TENDING TO PLACE FROM HERE TO THERE:
STUDIES IN THE PLACE-WORK OF AESTHETIC CHOROGRAPHY

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Science

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Abstract

TENDING TO PLACE FROM HERE TO THERE:
STUDIES IN THE PLACE-WORK OF AESTHETIC CHOROGRAPHY
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In 1995, Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation held its inaugural symposium titled "Art in the Landscape". During the roundtable discussion, walking artist Hamish Fulton asserted that there are fundamental differences between his art and American Land Art. Drawing on Fulton's assertion, this dissertation argues for the redefinition of British environmental art, conventionally called Land Art after the American tradition. Through the exploration of the work of several contemporary and living British artists, the British School of Aesthetic Chorography is articulated. The practice of aesthetic chorography involves an embodied experience of place, such as walking or gardening, which results in a creative response. This creative response is the place-work of aesthetic chorography and can take a plethora of forms including the attachment of language to place, the creation of an ephemeral marker, an image or a representation or the creation of a printed object which recalls the place in some way. Derived from the unfolding of this place-work, the role of language in art is a theme which is carried through the dissertation. The role of language in childhood, memory and constituting knowledge claims is also explored particularly as it relates to place and loss. The conservational potential of language with respect to place is theorized in a place theory of language and a recollective theory of place. The conservational element of this work is further developed through the articulation of aesthetic chorography as a parochial tending practice which devotes attention to place as an experienced phenomenon. The persistence of parochial places and vernacular tending practices, however, require conservation. The heritage work of the Common Ground

Trust in the UK which seeks to promote the "local distinctiveness" of places is explored and the keeping place is raised as a way of thinking about the engaged and living preservation of vernacular places, particularly in the face of environmental crisis.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Aesthetic Chorography, Art, Common Ground Trust, Concrete Poetry, Critical Topography, Environmental Aesthetics, Environmental Ethics, Epistemology, Heritage, Keeping Place, Land Art, Landscape, Language, Lieu de Mémoire, Local, Memory, Monument, Parochial, Place, Place-work, Tending, Vernacular, Walking, Jonathan Bordo, Lionel L. Ferguson, Alec Finlay, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Hamish Fulton, Andy Goldsworthy, Donald Judd, Richard Long, Robert Macfarlane, Brian Nichols, Ferdinand de Saussure, Richard Skelton, Robert Smithson, James Turrell, W.J.T. Mitchell

To my Gwa and Papa, for the gift of place,
and
to my boys, Leo and Ronan, for the gift of wonder;
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"There is nothing like looking if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after."

J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

Introduction

Figure 1- Morning Mist, Lionel L. Ferguson, 2011. By permission of the artist.

Ceci n'est pas un paysage. This is not a landscape.

At first glance this claim may seem false. The watercolour painting pictured above[1] (figure 1) displays all the characteristics of a typical landscape from the Western European tradition that structures our understanding of landscape as a genre of picturing. The painting shows sky, land, and water, arranged within the confines of a frame.[2] The two boats trolling around the inlet perform the function of marking human presence, a significant acknowledgement when considering this painting as falling within the genre of landscape for, as Jonathan Bordo writes:

[1] This original watercolour painting has presided over my PhD. It now sits on my desk, at a right angle to my computer screen, offering an oblique view of the British Columbian coast, a place I have never visited.
[2] W.J.T. Mitchell defines the landscape genre of painting as "a certain emphasis on natural objects as subject matter." See W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape" in *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14.

> The paradox of the landscape without a figural witness comes to assume a particular visual significance when one recalls that the Western European landscape, at least as early as the fifteenth century, is enunciated as a witnessed landscape, a landscape marked by deliberate signs of human presence: if not human beings figuratively present, then evidences of living human presence (shelters, dwellings, paths, roads, signs marking enclosures such as walls and fences, smoke rising from a fire), if not material evidences of living human presence, then traces on the land of former human occupancies (cairns, tumuli, ruins, graves, architecture).[3]

According to Bordo, the Western European landscape is a witnessed landscape, one where the witness's presence is marked, on the one hand, by the painting's existence and redoubled by visual markers of human presence in the land: roads, dwellings, or, as is the case in the painting pictured above, boats. Although the painting above bears certain defining characteristics of a landscape, it might not be a landscape.

One could also enter into the semantic argument that it is not a landscape at all because the painting is, in actuality, of a coast and, as a consequence, would be more aptly referred to as a seascape. Choosing to engage in semantics, however, ignores the more nuanced ways in which this painting avoids the traditions of the landscape genre.

