human) counterpart or partner to the natural (deer). Yet unlike MacIntyre or Smith, Capildeo—through the adoption of open-field poetics in their remix—allows "Stylish Deer" not only to 'inform' but to enact nature's 'fierce diversity' and 'chaos'. In this sense, Capildeo's poetry renews the "marriage" between poet and nature suggested by Smith—one no longer dependent on violent appropriation, but on mutual participation.



STYLISH DEER

Remixed from Iain Crichton Smith, Deer on the High Hills (1962), for Alice

And three deer the uniform worms
what it is
outraged and sniffing
into the dark wind

know the ice is breaking now
great bounding
leaps like
the mind of God

return so return soldier of the
practical
walk
then go
not

Forget Ulysses Hector
And that was death,
assumption of anguish
deranged, deranged,

must build must build from must build from
there
a stylish deer
high hills
let its leaps be unpredictable

Figure 4.1

By remixing Smith's text through open-field poetics, Capildeo bridges two forms of ecopoetics in "Stylish Deer", allowing them to shape one another's particularities while gesturing toward the inhuman world that underlies both. As shown in figure 4.1, the open-field style of composition imposes spaces and omissions on Smith's poem, so the reader must "leap" from one phrase to another without the lingual bridges of the original text. This leaping re-enacts the steps of deer while performing the failure of poetic language to "capture" the animal and the "wild system" they embody. Yet the remixed composition generates a sense of immediacy, which paradoxically enables readers to encounter the erratic and the wild by admitting and enacting the incapacity—and at the same time the potentiality—of language.

Both paralleling and diverging from Smith's ecopoetics, which entails a displacement of metaphors and imageries, Capildeo displaces one style of writing with another—open-field with traditional. Both styles of composition signify the asymmetrical relationship between the human and the inhuman. While Smith foregrounds the failure of language to represent "the deer" and "wild systems", Capildeo highlights the diverse uses of language, emphasising the multiplicity of ways poetry can (re)present nature and connect humans to it. By interweaving two modes of nature writing—one from mid-20th-century Scotland, the other from America—Capildeo's poetry becomes a transcultural imagining of deer and landscape as well as a rhizomatic mapping of images (Deleuze & Guattari). Such composition as a remix of both words and styles of writing is eco-ethical and performative. Resisting definitions or delimitations, whether lingual, cultural or geographical, it "leaps" over the formal rules of lyrical and open-field composition through the erratic spacing on the page.

As the poem's opening addresses: 'The uniform worms', 'and… three deer… outraged and sniffing … into the dark wind… know the ice is breaking now … great bounding … leaps like … the mind of God' (Capildeo 35). By remixing Smith's text with an open-field poetics, Capildeo layers one ecopoetic experiment upon another. In doing so, they enact a "third" ecopoetic practice—not as a synthesising resolution between two layered experiments, positioned as thesis and antithesis, but as a "tidalectic" movement in-between them, recognising both as expressions of a greater, interconnected earth (Brathwaite). Echoing the composition of "In Praise of Birds", discussed in the previous section, where various narratives are both connected and distanced through tidalectic relations and movements, the mode of relating and moving in-between is enacted

intertextually in “Stylish Deer”, signalling the multiplicity of poetic expression and earthly composition. Remixing styles of inhabiting both the page and the landscape, lyrical, open-field and “natural”, it reconnects the poetic and the ecological, the human and the inhuman, through intertextual dialogue, situating the variation of ecopoetry within the variation of the environment itself. Both are part of the world’s becoming.

III.2 “Towards an Unwalking”

In the second half of this section, I continue exploring how Capildeo’s poetry expands our imagining of the earth—and the possibilities of ecopoetics and eco-ethics—through such intertextual movements, this time in “Towards an Unwalking”. In this poem, Capildeo engages with Thomas A. Clark’s seminal work “In Praise of Walking” (1998), which represents not only Clark’s, but also a broader interest in contemporary ecopoetry in walking. The practice of walking has been widely praised. In the field of ecopoetry and ecocriticism, many writers (e.g., Skinner, “Walking the Folds of the Difficulty”; Tarlo and Tucker, “‘Off Path Counter Path’”; Davidson, On the Outskirts of Form) argue that walking resituates the subject within their bodily senses and physical relations to the environment. For example, in Chapter One, I demonstrated how the incorporation of walking into Tarlo and Tucker’s artmaking fosters their practice of eco-ethics. Beyond literature and literary studies, walking is also a focal point of scholarly attention and praise. For example, Shane O'Mara’s book *In Praise of Walking* explores the benefits and mechanics of walking from a neuroscientific perspective, while Rebecca Solnit’s essay “In Praise of Walking”, which follows her book Wanderlust, discusses the physical, intellectual and creative benefits of walking.

In line with the above, Alice Tarbuck and Eleanor Widger, in the *Green Letters* issue "Traversing the Field", argue that walking is not only crucial to ecopoetry and ecocriticism but also to interdisciplinary learning. In particular, they use Thomas A. Clark's poem "In Praise of Walking" as 'a prompt and a provocation', inviting scholars from various disciplines to 'consider links between landscape, walking and thinking and to deconstruct as well as celebrate its application in their respective disciplines' (239). Therefore, the value of walking as a means of linking and deconstructing ideological boundaries—between individual and disciplinary practices—is prominent in the field of ecopoetry and beyond. To demonstrate this in their article, Tarbuck and Widger examine and compare the practice of walking as both a source and a method of poetic composition in the work of Thomas A. Clark and Harriet Tarlo, as well as in "radical landscape poetry" more broadly, foregrounding a 'poetics of walking'.

Despite their shared interest in and engagement with walking, radical landscape poets approach walking poetics in distinct ways. In Chapter One, I argued that Tarlo and Tucker's practice of walking—both with each other and with local communities in the field—cultivates an embodied yet radical reimagining of the environment, one that challenges conventional ideas such as the atomistic subject, the inanimate landscape and the bounded place. Their practice is thus countercultural and eco-ethical, enacting an open and dialogical mode of artmaking as placemaking, grounded in the material environment and in physical relationships. This practice of eco-ethics, fostered through the act of walking, is then re-enacted in Tarlo's poetry and her collaborative work with Tucker. Through the interplay of words and images, the artists negotiate and reflect on

the boundaries between subject and environment, and between the artistic and the material, in their re-presentation of the landscape.

In contrast to Tarlo and Tucker's collaborative and critical engagement with the environment through walking, Clark's approach is solitary and reflective. As Tarbuck and Widger observe, it 'is conceptualised as leisure time, primarily reflective in nature':

> Clark actively develops, through his writing, habits of attending closely to environment, producing works that demonstrate a belief that the attention paid to the natural world while walking can be re-enacted in the attention paid to a walker's poetic account. The text, then, must be taken seriously as an environment, and must also be read not as mimetic, as in Romantic nature poetry, but as gestural. The two environments, textual and natural cannot be mapped one to another. Rather, one is demonstrative of the types of attention, the types of observable moments of interest, that the other one requires and produces (242).

In short, Clark's practice and poetics of walking function as 'a mode of transportation of the perceiving senses' (242) from the outside world to the page and from the poet to the reader. Building on this, Tarbuck and Widger argue that Clark's walking poetics—with its focus on the experience of being outside rather than on reaching a destination or achieving a goal—contributes to the movement of "The New Walking", which 'decentralises the act of walking performed by abled, particularly male, bodies' in both nature and nature writing, and instead 'encourages the legitimacy of different bodily presences in nature' (242).

While this call for 'different bodily presences in nature' is taken up in Capildeo's poetry, their work also questions Clark's approach to walking poetics as a 'transportation

of the perceiving senses' and challenges its capacity to validate diverse bodily experiences in nature (Tarbuck and Widger 242). Written after Thomas A. Clark's "In Praise of Walking", "Towards an Unwalking" is neither a remix nor a direct response to Clark's work. Although its composition incorporates some phrases and images from Clark's poem, it situates them within new contexts. In other words, "Towards an Unwalking" is a thoughtful extension of Clark's work, engaging with alternative experiences of "walking"—or "unwalking"—in the UK. In what follows, I explore how Capildeo's poetry presents alternative experiences and poetics of walking through a creative and critical engagement with Clark's walking poetics in "Towards an Unwalking".

Capildeo's "unwalking" diverges from Clark's walking and walking poetics from the first stanza. This divergence becomes evident when Clark's "In Praise of Walking" and Capildeo's "Towards an Unwalking" are read side by side. While Clark begins with 'Early one morning, any morning, we can set out, with the least possible baggage, and discover the world,' Capildeo writes:

> The Least Possible Baggage is the mother of deviated
> ziplocks. O my companion. I implore thee in pink squares.
> Dawn alligator-ranges. Apply acupuncture to the frozen
> shoulder of this land. I write a card and put it in your
> hand and run away. And you reappear before me.
> Light. Anticipation.
>
> (*Like a Tree* 21)

Capildeo expands on the phrase ‘the least possible baggage’—a trivial aside for Clark—and imbues it with new and weightier meanings. In the context of travel, the image of “ziplocks” evokes the plastic bags used at airports for carrying liquids through security checks. While ‘the least possible baggage’ for Clark signifies freedom from material belongings, for Capildeo it evokes an atmosphere of restriction, authority and surveillance within the context of air travel. Anyone who has been through airport security knows that freedom is never part of the process: people walk in designated directions and in lines; their bodies are stripped of extra coverings and individuality under the exposure of penetrating rays, until staff silently announce that they are free to go. Beyond security, foreign travellers must also pass through border control to enter their destination country. The terms and images of ‘imploration’, ‘pink squares’, ‘the frozen shoulders’ and ‘card’ all evoke the immigration process, where the traveller fills in an arrival card with personal details and intentions, hands it to the officer, and waits for permission to enter.