The claim, *Ceci n'est pas un paysage*, is, of course, a play on surrealist painter, René Magritte's *La Trahison des images* (1929), a painting of a pipe with the words "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*" written beneath, inviting the viewer to contemplate how what they are looking at is in fact a representation of pipe and, as such, declared not a pipe at all. The representation removes the pipe's ability to be a pipe: it no longer smokes or holds tobacco; one can no longer stuff the bowl or hold the bit between one's teeth. In taking

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[3] Jonathan Bordo, "Picture and Witness at the Site of Wilderness," in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 26, No 2, 2000, 297.

away the pipe's ability to perform its pipe-ness it ceases to be a pipe; it merely looks like one. The painting also invites a contemplation of the relationship between words and images and asks the viewer to consider how both words and images suggest or point toward an object without having the ability to actually be the thing they are showing or referencing. Language mediates the gap between the thing and its representation.

By applying Magritte's surrealist conceptualization to landscape, it invites the same contemplations with the added complexity of the object under study being a heavily endowed socio-cultural construct. Landscape is commonly understood, on the surface to be a genre of painting, one which is comprised of an extensive list of sub-genres. Within the context of the end of the 20th century, landscape has also come to be understood retrospectively as a medium,

> not as the uniquely central medium that gives us access to ways of seeing landscape, but as a representation of something that is already a representation in its own right…. It is a material "means" (to borrow from Aristotle's terminology) like language or paint, embedded in a tradition of cultural signification and communication, a body of symbolic forms capable of being invoked and reshaped to express meanings and values.[4]

By virtue of saying that this, the painting you see above, is not a landscape, the claim is being made that this particular painting operates outside of the established "tradition of cultural signification and communication" that W.J.T. Mitchell discusses. Landscape, as a genre and a medium, has a long history of usage which, within academic contexts, has largely come to be understood as standing emblematic for the ways in which humans, within the Western European tradition, relate to the land in a variety of historic, religious

[4] Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape", 14.

and socioeconomic contexts.[5] These traditional approaches to landscape picturing allow for the conceptualization of land as property, real estate, commodity and, as such, relegate it to the realms of object-hood. Like Magritte's painted pipe painted land stills the living entities it represents; they become *nature morte*.

This painting, like many of the Scottish Canadian watercolourist Lionel L. Ferguson's paintings, is not a landscape, although it bears many characteristics which, at first glance, make it appear as though it is entering into the traditions. This painting is, in fact, a *chorography*[6] because its representation is of a place as an experienced entity, located spatially and temporally, and not of land as personal property or as wilderness – devoid of human presence and therefore ripe for exploitation.[7] The clouds, the mountains, the rising mist and the dissipating fog, along with the faint red glow emitted by the boats' lights, suggest that this is early morning. The coast awash with breaking waves, the light coming in from the east, their boat facing roughly north. The boats are telling of the human activity that is present even in this remote location, each one a life with an experience and a story, particularly of this place. The viewpoint, from the ocean, looking inland, also speaks to the presence of the human, the witness, which gives the lie to the "wilderness" of Desolation Sound, B.C. This is not an unwitnessed, unexperienced place: a *terra nullius* this is not.

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[5] See Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape", 5-34.
[6] A chorography is the witnessed articulation of a site which exists in both space and time. This concept is elaborated in detail throughout the dissertation.
[7] See Bordo, "Picture and Witness,"231, which draws the connection between the visual representation of an unwitnessed landscape as constituting a wilderness which, from a European perspective, "alleges the zero degree of history". See also Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine – Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," *Journal of Canadian Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 4, 1992.