Besides air travel across borders, there are few other situations in which a traveller’s belongings must be minimal and sealed in ziplock bags—except, perhaps, when refugees and/or undocumented immigrants attempt to enter a new homeland, using ziplock bags to protect their ‘least possible baggage’. Phrases such as ‘dawn alligator-ranges’, ‘frozen’ and ‘run away’ reinforce this interpretation, suggesting that such journeys are fraught with danger—whether from animals, the natural environment or law enforcement. When placed in this context, the word “ziplocks” in the line ‘the mother of deviated ziplocks’ may also function as a synecdoche for the body bags of deceased children. In this case, “ziplocks” are not only a symbol of control, but also an

embodiment of the yearning, displacement and desperation experienced by unprotected travellers.

In contrast to the beginning of Clark's morning walks, Capildeo's "unwalking" opens with a difficult arrival, marked by 'light' and 'anticipation'. By expanding on the phrase 'the least possible baggage', Capildeo brings attention to the often-overlooked travelling experiences of minorities, revealing the weight behind their "lightness"—a lightness born of dispossession rather than freedom. This hidden weight is also mirrored in the imbalanced structure of the stanza, where five full lines weigh heavily on just two concluding words. By exposing the stark contrast between travel as an act of freedom and discovery for some, and as an experience of survival and restriction for others, Capildeo's "unwalking" challenges the praise and idealisation of walking in Clark's work.

This intertextual intervention enacted in Capildeo's poetry can be understood through what Vron Ware terms a 'language of perspicuous contrast'. By contrasting and contextualising the walking narratives of privileged, local subjects with those of minority and foreign subjects, Capildeo's poetry connects nature reflections in poetry with socio-political criticism, gesturing towards the entanglement of literary, (neo)colonial and nationalist discourses. This also aligns with the broader argument advanced by Les Back and Vron Ware in Out of Whiteness, which proposes an interpretative view of race not as an essential identity but as a historically and culturally contingent system of power, which can be exposed and dismantled through dialogue and rearticulations. Pivoting on the contrasting lived experiences of travel between the Scottish, white man—represented by Thomas A. Clark—and the poetic subject of "Towards an Unwalking", who is neither local nor white, Capildeo reveals the modern systems of power that continue to produce

violent and hierarchical divisions in global societies. In this sense, Capildeo's poetry constitutes what Ware calls the 'subversive labour' (209) of dismantling nationality, ethnicity, race, and other essentialist categorisations of human bodies, while interrogating constructed social injustices in modern societies through these categories.

Capildeo continues to question the freedom of walking outside that is 'so readily available' to Clark, comparing it to the lack of freedom experienced by foreign subjects after their arrival, as enacted in the first stanza. While Clark asserts that 'it is quite possible to refuse all the coercion, violence, property, triviality, to simply walk away,' Capildeo counters: 'Violence, Property and Triviality are three sisters. … I can only begin to walk only if I am also counting' (21). What Clark walks away from is precisely what both enables and constrains the movement of the poetic subject in "Towards an Unwalking". 'Violence, Property and Triviality' constitute the only path by which many immigrants can travel across national borders, as their journeys must be sponsored, surveilled and authorised. Therefore, responding to Clark's line 'Always, everywhere, people have walked, veining the earth with paths', Capildeo writes:

> take one way out of always. Unscramble the WHY of
>
> everYWHere. For VEin and PatH, read IN and AT.

(*Like a Tree* 21)

People have not walked all ways ('always') or everywhere—at least, not all people. The capitalised letters in the stanza emphasise the single, constrained path available for the poetic subject and the questioning they undergo along the way. By teasing apart 'IN' from 'VEin' and 'AT' from 'PatH', Capildeo underscores the sense of emplacement

embedded in movement, counteracting Clark's idealisation of humans' unlimited mobility on earth and the risk of framing walking as a means of linear expansion.

This interplay of movement and emplacement in "Towards an Unwalking" pertains not only to the marginalisation of minorities in modern societies but also to the ambiguous position of the subject within the natural landscape and in landscape poetry. As mentioned above, Clark's approach to walking poetics functions as, in Tarbuck and Widger's words, 'a mode of transporting the perceiving senses' from the natural to the textual environment (242). Capildeo interrogates this direct transportation of the senses in "Towards an Unwalking", reflecting on both the connection and disconnection between the natural and textual environments. For example, in the stanza:

> Leaf it. Just leaf it. Spring green as a crayon drawing on the
> kerb.

(*Like a Tree* 22)

The word 'leaf,' with its double meaning as both a part of a plant and a page of a book, serves as a medium between nature and metaphor. The repetition and hurried tone in the first sentence may function to mimic the "explosive" natural growth of plants, corresponding to the image of spreading 'spring green' in the following sentence. Alternatively, it may be mocking an impatient subject who substitutes nature's own colouring with a 'crayon drawing'. Through this ambiguous signification, Capildeo positions the poetic subject and the reader at the boundary between the natural and the artificial.

In this sense, Capildeo's poetics aligns with Tarlo's walking poetics in its countercultural character—in critiquing the widely celebrated act of walking—and in its

negotiation between the poetic and the real, opposing a direct 'transportation of perceiving senses', as seen in Clark's work (Tarbuck and Widger 242). On one hand, by positing the poetic and the reading subject in-between the natural and the artificial, Capildeo foregrounds the relationality between these two environments. This ambiguous place of the subject embodies the difficult position of foreign subjects—both at the "border"—signifying the impossibility of a direct transportation of senses from "outside" to "inside", from foreign, minority to local, mainstream subjects. The divergence of Capildeo's composition from Clark's walking poetics further underscores the unrelatability of Clark's walking and travelling experiences as acts of freedom, leisure and meditation. On the other hand, by linking these divergent experiences and narratives of walking in "Towards an Unwalking", Capildeo highlights the diversity of walking bodies and walking poetics. By connecting and contrasting divergent bodies and experiences of walking, Capildeo's poetry embodies a planetary and transcultural imagining of the world while remaining rooted in particular body subjects and places. Echoing the multivocal and dialogical re-presentation of place in Tarlo's poetry (see Chapter One), Capildeo's work similarly brings together an embodied and subjective—phenomenological—and an intersubjective and critical—post-phenomenological—view of the landscape.

Moreover, the intertextual movement in Capildeo's poetry weaves together socio-political and environmental criticism. Its enactment of relations and movements across texts resonates with the principles of ecological and ethical thinking within Environmental Humanities, which foreground dialogue and collaboration across disciplines, communities and even species (see Introduction). The socio-political

criticism performed in “Towards an Unwalking” is directed not only towards the hostile environment faced by minority travellers and foreign subjects, but also towards the mainstream’s disconnection from the natural world.

For instance, in the stanza:

> Posh boys do self-dislocation porn. Birdsong mobile apps
> turn birds away from essential tasks. O technology, O science,
> O the psychogeographic hims singing for the photoshoot.
> Posh boys tie no walking-boots to overhead lines. Their
> pronouns are trophied in bramble paragraphs, hard in high-
> waterstones beauty sleep.

(*Like a Tree* 23)

The discussion of ‘posh boys’, ‘technology’, and ‘science’ highlights the emergence of ‘New Naturalism’ in twentieth-century Britain, as noted by Matless. In his work, *Landscape and Englishness*, Matless describes how, during and after the Second World War, modern scientific approaches to nature, including its management and aesthetics, gained prominence. British citizens were encouraged to appreciate and ‘capture’ nature’s beauty through technologies like colour photography. This practice, termed ‘camera-hunting’ by James Ryan, involved citizens venturing into landscapes to create images, serving as a form of popularised fieldwork (Matless 311).

The reference to ‘posh boys’ also evokes the Edwardian-era Boy Scout. From 1907–08, scouting quickly gained traction among boys aged 11 to 18, organised into local troops led by adult volunteers and often linked to schools, churches, and youth organisations. However, in *Wanderlust*, Solnit warns that organised outdoor activities do

not necessarily allow for free participation in nature. Scouting, for instance, can transform walking into marching, where collective discipline and authority suppress personal rhythms, turning movement into regimentation rather than the free and open access often associated with walking clubs.

In this context, organised interactions with nature by ‘posh boys’ replicate the forces that shape marginalised experiences, privileging certain bodies [it might be that around here would be the opportunity to mention how Capildeo underscores 'privilege' by choosing male subjects of elevated class] by normalising their access while denying others. For example, activities like camera-hunting and Scouting normalise British citizens’ presence in the landscape, promoting a surveyor’s perspective that objectifies nonhuman and noncitizen entities, categorising and monitoring them.

Rather than simply contrasting minority and mainstream environmental views, Capildeo connects them by emphasising the displacement and confinement inherent in the citizen role. Capildeo describes the ‘self-dislocation’ of ‘posh boys’ from the real to the artificial as a self-indulgent (‘porn') experience, suggesting disorientation and self-enclosure. Their reliance on technology does not enable true freedom or access to the natural world; instead, it confines them within a mediated experience, disconnecting them from nature and reality.

In this way, Capildeo contrasts environmental experience across unequal positions: for minorities, including immigrants, it is often hostile and constrained, while for the mainstream, figured as ‘posh boys’, it appears benign and accessible. At the same time, she reconnects these positions by showing their shared dislocation from the real, natural world and their enclosure within a culturally and technologically mediated

environment. Thus, the displacement and marginalisation of minorities, the technological dislocation of the self within the mainstream, and the ambiguous place of the subject in landscape poetry are entangled and mutually signified in "Towards an Unwalking" through its intertextual engagement with the work of another.

Nonetheless, Capildeo's poetry stresses—but does not conclude on—the socio-political, technological or ideological enclosures of subjects, nor does it dwell on the impossibility of an unmediated experience or knowledge of nature. Rather, it reminds readers that both the environment and human perception of it are fluid and multiple, shaped by social and material diversity. In *Wanderlust*, Solnit presents a variety of walking experiences in relation to the body, place and time. For example, the experience of walking on the street differs for women and men, for women in the nineteenth century and those in the twenty-first, for police officers and protestors, and for all bodies walking in the streets of London or along the U.S.–Mexico border. The subject's identity and body, the weather, time, location, companion and purpose—among other factors—are all variables that shape both the experience of walking and the perception of the outside world. In agreement with Solnit, Capildeo includes a wide range of subjects in the composition of "Towards an Unwalking" (e.g. travellers, 'vagrants and vendors', women, 'posh boys', 'man of dragonfly T-shirt', 'poet') and locations (e.g. 'field', 'road', 'stairway', 'highway', 'from bed to bedside', 'ship') to illustrate the rich histories and cultures that have evolved around this seemingly simple and common activity.

The emphasis on the diversity of walking bodies, as well as the variety of walking experiences and environments, serves not only a socio-political but also an environmental critique in Capildeo's poetry. Beyond the place of foreign and mediated subjects in the

modern world, and of the poetic subject in landscape poetry, the interplay of emplacement and displacement, and of mobility and immobility, in "Towards an Unwalking" also speculates on the position of humanity on the earth. In contrast to Clark's walking—which is an activity of leisure and meditation—Capildeo presents a precarious and emergent sense of being and movement in the world, not only for the socio-politically marginalised but for human bodies more broadly. The vagaries of the environment presented in the poem, and the resulting senses of urgency and uncertainty, cannot be explained solely by human factors such as the marginalisation of minority travellers or foreign bodies. More significantly, they are part of nature's (un)doing.

In "Towards an Unwalking", the force of environmental transformation overpowers all human bodies, regardless of their identities, and immobilises them within a volatile earth. For example, the line 'Temporary waterfalls; also landslides; on the hairpin road to the sea' expresses and enacts the transformability of natural landscapes: the suffixes 'fall' and 'slide' both evoke physical movements, while the parallel between 'waterfalls' and 'landslides' emphasises the elemental interconnectivity and interchangeability of 'water' and 'land' (Capildeo, *Like a Tree* 23). This signification complicates the meaning of the final clause, 'on the hairpin road to the sea', as the connection between 'road' and 'sea' is not only syntactic but also material and elemental, highlighting their interdependence as parts of the same earth.

The enactment of transforming landscapes produces a powerful sense of groundlessness and 'lostness' in the poem, which seizes the poetic subject and strips them of subjectivity and mobility, as explicated in the following stanza:

Please, Dissociation, reveal the gifts the man says lostness

brings. Make this the good things called a walk, when the
ground peels like a kite caught in the tree I also am, rooted in
my own crossroads, unable of any going, no distance from the
door to which I have keys.

(Capildeo, *Like a Tree* 22)

'The gifts of lostness' and 'the good things of a walk' echo Clark's claim in "In Praise of Walking" that 'To be completely lost is a good thing on a walk'—a state the poetic subject in the stanza above longs for. Yet the ground around and beneath them 'peels like a kite caught in the tree', leaving them stranded in solitude. As enacted in Capildeo's poetry, the environment is collapsing, and the subject is 'rooted in [their] own crossroads, unable of any going'.

Resonating with this articulated precarity of the subject's place, Capildeo employs an imploring tone and repetition to convey a lived sense of urgency. For instance, in the lines '…to look away is to walk over and over to walk over a bridge over and over a none bridge'; 'If you can't run, roil, if you can't roll, roll. Role and role.'; and 'Leaf it. Just leaf it.', the lyrical repetitions create a 'wading', 'swinging' motion in the text, enacting both the disorienting environment and the subject's urgent yet futile attempt to move forward. In the composition of "Towards an Unwalking", the subject's lostness is neither one of 'the gifts' nor among 'the good things' that a walk brings, as "the man" (Thomas A. Clark) claims. Instead, it emerges from the subject's entrapment within a volatile environment.

To reiterate, in contrast to what Clark suggests in "In Praise of Walking", the poetic subject embodied in Capildeo's poem has 'no distance' to travel; they have arrived

in—and been arrested by—a hostile land. This contrast not only critiques the divergent social experiences of 'the man' and "others", but also challenges the traditional view of the environment as an inanimate and benign backdrop for human activity and reflection—a perception that reinforces and justifies the exploitation of natural bodies and of those deemed "inhuman" (Yusoff; Plumwood).

Counteracting Clark's walking and walking poem, which assume an anthropocentric and genteel perception of nature, Capildeo establishes a 'new walking' as 'unwalking'. As they write in the following stanza:

> The Walkauthorial's preferred totalities, all and nothing,
> everywhere and always, are nowhere when the crosser of
>
> bridges loses consciousness. Fainting and being pulled up is
> a tighter and wider form of walking. I implore the return of
> unnamed abilities to tell stairway from linen and breath from
> both.
>
> (*Like a Tree* 24)

The compound term 'Walkauthorial' can be unpacked to suggest either a walking author or the authorial authority over walking—two meanings that do not always coincide. While the former grounds their composition in the particular, physical environment and the body subject of walking—such as Harriet Tarlo (see Chapter One)—the latter fabricates and normalises the experience of walking as that of a particular, often privileged subject. Resisting tendencies of totalisation and determination, the ambiguous signification of the term 'Walkauthorial' highlights the relational tension between these

two distinct poetics of walking and alerts readers and authors to the slippages between them.

Beyond such innovative use of language, 'the Walkauthorial's preferred totalities' are also challenged by the 'human fallibility' enacted in the poem (24; 22). In the second line of the quoted stanza above, 'the crosser of / the bridge loses consciousness' echoes the final line of the preceding stanza: 'and to look away is to walk over and over to walk over a bridge over and over a bone bridge'. The repeated phrase 'walk over' contributes to the signification of an ever-extending bridge that can never be fully crossed. On one hand, the infinite ground provided by this 'bridge' reflects the open-field totalities fabricated and favoured by certain walking authors. On the other hand, the transformability of the bridge contrasts with, and thus defies, the totalities implicated in the imagery of an open, even ground. As the above stanza indicates, rather than being walked over by the subject, the bridge cannot be crossed and strips the crosser of consciousness. In this sense, it is 'all and nothing', 'everywhere and always', yet also 'nowhere', underscoring the immobility of the subject within totalitarian practices and thought.

So, 'the bridge' in Capildeo's poem is metamorphic, exhibiting an agency of movement and transformation traditionally attributed only to the subject. The only way to traverse this living ground is through 'unwalking'—a surrender of one's mobility to the environment. As shown in the stanza above, the subject does not 'walk over' the bridge; rather, the metamorphic bridge causes them to faint and fall, yet also lifts them up. By juxtaposing the unconscious and immobilised subject with the animate and shifting ground, Capildeo subverts the presumed dynamic between human and nature, subject and

object, body and space. This subversion is central to understanding Capildeo's poetry and its posthuman, phenomenological, eco-ethical and decolonial reimagining of human beings and their relationship with the more-than-human world.

To explain, the subversive dynamic between the human subject and the material environment of walking and travelling, enacted in Capildeo's poetry, challenges the traditional worldview, reconfiguring models of movement, subjectivity, temporality and spatiality. As Tarbuck and Widger point out, Clark's walking poems, such as "In Praise of Walking", are shaped by reflective walking that transports the perceiving senses and sustains attentive noticing in the field ("Traversing the Field"). In Capildeo's "Towards an Unwalking", by contrast, dynamism emerges from reciprocal movement as subject and landscape traverse one another. The transforming landscapes in the poem—such as the peeling ground, the uncrossable bridge and the black, glittering river-night—are not material grounds for the subject to walk upon but rather sources of change and movement. Recalling Maggie O'Sullivan's poetry, as discussed in Chapter Three, the animation of landscape in Capildeo's work similarly enacts a posthuman, phenomenological reconfiguration of subject and environment as mutually and dynamically constituted, rather than as separate, fixed entities. As in O'Sullivan's composition, "Towards an Unwalking" also embodies a form of "communication" among various bodies/subjects as their "concurrence" in the transforming landscape (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*). The boundaries between human and nonhuman are blurred in the poem's expression-performance, as the lyrical "I" speaks and prays to a variety of figures, including 'my companion', 'destination', 'mother', 'sweet man of the dragonfly', 'shadow' and 'earth'. Such anthropomorphism and/or zoomorphism in Capildeo's poetry

underscore the interconnectivity and interchangeability between human and nonhuman, subject and environment.

In addition, comparable to the shamanistic undertones of O'Sullivan's poetry and its rootedness in the ecological realm, the mutual transformation and transversal between subject and environment enacted in Capildeo's work acquire a virtual, dream-like quality. For instance, in the one-line stanza, 'I dream of being a child who dreams of flying', the subject, space and time of the event—dreaming, flying—are all rendered ambiguous and multitudinous (*Like a Tree* 21). In this context of uncertainty, the dream of 'flying' not only signifies the subject's longing for freedom but also serves to connect the poetic subject and the child, linking their existences across unknown spaces and times through shared dream(s).

This animation of landscape in Capildeo's work embodies a "virtuality", which is highlighted by Denise Ferreira da Silva as a critical force in the Black feminist poethical reconstruction of the world, disillusioning dominant constructs of "reality" shaped by Western epistemologies such as colonialism, empiricism and progressivism. In contrast to a "reality" made of static space and linear time, "virtuality" is guided by 'matters' and their 'transubstantiality, transversality and traversability', which are, the transformation of substances, the movement back and forth through time, and the crossing of physical and ideological boundaries across space. According to Silva, these radical modalities of transformation and movement, embodied in the world's interacting materials, are a critical force in disrupting the fixed, linear spatial-temporal frameworks that have historically sustained the production and exploitation of racialised bodies/subjects during colonialism and its afterlives.

Echoing Braithwaite's 'tidalectics', Glissant's 'poetics of relation' and Kristeva's 'negativity' (see Sections Two and Three), Silva's deconstruction of perceived reality, centred on "virtuality", is likewise grounded in the transformability of the material environment. Alongside Capildeo, these postcolonial and feminist writers turn to the natural world as a source of transformation, reclaiming the agency of nonhuman—more-than-human—worlds in order to traverse and transcend the symbolic order pre-established in modern societies. Sourced from and re-enacting nature's (un)making, Capildeo's poetry forges an eco-ethical link among various bodies/subjects (e.g., women, immigrants and Black bodies) across cultures, histories and geographies through their shared experiences of being in a hostile world as well as their 'dream(s)' of freedom. In the same way, it forges a link between marginal and dominant, human and nonhuman subjects through their shared experiences and participation in the transforming environment (whether resulting from climate change or not), reflecting collective senses of urgency and vulnerability, and further deconstructing the social division of living bodies. By engaging with and interweaving diverse subjects and narratives of the earth, Capildeo's poetry is thus a crucial site for practising both postcolonial and environmental ethics. Signifying a formal and ideological openness grounded in the natural world, their poetics resonates with the practice of eco-ethics in ELP, as outlined in the previous chapters, and with the principles of ecological and ethical thinking within the broader field of the Environmental Humanities (see Introduction).

Capildeo's subversion of walking into 'unwalking' also challenges human exceptionalism. According to anthropological studies, the shift to bipedalism altered our ancestors' posture, freed their hands for tool use, and shaped their perception of the

environment—from a perspective of being embedded within it to one of looking over and standing upon it (Gould; Tardieu). Moreover, bipedalism also facilitated long-distance travel and migration, increasing the chances of survival when original habitats became uninhabitable. It was energy-efficient and gave early humans a strategic advantage in endurance hunting, making them more effective hunters than most animals over long distances. In these ways, bipedalism led to the expansion of both human brains and territories. Although the exact reasons for the development of bipedalism remain unclear, it marked a pivotal point in human evolution—a marker of uniqueness and a key factor in humanity's dominance over other animals and the environment. When viewed alongside these findings from evolutionary anthropology, Capildeo's poem "Towards an Unwalking", as suggested by its title, questions humanity's self-conception rooted in self-enclosure and domination, and calls for an eco-ethical reinvention of the origin story—and thus the future—for modern humans (Wynter and McKittrick).

Written after Clark's "In Praise of Walking", Capildeo's "Towards an Unwalking" responds to Clark's walking practice and poetics from the perspective of an arrivant, who is foreign to the local environment, and to whom the environment is likewise foreign. By contrasting Clark's walking as an act of leisure and meditation—alongside his perception of an open and benign environment—with the experiences of foreign, minority subjects crossing borders and, upon arrival, navigating hostile and restrictive environments, Capildeo's poetry asserts the diversity of walking bodies and their perceptions of the world.

On this level, "Towards an Unwalking" also answers Tarbuck and Widger's call in "Traversing the Field" for interdisciplinary reflection on the 'links between landscape,

walking and thinking'. By enacting a movement of "unwalking" in the composition, where the subject becomes lost and immobilised within an agential, transforming environment, Capildeo reimagines the environment through the specific experience of the body subject. In doing so, she subverts presumed dynamics between subject and object, human and nature. This subversion articulates an alternative walking poetics that contributes to an eco-ethical, posthuman, phenomenological and decolonial reconfiguration of the human subject and the natural world, disrupting conventional models of subjectivity, materiality, spatiality and temporality. As such, Capildeo's poetry offers interdisciplinary reflection on human and more-than-human worlds through intertextual movement, bringing new perspectives into ecopoetics and eco-ethics by resituating them within the diverse and dynamic—both discursive and material—composition of the earth.

To recap briefly, this section continues with a close reading of Capildeo's poetry, focusing on their enactment of movements and relations across texts in "Stylish Deer" and "Towards an Unwalking". By engaging with other texts in their own composition, Capildeo highlights the multiplicity of subjects and experiences within the environment, as well as the diversity of ecopoetic practice. And in situating these diverse environmental narratives within the context of a dynamic earth, Capildeo's poetry presents a more inclusive view of humans and the world, and advances an environmental ethics attentive to all beings in social and physical enclosures.

Conclusion

This chapter examines Capildeo's poetry and argues that it offers an eco-ethical reimagining of the earth, exemplifying the transformative potential of experimental landscape poetry (ELP) when read through a cross-framework relational approach that interweaves socio-political and environmental concerns. Drawing on the cultural specificity of their work—the identity and experiences of the poet travelling between the Caribbean and the British islands—I argue that Capildeo's poetry enacts 'tidalectic' movements and 'rhizomatic' relations among various landscapes, subjects and narratives across the earth (Brathwaite; Glissant). Its diverse and dynamic composition both mirrors that of the natural world and enacts a reimagining of world(s) woven from multiple materials and ideologies, without resorting to (neo)colonial logics of assimilation, opposition or domination. This practice and composition of eco-ethics not only resonates with the works of Tarlo, Larkin and O'Sullivan examined in previous chapters, but also offers an eco-ethical model for connecting various environmental narratives within the field of poetry and beyond.

The practice of eco-ethics in Capildeo's poetry parallels and extends beyond their negotiation of identity as an immigrant and poet of colour in the UK. By relating to and contrasting the poetic traditions of the UK with the experiences and narratives of those rendered nonlocal and othered within it, Capildeo's poetry resists assimilation into British literary culture, including categories such as ecopoetry and radical landscape poetry. At the same time, it resists reductive identity politics that would marginalise its reflections on the contemporary environment by confining them within a fixed postcolonial framework and excluding them from mainstream conversations about the environment and environmental crisis. Shifting between cultures and subjects of writing, Capildeo's

poetry traverses the physical and ideological boundaries imposed on natural landscapes and living bodies by modern systems, and cultivates alternative modes of being within and moving across the world that follow and celebrate the diversity and connectivity of the earth. It draws readers' attention to the entanglement of environmental violence and social injustice, advancing an intertextual and intersubjective practice of eco-ethics aimed at the emancipation of all beings—human and nonhuman. In this way, Capildeo's poetry both aligns with and expands the scope of ELP beyond its Anglo-American foundations. By ending this thesis with a discussion of Capildeo's poetry, I seek to highlight the intellectual openness of ELP and its potential to constitute, enact and communicate an inclusive eco-ethics for the contemporary world—one that resists the tendency towards enclosure in modern systems through continuous linguistic and formal experimentation, as well as through an eco-ethical thinking that continually reaches toward "the other".

Conclusion

Eco-Ethical Composition: Contemporary Experimental Landscape Poetry in the UK

This thesis investigates the practice of eco-ethics in experimental landscape poetry (ELP) and its wider implications within the contemporary environment—both local and global, material and ideological. By examining the work of Harriet Tarlo, Peter Larkin, Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo, who are practising within the 21st-century UK, I argue that ELP constitutes a crucial site for (re)constituting, communicating and enacting an eco-ethics as a mode of knowing and being in the world that is radically open while drawn from particular, physical places, relations and subjects. This interpretation of eco-ethics is established on the principle of ecological and ethical thinking within the field of Environmental Humanities, which emphasises both the creativity and criticality of environmental scholarship to not only think about but also *through* the environment, fostering interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary collaborations and conversations across various disciplines and communities on the earth, both human and nonhuman (Bird, et al). By grounding their research in "the environment"—composed of diverse and dynamic ecological and social relations among varied actors—rather than in the formality and disciplinarity of established discourses, contemporary scholars and artists enact a radical reimagining of both human and more-than-human worlds, as exemplified by feminist materialism, posthuman phenomenology, experimental and eco-poetics and related fields. Participating in this ideological shift, ELP contributes to the reimagining of the natural world and the place of humans within it—both individually as embodied

subjects and collectively as humanity—practising eco-ethical ways of perceiving and engaging with the environment.

In Chapter One, I examine the eco-ethical practices of Tarlo and Tucker in the field outside, on the page and in exhibition. Drawing on their creative process through walking with each other and with local communities within the locale, I argue that they enact a situated, dialogical and countercultural mode of artmaking as placemaking, reconfiguring the senses of subject and place as mutually constituted and processually (un)made in the act and field of perception. This eco-ethical composition is then re-enacted in Tarlo's poetry as well as in the presentation of Tarlo and Tucker's work in galleries and in books. Through experimental configurations of space, words and images, Tarlo and Tucker continue to signify and negotiate the boundaries between the body subject and the physical environment, and between the discursive and material processes of art- and place-making.

From natural landscapes to paper and gallery walls, from outside to inside, from beginning to end, Tarlo and Tucker's practice is eco-ethical. Mirroring their collaborations and conversations with others in the creative process, their work enacts an eco-ethical composition and re-presentation of the perceived landscape through an interplay of texts and images, bridging multiple perspectives, materialities and sensibilities without collapsing their differences. In this way, it constitutes an open and dialogical reimagining of the world while remaining attentive to the materials, relations and actions in the field they work and walk within. In contrast to eco-ethics understood as a moral discipline, Tarlo and Tucker's practice of eco-ethics is enactive and open-ended, emerging from the subject's interconnections and interactions with others in the locale

and, at the same time, transferable to other locations and situations. Grounded in the "field" and the senses of locationality and elasticity it embodies—referring to a particular natural field, the embodied and dynamic field of perception as well as various fields of practice—Tarlo's poetry demonstrates the potential for ELP to constitute and enact a contextual, transformative and trans-locational eco-ethics (Tarlo, "Open Field").

In Chapter Two, I argue that Larkin's poetry enacts an eco-ethical dwelling with trees in landscapes shaped by both natural and human forces. The co-presence of ecological life and human construction enables Larkin's meditation on the relationship between humans and nature, seeking to reconnect the two through relations of "scarcity" (Larkin, "Fully From, All Scarce To"). Drawing on the textual and natural environments of Larkin's poetry—his writing in relation to the physical materiality of trees and landscapes—I propose four interpretations of his poetics of "scarcity": signification of crossing, mediation in the margin, granulation of texts and reproduction of an ecological space. This speculative approach seeks to demonstrate the indefinable and inexhaustible natural world presented and promised in Larkin's poetry by the relations of "scarcity" between environment and subject, material and mediation. Building on Larkin's poetics of "scarcity", I emphasise the metaphysical openness and transformability of ELP, rooted—rather than extracted or abstracted—from the given, material world as gifts of nature. Akin to Tarlo's "radical landscape poetry" Larkin's work demonstrates the importance and potential of embedding poetic innovation within the material and ideological contexts of its composition as a means of practising eco-ethics (Larkin, "Innovation Contra Acceleration").

Nonetheless, from the next chapter onwards, the research subject departs from Tarlo's grouping of "radical landscape poetry" as proposed in the anthology *The Ground Aslant*, which originally inspired this thesis. Building on the radicalism of its practice—as a formal and ideological openness rooted in the natural world—and its rhizomatic roots in various poetic traditions in the UK and the US, pastoral and innovative, I extend Tarlo's grouping to include poets who were invited to contribute to the anthology but declined, as well as those who were not invited, namely Maggie O'Sullivan and Anthony Vahni Capildeo. For clarity, I refer to this extended grouping of contemporary poetry, which engages with both the environment and environmental discourses with sustainable creativity and criticality, as "experimental landscape poetry" in this thesis.

In Chapter Three, I examine O'Sullivan's poetry and its practice of eco-ethics. Interweaving sounds, symbols and visuals, O'Sullivan's composition is sensuous, magical and eco-political; it embodies an event and place where various actors—human and nonhuman, lifeful and lifeless—are mutually constituted and transformed. In engaging with O'Sullivan's work, the reader and audience inhabit such a place and participate in shared material, sensory and affective exchanges between themselves and other bodies and subjects present(ed). In deconstructing and reconstituting language and subjectivity into transcorporeal senses and sensibilities, O'Sullivan's poetry constitutes an eco-ethical practice of unmaking stubborn patterns embedded in Western philosophy—such as the dualisms of mind and body, and human and nature—and forging new, embodied connections—kinship—between subject and environment, and between human and more-than-human worlds (O'Sullivan-Olsen; Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*; Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*).

Like the practice of eco-ethics outlined in the work of Tarlo and Larkin, O'Sullivan's poetry also enacts a radical reimagining of the natural world and the place of humans within it, challenging pre-established boundaries between subjective and objective, and between discursive and material processes of worldmaking. Meanwhile, by combining innovative poetics with ritualistic and bodily performances such as shamanism and handcrafting, as seen in poems collected in *In the House of the Shaman* and the multimedia, multidimensional composition of *murmur*, O'Sullivan's poetry expands the possibility of ELP and eco-ethics into spiritual realms without losing its physical and phenomenal grounding. To explain, distinct from the composition of Tarlo and Larkin, O'Sullivan's poetry not only entails an interplay of textual and spatial relations on the page but also a 'heuristic trans-forming', resisting the transcendental transformation of knowledge by foregrounding the trans-sensual experience of the reader and audience within specific sites and situations shaped by the poem, whether through composition or performance (O'Sullivan-Olsen). Its process of sense-making is, in Tarlo's words, 'radically democratic', or, in Barad's term, 'intra-active', taking place between the body of the reader or audience and the poem within the environment of its presentation (Tarlo, "Provisional Pleasure"; Barad, "Posthuman Performativity").

In Chapter Four, I examine Capildeo's poetry and argue that it demonstrates the potential of ELP as a practice of eco-ethics when viewed through an interdisciplinary lens, integrating environmental and socio-political concerns on the common and changeable ground provided by the earth. Drawing on the geophysics and cultures of the Antilles, as well as their own experiences of travel and immigration, Capildeo's poetry enacts 'tidalectic' movements and rhizomatic relations among landscapes, subjects and

narratives across the earth (Brathwaite; Glissant). In this way, it enacts a transcultural and transnatural imagining of the environment that transgresses and transcends the physical and ideological boundaries imposed on natural bodies within modern systems. Moreover, directing readers' attention to the entanglement of environmental violence and social injustice, it presents an intersubjective and interdisciplinary eco-ethics and eco-poetics that projects towards the emancipation of all beings—human and nonhuman. Engaging with and mediating between Caribbean and British traditions of writing and thinking, Capildeo's poetry both aligns with and expands the scope of radical and experimental landscape poetry beyond its Anglo-American foundations to the so-called peripheries of a world centred on the West. By ending this thesis with a "responsible" reading of Capildeo's poetry—one that considers the cultural specificity of their work without reducing it to that specificity—I emphasise once again the intellectual openness of experimental landscape poetry and its potential to constitute an inclusive eco-ethics for both human and nonhuman beings.

While examining the poetry of four poets respectively in each chapter, highlighting their unique perspectives on the environment as well as their idiosyncratic practices of re-presenting and reimagining it, I also connect and compare their works for their shared commitment to eco-ethical composition. Both Tarlo's and Larkin's poetry have been characterised as radical landscape poetry and published in *The Ground Aslant* by Tarlo. Through linguistic and formal experimentation, Tarlo and Larkin transform their composition into a poetic field that embodies and gestures towards an external world that is both phenomenologically continuous with the place of the page and yet lies beyond it.

Nonetheless, Larkin's poetry and his reflections on human–nature relationships are not only drawn from the physical materiality of trees and landscapes but also 'promised' through a poetical thinking centred on the term "scarcity" (Larkin, *Lessways Least*). This poetics of "scarcity" includes a spiritual element—one that combines negative poetics and apophatic theology—that is absent in Tarlo's work, although both similarly ground their poetic innovation in the given, material world.

A spiritual element is present, instead, in the work of O'Sullivan, which cannot be subsumed under Tarlo's term and grouping of "radical landscape poetry". As in Larkin's poetry, the incorporation of supernatural figures and events in O'Sullivan's composition serves to mediate between wound and opening, salvaging and savaging, transforming the place of the poem as well as the represented landscape from compromised and violent to ecological and recuperative, from "real" to "imaginative", and from being restricted within the human and the subjective to a more expansive sense of the "real". Yet in contrast to Larkin's theological and reflective approach, the presence of the supernatural in O'Sullivan's poetry is linked to magic, dream, shamanism and, more importantly, performance (O'Sullivan-Olsen). The performativity of O'Sullivan's poetry, enabled by its deconstruction and reconstitution of language and subjectivity, marks its inventiveness, bringing the poem—its composition on the page as well as the represented landscape—into a trans-sensory and "unnatural" dimension beyond their confinement within traditional senses and sensibilities.

Nevertheless, this emphasis on the sensory aligns O'Sullivan's poetry with Tarlo's, whose open-form composition enacts an embodied, dynamic and provisional perception of the field outside that mirrors the poet's as she walks within it. While

grounding the reader's perception of the poem in the physical and phenomenal realms, she positions them at the threshold between the poetic and the real, negotiating the boundary while resisting assimilation between the two. By contrast, O'Sullivan foregrounds the bodily presence of the composition itself—as a 'bodytext' (O'Sullivan, *murmur*) or an embodied expression—her poetry becoming a site of concurrence between the reader and the environment shaped and re-presented by the poem.

Echoing the eco-ethical beginnings of experimental and radical landscape poetry in American late modernism—particularly Olson's open-field poetics—and in British pastoral traditions, the connections between the poetries of Tarlo, Larkin and O'Sullivan are rhizomatic, demonstrating a non-systematic, ecological connectivity among diverse modes of viewing and representing the environment. By bringing these poets together through their shared eco-ethical commitment and practice, this thesis highlights the diversity within ELP and its potential to shape an open-ended and dialogical eco-ethics that attends to both the multiplicity and interconnectivity of living bodies and their lived experiences of the earth. Building on this, the incorporation of Capildeo's poetry into this thesis is a deliberate choice to expand the project of reimagining the environment and the place of humans within it in contemporary experimental poetry, by including minority poets and the "nonlocal" perspectives they embody, and by counteracting its historical exclusivity to white and male voices.

That said, the incorporation of Capildeo's poetry into this thesis is not a decision based solely on their ethnic or socio-political identity as an immigrant, agender poet of colour from Trinidad. Their enactment of movements and relations among various subjects of the earth not only resonates with the eco-ethical composition of Tarlo, Larkin

and O'Sullivan, but also offers a model for connecting their works both with each other and with other local and global narratives of the environment by situating them within the diverse and dynamic earth. As shown in Chapter Four, both Tarlo and Capildeo attend to the act of walking as a form of resistance. Yet while walking is rendered as a convivial activity by Tarlo and Tucker, Capildeo draws on divergent experiences and bodies of walking to expose the enclosure and exclusion of minority subjects within modern systems. Although their work also foregrounds the interconnectedness of all living bodies, this solidarity is grounded in their mobility—or lack thereof—within transforming environments, rather than in a shared location. In parallel, while Tarlo's dialogical composition emerges through and re-enacts her collaboration and conversation with Tucker and local inhabitants in the "field", the dialogue in Capildeo's poetry is enacted through continual alternation between discourses—linking as much as contrasting various narratives across time, culture and geography. In this way, Capildeo's poetry not only draws attention to the embodied perspectives of marginalised subjects but also mobilises a planetary sensibility of the environment, extending the focus of ELP beyond its origins in the US and UK and from the West to the globe.

From this global perspective and project of emancipation, the connection between Capildeo's poetry and other examples of ELP discussed in this thesis—namely the work of Tarlo, Larkin and O'Sullivan—becomes evident in their shared challenge to the enclosure, extraction and exploitation of nature and of those rendered inhuman or subhuman, including trees, women, animals and people of colour, within modern systems. Pivoting on the diversity, dynamism and relationality of the natural world, ELP resists dominant logics of division and categorisation inscribed in and reinforced by

naturalised discourses of language and meaning-making. Instead, it enacts an eco-ethical mode of knowing through being within the environment and in relation to others. As such, it constitutes a crucial site for communicating, reconstituting and practising eco-ethics.

List of Figures

- Figure 0.11 Earthrise

Anders, William. *Earthrise*. 24 Dec. 1968. *NASA Image and Video Library*, NASA, https://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/apollo-8-earthrise. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

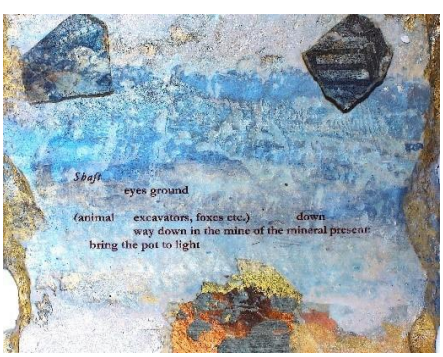
- Figure 1.1: "Outfalls"

Tarlo, Harriet, and Judith Tucker. *Outfalls: Poems and Paintings*. Wild Pansy Press, 2018.

- Figure 1.2: "Field Notes/Field Studies"

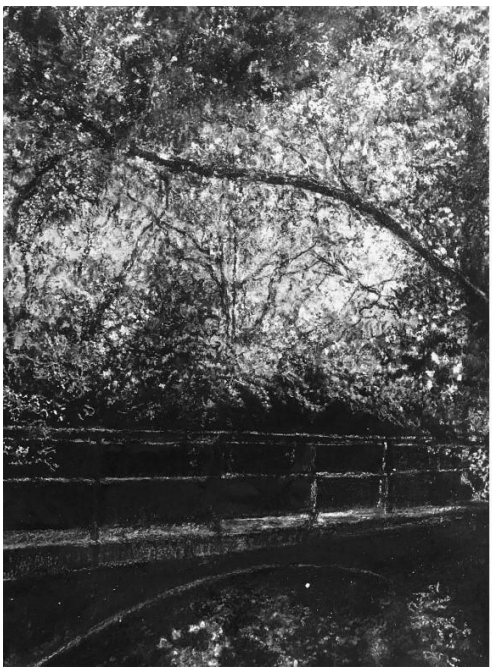
Burnett, Elizabeth-Jane, and Rebecca Thomas. *Field Feeling*. *In the Open: Collaborative Artworks Around Place, Landscape and Environment*, *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*, https://plumwoodmountain.com/multimedia-gallery/in-the-open-collaborative-artworks-around-place-landscape-and-environment-3/#jp-carousel-6195. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

- Figure 1.3 “Searching for Jossie”



Eltringham, Daniel, and David Walker Barker. *Searching for Jossie*. *In the Open: Collaborative Artworks Around Place, Landscape and Environment*, *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*, https://plumwoodmountain.com/multimedia-gallery/in-the-open-collaborative-artworks-around-place-landscape-and-environment-3/#jp-carousel-6176. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

- Figure 1.4: "Outfalls"



river ruptures out
sluice running Lud
under DUCKERING
LINCO iron foot-
bridge worn ropes
hang JONO ♥ JODI
twist back under
cross felled trunks
clagged over ditch
hedgerow grasses
brushing bedstraw
clover mallow be-
low gate to sorrel
plantain meadow
DR PEPPER & PEPSI
caught reed fringe
winds to roadside
behind barbed green
wire creep-ripples to
small stone bridge at
field edge & wanders
north-east into fen

Tarlo, Harriet, and Judith Tucker. *Outfalls: Poems and Paintings*. Wild Pansy Press, 2018.

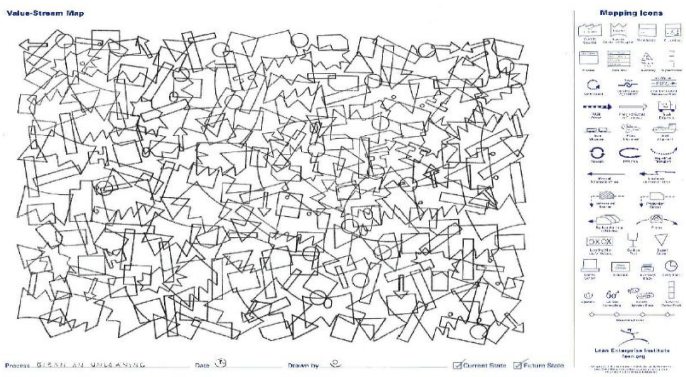
- Figure 1.5: "Behind Lands"

Tarlo, Harriet, and Judith Tucker. *Behind Land: Poems and Paintings*. Wild Pansy Press, 2015.

- Figure 1.6: "Excavation and Estuaries"

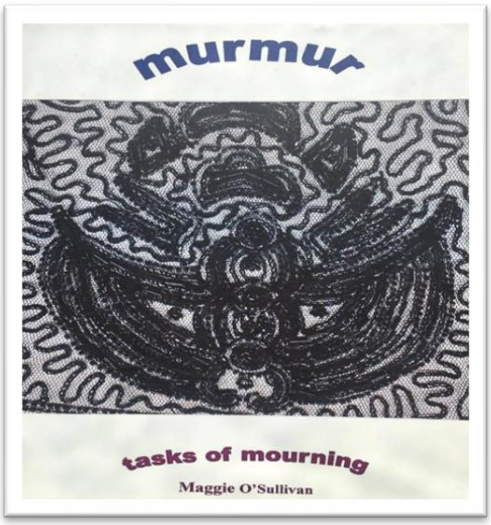
Tarlo, Harriet, and Judith Tucker. "Between Lines in Space: Drawing and Writing in Landscape." *Excavations & Estuaries: The Nature of Landscape*, 2013.

- Figure 2.1: “Value-Stream Map”



Joelle. *Value-Stream Map. We/‘Re: A Tree*, Poetry at Warwick, University of Warwick, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/joelle. Accessed 9 Apr. 2025.

- Figure 3.1: the cover of *murmur*



Photographed by me, 16 Apr. 2025.

Works Cited

Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. Vintage, 1996.

Akenji, Lewis. "Consumer Scapegoatism and Limits to Green Consumerism." *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 63, 2014, pp. 13–23.

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana UP, 2010.

—. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. U of Minnesota P, 2016.

—. "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature." *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman, Indiana UP, 2008, pp. 237–64.

Alaimo, Stacy, and Susan J. Hekman, editors. *Material Feminisms*. Indiana UP, 2008.

Alvarez, Al, editor. *The New Poetry*. Penguin, 1962.

Armbruster, Karla, and Kathleen R. Wallace, editors. *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. University of Virginia Press, 2001.Attridge, Derek. *The Singularity of Literature*. Routledge, 2004.

Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2003, pp. 801–31.

—. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke UP, 2006.

Barry, Peter. *Reading Poetry*. Manchester UP, 2013.

Barry, Peter, and William Welstead, editors. *Extending Ecocriticism: Crisis, Collaboration and Challenges in the Environmental Humanities*. Manchester University Press, 2017.

Bate, Jonathan. *The Song of the Earth*. Harvard UP, 2000.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity, and Intellectuals*. Polity, 1987.

BBC Radio 4. *Start the Week: "Language and Reinvention."* Hosted by Tom Sutcliffe, BBC Radio 4, 2024. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006r9xr.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke UP, 2010.

Bergthaller, Hannes. "Ecocriticism, Biopolitics, and Ecological Immunity: The Case of Thomas Bernhard." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2015, pp. 28–41.

Bergthaller, Hannes, and Peter Mortensen, editors. *Framing the Environmental Humanities*. Brill, 2018.

Bernstein, Charles. *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. Oxford UP, 2020.

Beuys, Joseph. "Houses of the Shaman." Quoted in Maggie O'Sullivan, *In the House of the Shaman*, Reality Street Editions, 1993.

Biggs, Iain. "Educating 'Local Cosmopolitans': The Case for a Critical Regionalism in Art Education?" *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001, pp. 16–24.

—. "The Spaces of 'Deep Mapping': A Partial Account." *Journal of Arts and Communities*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2011, pp. 5–25.

Bloomfield, Mandy. *Archaeopoetics: Word, Image, History*. U of Alabama P, 2016.

—. "Landscaping the Page: British Open-Field Poetics and Environmental

Aesthetics." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2013, pp. 121–36.

—. "Maggie O'Sullivan's Material Poetics of Salvaging in *red shifts* and *murmur*." *The Salt Companion to Maggie O'Sullivan*, edited by Chris Emery, Salt Publishing, 2011, pp. 26–40.

—. "Unsettling Sustainability: The Poetics of Discomfort." *Green Letters*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2014, pp. 21–35.

Bloor, Roger. "Do Not Turn This Page!!!" *Magma Poetry*, vol. 72, 2018.

Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. *Caribbean Man in Space and Time*. Savacou Publications, 1974.

Brathwaite, Kamau. *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*. We Press, 1999.

Breu, Christopher. *Insistence of the Material: Literature in the Age of Biopolitics*. U of Minnesota P, 2014.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2005.

Burnett, Elizabeth-Jane. *A Social Biography of Contemporary Innovative Poetry Communities: The Gift, the Wager, and Poethics*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Byers, Mark. "Environmental Pedagogues: Charles Olson and R. Buckminster Fuller." *English: Journal of the English Association*, vol. 62, no. 236, 2013, pp. 66–84.

—. *The Politics of Historical Vision: Marx, Foucault, Habermas*. Guilford, 1995.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* Routledge, 1993.

Capildeo, Vahni. "A Personal Dog." *Measures of Expatriation*. Carcanet, 2016.

—. *Like a Tree, Walking*. Carcanet, 2021.

Casey, Edward S., and Michael Marder. *Plants in Place: On the Social and Vegetal Lives of Places*. Oxford UP, 2023.

Chao, Sophie. "Plantation Timescapes: Multispecial Temporalities in Anthropology and Ecology." *Multispecies Temporalities: Material Bodies in Time*, edited by Angeliki Koufou, Routledge, 2022.

Clark, Nigel. *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*. SAGE, 2011.

—. "Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, nos. 2–3, 2010, pp. 45–68.

Clark, Nigel, and Bronislaw Szerszynski. *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences*. Polity, 2021.

Clark, Thomas A. "In Praise of Walking." *Distance & Proximity*. Polygon, 1998.

Clark, Timothy. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Clark, Tom. "Towards a Deconstructive Environmental Criticism." *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2010, pp. 45–68.

Code, Lorraine. *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*. Oxford UP, 2006.

Collings, Simon. "Short of Nothing: Expanding Horizons of 'Scarcity' in the Poetry of Peter Larkin." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1–30. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1301.

Conquest, Robert, editor. *New Lines: An Anthology*. Macmillan, 1956.

Critchley, Emily, editor. *Out of Everywhere 2: Linguistically Innovative Poetry by Women in North America & the UK*. Reality Street, 2015.

Crozier, Andrew, and Tim Longville, editors. *A Various Art*. Carcanet, 1987.

Davidson, Michael. *On the Outskirts of Form: Practicing Cultural Poetics*. Wesleyan UP, 2013.

Daw, Sarah. "If He Chooses to Speak from These Roots: Charles Olson, Posthumanism and the New Materialism." *PN Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2020, pp. 29–33.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, U of Minnesota P, 1987.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*. U of Hawai'i P, 2007.

DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, Jill Didur and Anthony Carrigan, editors. *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*. Routledge, 2015.

Derrida, Jacques. "Différance." *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass, U of Chicago P, 1982, pp. 1–28.

—. *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*. Vol. 1, translated by Catherine Porter, Stanford UP, 2007.

Dronsfield, Jonathan. "Conditions for the Possibility of Art: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Sublime." *Aesthetic Revolutions and Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Movements*, edited by Aleš Erjavec, Duke UP, 2015, pp. 108–36.

Eltringham, Daniel. *Poetry & Commons: Postwar British Radical Verse and the Natural World*. Liverpool UP, 2022.

Elvey, Anne. "Trees' Deep Incarnation: The Scarcity-Gift of Peter Larkin's 'praying // firs \ attenuate'." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–28. https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1348.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Pluto Press, 1986.

Farrier, David. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. U of Minnesota P, 2019.

Ferreira da Silva, Denise. "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 81–97.

Gao, Jingyi, and Mitchell Newberry. "The Aesthetic and Biological Basis of Fractal Art in Trees." *PNAS Nexus*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2023, pgaf003. https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf003.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2004.

—. "Radical Pastoral?" *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, edited by Laurence Coupe, Routledge, 2000, pp. 263–66.

Gibson, Katherine. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. U of Minnesota P, 2006.

Gibson, Katherine, et al., editors. *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*. Punctum Books, 2015.

Gil, Pablo M., et al. "Electrical Signals in Avocado Trees (*Persea americana* Mill.) in Response to Light and Water Stress." *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 9, 2009, pp. 3797–810. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms10093797.

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, U of Michigan P, 1997.

Gould, Stephen Jay. "Biological Potentiality vs Biological Determinism." *Natural History*, vol. 86, no. 5, 1977, pp. 12–22.

Gross, Philip. *The Thirteenth Angel*. Bloodaxe, 2021.

Hames-García, Michael. "How Real Is Race?" *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman, Indiana UP, 2008, pp. 308–39.

Hampson, Robert. "The Language Poets: Writing about Writing or Literary Politics?" *Fragmente*, vol. 4, 1992, pp. 87–95.

Hand, Dominic. "Reforesting the Rhizome: Peter Larkin's 'Roots Surfacing Horizon'." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–25. https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1944.

Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.

—. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991.

—. *When Species Meet*. U of Minnesota P, 2008.

—. "It Matters What Stories Tell Stories; It Matters What Thoughts Think Thoughts." *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, Open Humanities Press, 2015.

—. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575–99.

Haskell, David George. *The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors*. Viking, 2017.

Herbert, W. N., and Matthew Hollis, editors. *Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry*. Bloodaxe, 2000.

Heddon, Deirdre, and Cathy Turner. "Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility." *Contemporary Theatre Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2012, pp. 224–36.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper & Row, 1962.

—. *Discourse on Thinking*. Harper & Row, 1966.

—. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper & Row, 1971.

—. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Translated by William Lovitt, Harper, 1977.

Heijin, Andreas. "Ladders, Trees, Complexity, and Other Metaphors in Evolutionary Thinking." *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, edited by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, U of Minnesota P, 2017.

Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford UP, 2008.

Hejinian, Lyn. *The Language of Inquiry*. U of California P, 2000.

Howe, Sarah. "What the Surfaces Enclave." *Were X a Tree*, edited by Amy Cutler, University of Warwick, 2018.

Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015.

Hulse, Michael, et al., editors. *The New Poetry*. Bloodaxe, 1993.

Hume, Angela, and Gillian Osborne, editors. *Ecopoetics: Essays in the Field*. U of Iowa P, 2018.

Hume, Angela, et al. "Ecopoetics as Expanded Critical Practice: An Interview with C. A. Conrad, Brenda Hillman, Jonathan Skinner, & Evelyn Reilly." *The Conversant*, 2012.

Iijima, Brenda. "Metamorphic Morphology (with Gushing Igneous Intrusion)." *Eco Language Reader*, edited by Brenda Iijima, Nightboat Books, 2010.

Ingold, Tim. *Lines: A Brief History*. Routledge, 2007.

—. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. Routledge, 2000.

—. "The Temporality of Landscape." *World Archaeology*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1993, pp. 152–74.

—. "The Textility of Making." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 91–102.

Jarniewicz, Jerzy. "Concrete and Performance Poetry." *A Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Poetry, 1960–2015*, edited by Michael O'Neill, Anthony Howe, and Madeleine Callaghan, Wiley Blackwell, 2016, pp. 273–82.

—. "History and Poetry: The Battle of Solferino Revisited." *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2019, pp. 69–80.

Joelle, Natalie. "Larkin and Lean Thinking." *Were X a Tree*, edited by Amy Cutler, University of Warwick, 2018 https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/poetryatwarwick/onlinepublications/werexatree/joelle.

"Jubilee Activities in Wotton." *Visit Stroud*, www.visitstroud.uk/events/jubilee-activities-in-wotton.

Kennedy, David. "Antiquities of the Present: Some Historical Notes on Anthologies of Innovative British Poetry." *New Poetries*, edited by Robert Hampson and Peter Barry, Manchester UP, 2008, pp. 63–88.

Kennedy, David, and Christine Kennedy. *Women's Experimental Poetry in Britain 1970–2010: Body, Time and Locale*. Liverpool UP, 2013.

Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret Waller, Columbia UP, 1984.

Kruger, Kathryn Sullivan. *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production*. Susquehanna UP, 2001.

Larkin, Peter. "Fully From, All Scarce To." *Glossator: Practice and Theory of the Commentary*, vol. 2, 2010, pp. 245–93.

—. "Innovation Contra Acceleration." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1999, pp. 167–73.

—. *Lessways Least Scarce Among*. Shearsman Books, 2019.

—. "Occasions for Scarcity." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2022, pp. 134–43.

—. "Roots Surfacing Horizon." *Lessways Least Scarce Among*, Shearsman Books, 2012, pp. 133–67.

—. "Slight Agreeing Trees." *Lessways Least Scarce Among*, Shearsman Books, 2012, pp. 9–39.

—. "Wordsworth's Maculate Exception." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 43, no. 2,

2012, pp. 78–86.

—. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

—. Interview by Edmund Hardy. *Intercapillary Space*, 2006.

Latter, Alex. *Late Modernism and The English Intelligencer*: *On the Poetics of Community*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Lee, Charles. "The Ad Hoc Manifesto (Powerful Ideas from Improvisation)." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 42, no. 11, 2010, pp. 2537–39.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne UP, 1969.

Lidström, Susanna, and Greg Garrard. "Beyond the Apocalypse: Some Observations on American Ecopoetic Canonisation." *Journal of Ecocriticism*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1–16.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.

Malcolm, David. *The British and Irish Short Story Handbook*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Mancuso, Stefano, and Alessandra Viola. *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*. Translated by Joan Benham, Island Press, 2015.

Marder, Michael. "Being Dumped." *Performance Research*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2012, pp. 135–38.

Marriott, David. "Response to Race and the Poetic Avant-Garde". *Boston Review*, 10 Mar. 2015.

Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*. Translated by Martin Nicolaus, Penguin, 1973, pp. 409–515.

Mason, Emma Jane, guest ed. "Peter Larkin: Poetry, Phenomenology, and Ecology." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2021, https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.4027.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. SAGE, 2005.

—. "A Global Sense of Place." *Space, Place and Gender*, edited by Doreen Massey, U of Minnesota P, 1994, pp. 146–56.

Matless, David. *Landscape and Englishness*. Reaktion Books, 2016.

Meeker, Natania, and Antónia Szabari. *Radical Botany: Plants and Speculative Fiction*. Fordham UP, 2019.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith, Routledge, 1962.

—. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Edited by Claude Lefort, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Northwestern UP, 1968.

Middleton, Peter. "Language Poetry and Linguistic Activism." *Social Text*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2001, pp. 129–49.

—. "The Contemporary Poetry Reading." *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, edited by Charles Bernstein, Oxford UP, 2020, pp. 262–99.

—. *Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry*. U of Alabama P, 2005.

—. *Physics Envy: American Poetry and Science in the Cold War and After*. U of Chicago P, 2015.

—. “Poetry after 1970.” *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, edited by Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, Cambridge UP, 2005, pp. 768–86.

Milbank, John. “Negation in Poetics and Theology.” *Modern Theology*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2024, pp. 228–42.

—. “‘The Beckoning Obstruction’: On the Theme of Scarcity in the Poetry of Peter Larkin.” *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.1923.

Minteer, Ben A. *Refounding Environmental Ethics: Pragmatism, Principle, and Practice*. Temple UP, 2014.

—. “Environmental Philosophy and the Public Interest: A Pragmatic Reconciliation.” *Environmental Values*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2005, pp. 37–60.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. Verso, 2013.

—. “Economentality: How the Future Entered Government.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2011, pp. 479–507.

Mitman, Gregg. “Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing.” *Edge Effects*, 2019.

Morrison, Blake, and Andrew Motion, editors. *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*. Penguin, 1982.

Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard UP, 2007.

Mortuza, Shamsad. *The Figure of the Shaman in Contemporary British Poetry*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

Mottram, Eric, et al., editors. *The New British Poetry*. Paladin, 1988.

Mulford, Wendy. "Afterword." *Out of Everywhere: Linguistically Innovative Poetry by Women in North America and the UK*, edited by Maggie O'Sullivan, Reality Street Editions, 1996.

Myers, Misha. "Walking Again Lively: Towards an Ambulant and Conversive Methodology of Performance and Research." *Mobilities*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2011, pp. 183–201.

Nagel, Thomas. "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, 1974, pp. 435–50.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Sense of the World*. Translated by Jeffrey S. Librett, U of Minnesota P, 1997.

Neimanis, Astrida. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Neimanis, Astrida, et al. "Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities: Toward Critical Posthumanities for the Anthropocene." *Ethics & the Environment*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2015, pp. 67–97.

Nichols, Miriam. *Radical Affections: Essays on the Poetics of Outside*. U of Alabama P, 2010.

Norton, Bryan G. "Epistemology and Environmental Values." *The Monist*, vol. 75, no. 2, 1992, pp. 208–26.

Nwadike, Chiamaka. "Open Seas and Crossings: Kamau Brathwaite's Tidalectics." *Obsidian*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2020, pp. 59–84.

O'Mara, Shane. *In Praise of Walking: A New Scientific Exploration*. W. W. Norton, 2019.

O'Sullivan, Maggie. *In the House of the Shaman*. Reality Street Editions, 1993.

—. *murmur*. Etruscan Books, 2020.

—. *Palace of Reptiles*. Etruscan Books, 2003.

—. *Red Shifts*. Etruscan Books, 2001.

—, editor. *Out of Everywhere*. Reality Street Editions, 2006.

O'Sullivan, Maggie, and Redell Olsen. "Interview with Maggie O'Sullivan." *How2*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2004.

O'Sullivan, Maggie, and Scott Thurston. "No Dialects Please." *Braced*. Reality Street Editions, 2011.

O'Sullivan, Maggie, and Wendy Mulford, editors. *Out of Everywhere: Linguistically Innovative Poetry by Women in North America and the UK*. Reality Street Editions, 1996.

Olson, Charles. *Call Me Ishmael*. City Lights Books, 1947.

—. "Projective Verse." *Poetry New York*, no. 3, 1950.

—. *The Maximus Poems*. Jargon/Corinth Books, 1960.

Parmar, Sandeep. "Still Not a British Subject: Race and UK Poetry." *Journal of British and Irish innovative poetry* 12.1 (2020): n. pag. Web.

Perloff, Marjorie. "It Must Change." *PMLA*, vol. 122, no. 3, 2007, pp. 652–62.

Perry, Eleanor. "Mourning, Memory, and the Page: Maggie O'Sullivan's *murmur*." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2017, pp. 139–58.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Routledge, 1993.

—. “Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2001, pp. 3–32.

Retallack, Joan. *The Poethical Wager*. U of California P, 2003.

Rose, Deborah Bird. “Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time.” *Environmental Philosophy*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, pp. 127–40.

Rose, Deborah Bird, et al. “Thinking Through the Environment, Unsettling the Humanities.” *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1–5.

Rosenthal, Mark, et al. *Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Environments*. Tate Publishing, 2005.

Royce, Terry. “The Intersemiotic Complementarity of Written Text and Image in Scientific and Technical Discourse.” *Multimodal Analysis in Academic Settings: From Research to Teaching*, edited by Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli and Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez, Routledge, 2015, pp. 68–93.

Sanders, Jon. “Iain Crichton Smith, ‘Deer on the High Hills’.” *The Dark Horse*, vol. 33, 2015, pp. 1–7.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale UP, 1999.

Seita, Sophie. “Thinking Through Branches.” *Were X a Tree*, edited by Amy Cutler, University of Warwick, 2018.

Selby, Nick. “Mythologies of ‘Extremity’: British Avant-Garde Poetry, 1960–2000.” *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, edited by Peter Robinson, Oxford UP, 2013.

Sheppard, Robert. *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents, 1950–2000*. Liverpool UP, 2005.

Shue, Henry. "Ethics, the Environment and the Changing International Order." *International Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 3, 1995, pp. 453–61.

Simard, Suzanne. "The Whispering Trees." *Smithsonian Magazine*, Mar. 2018, www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084/.

"Site of Earthwork, W of Palefield Coppice, Haseley." *Take the TimeTrail with Warwickshire Museum*, Warwickshire County Council, https://timetrail.warwickshire.gov.uk/detail.aspx?monuid=WA2657. Accessed 7 Nov. 2025.

Sinclair, Iain, editor. *Conductors of Chaos: A Poetry Anthology*. Picador, 1996.

Skinner, Jonathan. "Editor's Statement." *Ecopoetics*, vol. 1, 2001, pp. 5–8.

—. "Particular Attention: Thinking Through Kinsella." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2004, pp. 213–26.

—. "Walking the Falls: Dark Tourism and the Significance of Movement on the Political Tour of West Belfast." *Tourist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2016, pp. 23–39.

Smith, Iain Crichton. "Deer on the High Hills." *Poems to Eimhir*. Victor Gollancz, 1962.

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Penguin, 2014.

—. "In Praise of Walking." *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, edited by Tim Cresswell, Routledge, 2015.

Soper, Kate. "Alternative Hedonism, Cultural Theory and the Role of Aesthetic Revisioning." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2008, pp. 567–87.

—. "Hedonist Revisionism." *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 141, 2007, pp. 37–40.

—. “Re-thinking the ‘Good Life’: The Citizenship Dimension of Consumer Disaffection with Consumerism.” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2007, pp. 205–29.

—. “Representing Nature.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1998, pp. 61–65.

Sparrow, John. “Performances of Technology as Compositional Practice in British and Irish Contemporary Poetry.” *A Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Poetry, 1960–2015*, edited by Michael O’Neill, Anthony Howe, and Madeleine Callaghan, Wiley Blackwell, 2016, pp. 283–304.

Sprague, Jane. “Ecopoetics.” *Interim*, vol. 27, nos. 1–2, 2009.

Suliman, Osman. *The Dissolution of Muslim States*. Ta-Ha Publishers, 1997.

SymbioticA. “SymbioticA: Home.” *The University of Western Australia*, 21 Feb. 2019, static.weboffice.uwa.edu.au/archive/www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/home.html. Accessed 7 Nov. 2025.

Szechyńska-Hebda, Magdalena, et al. “Aboveground Plant-to-Plant Electrical Signaling Mediates Network Acquired Acclimation.” *The Plant Cell*, vol. 34, no. 8, 2022, pp. 3047–65. https://doi.org/10.1093/plcell/koac150.

Tarbuck, Alice, and Eleanore Widger. "Editorial: Traversing the Field: Walking, Landscapes and Locality." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2017, pp. 253-57. *Taylor & Francis Online*, https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2017.1389652.

Tarlo, Harriet. “Open Field: Reading Field as Place and Poetics.” *Placing Poetry*, edited by Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding, Rodopi, 2013, pp. 113–48.

—. “Provisional Pleasures: The Challenge of Contemporary Experimental Women’s Poetry.” *Feminist Review*, vol. 62, no. 1, 1999, pp. 94–112.

—. “Radical Landscapes: Experiment and Environment in Contemporary Poetry.” *Jacket*, no. 32, 2007.

—. “Recycles: The Eco-Ethical Poetics of Found Text in Contemporary Poetry.” *Journal of Ecocriticism*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2009, pp. 114–30.

—, editor. *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry*. Shearsman Books, 2011.

Tarlo, Harriet, and Judith Tucker. *Behind Lands*. Wild Pansy Press, 2015.

—. *Field*. Shearsman Books, 2016.

—. *Gathering Grounds*. Shearsman Books, 2021.

—. “‘Off Path, Counter Path’: Contemporary Walking Collaborations in Landscape, Art and Poetry.” *Critical Survey*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2017, pp. 105–32.

—. “Drawing Closer: Towards a Phenomenology of Contemporary Drawing.” *Field Readings*, vol. 1, 2021, pp. 45–69.

—. “In the Open: Collaborative Artworks around Place, Landscape and Environment.” *Journal of Art, Media and Arts Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2019.

—. “Poetry, Painting and Change on the Edge of England.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2019, pp. 634–59.

—. “Cross Multi Inter Trans: A Contextual Introduction.” *Green Letters*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2019, pp. 219–30.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton UP, 2015.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, et al., editors. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. U of Minnesota P, 2017.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, et al. *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene*. U of Minnesota P, 2024.

Virtanen, Juha. "Introduction to Poetry and Race." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1–7.

Wang, Dorothy J. *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry*. Stanford UP, 2015.

Ware, Vron. "Ghosts, Trails, and Bones: Circuits of Memory and Traditions of Resistance." *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*, edited by Vron Ware and Les Back, U of Chicago P, 2002, pp. 196–226.

—. "Otherworldly Knowledge: Toward a 'Language of Perspicuous Contrast'." *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*, edited by Vron Ware and Les Back, U of Chicago P, 2002, pp. 15–32.

Watson, Roderick. "The Modern Scottish Literary Renaissance." *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Volume 3: Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)*, edited by Ian Brown, Edinburgh UP, 2001.

Weston, Daniel, and Juha Virtanen. "The Work and the Reader: A New Formalism for the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1–6.

Welsh, Sarah. "The Radical Diversity of Caribbean Poetry in Britain." *Edinburgh Companion to British and American Poetics*, edited by Anne-Marie Millim, Edinburgh UP, 2019.

Widger, Eleanor. “The ‘Specific Evidentness’ of Contemporary Radical Landscape Poetry: Innovative Form and Spatial Presence in *The Ground Aslant*.” *English: Journal of the English Association*, vol. 65, no. 251, 2016, pp. 363–86.

Wilson, Edward O. *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. Knopf, 1998.

Wohlleben, Peter. *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World*. Translated by Jane Billinghurst, Greystone Books, 2015.

Wood, David. “What Is Ecophenomenology?” *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2001, pp. 78–95.

Wylie, John. *Landscape*. Routledge, 2007.

—. “A Single Day’s Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2005, pp. 234–47.

—. “A Landscape Cannot Be a Homeland.” *Landscape Research*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2016, pp. 408–16.

Wynter, Sylvia. *Why We Cannot Save Ourselves in a Woman’s Manner: Towards the Caribbean Worldview*. First Conference of Caribbean Women Writers, Tape 1, 1988.

Wynter, Sylvia, and Katherine McKittrick. “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations.” *Sylvia Wynter: Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick, Duke UP, 2015, pp. 9–89.

Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. U of Minnesota P, 2018.

Zapf, Hubert. “Literary Ecology and the Ethics of Texts.” *New Literary History*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2008, pp. 847–68.

—

Multimedia

“A Reading by Maggie O’Sullivan.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Kelly Writers House, 30 July 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOZDYxt9aQ4,