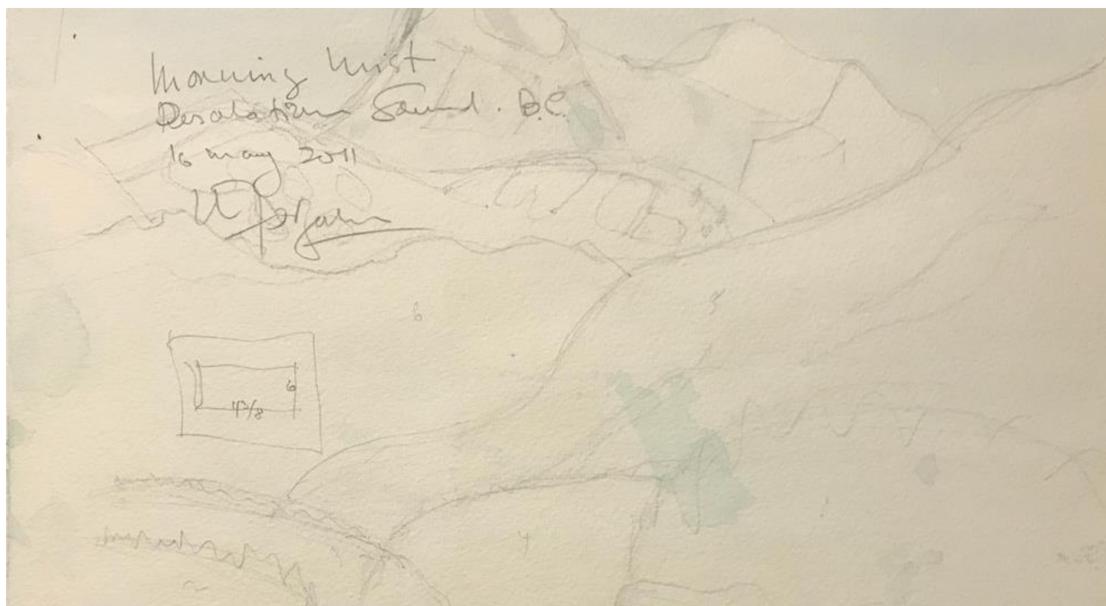

Figure 2 -The Reverse of Morning Mist, Desolation Sound, B.C., 16 May 2011, Lionel L. Ferguson, 2011. By permission of the artist.

This piece's lack of "title", in the conventional sense, also lends itself to the understanding of this piece as a chorography. While "Morning mist" may appear to be a title, it is in fact merely describing the weather conditions. There is nothing to say that what is represented in this painting is anything other than this place at this time. What is recorded in place of a title are the conditions, place, time and date, all of which are recorded on the back of the painting in the artist's hand: "Morning mist, Desolation Sound, BC, 16 May 2011, L.L. Ferguson" (figure 2).

Desolation Sound is in fact a marine park, known for its isolation, solitude, wildlife and diverse topography; it can be located on a map. Ferguson and his wife Mary visited Desolation Sound on a trip to the British Columbian coast in the Spring of 2011 while they were visiting their son who lives and works on Cortes Island. This piece is emblematic of Ferguson's approach to painting place, for there is nothing appropriative in the act, to Ferguson his paintings of place are simply "memories I can hang on a wall."

Ferguson's practice highlights not only his position as an attentive witness with respect to place but also the role that time plays in the constitution of somewhere as a place. This alliance between place and time is articulated by Bahktin in his formulation of the chronotope, literally a time-place.[8] Ferguson's chronotopic painting practice is chorographic in that it articulates a place as a time-based entity existing with respect to the experience of a witness, a life for whom the place exists. By recasting certain pictured landscapes, directed by their creative process, as an aestheticized form of chorography, it permits us to relieve them of the cultural baggage placed upon them simply by virtue of their picturing the land. Postulating contemporary landscape picturing practises as chorographic will be an underlying mainstay of this dissertation.

Critical Topography

The approach taken to my account of Ferguson's painting above is influenced by Jonathan Bordo's critical topography, an approach to the study of the mental and cultural construct that is place, which is performed through the study of places. A critical topography of a place seeks to provide a deeply nuanced answer to the place question: *where am I?* Bordo looks to Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* to elaborate the nuances of answering this seemingly simple and direct question.

> One might say the place question is modally charged, meaning it has a plethora of instances of it. Where am I now, implies the question, where was I before? The two questions together might lead to the question: Why am I here, and beside that question, who am I to be here at this place now? This question in turn might lead to the question, by what right am I to be at that spot? … If Oedipus is there at

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[8] M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

> Colonus, expelled from Thebes, seeking refuge in Athens, his seemingly theoretical question, where am I, contains the deeper question, what right do I have to be here – the question of right…. Nowhere are the existential, ethical and philosophical issues about place more critically and acutely posed… than in *Oedipus at Colonus*.[9]

Through this passage, Bordo highlights the complexity of the question: "where am I?" What does it really mean to be somewhere, and what are all the things that make somewhere a here and not somewhere else, or nowhere? Indeed, how does one talk about a place, what makes a place, a place?

In working to answer this suite of questions, critical topography adopts an insular approach which presents place as a culturally dense site, a universe in miniature, a monad, which can be defined by and constituted through one's experiencing of it. Critical topography also considers the journey by which one arrives at a place: the how-do-I get-there is integral to the articulation of where-am-I. Critical topography is both intensive and mobile.

How we explore, experience, and arrive at an articulation of place can be informed by expressions of place including: memories, narratives, words, art, music, literature, history, events, even a representation of the place. As the discussion of Ferguson's painting illustrates, these place particulars are also temporally connected, existing at a site stratigraphically, interacting relationally such that we can construct an understanding of a place in similar fashion to the way that archaeology interprets and understands material culture according to its location in the strata. Bordo discusses the practice of critical topography in the following way:

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[9] Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick, "Introduction" in *Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, Forthcoming).

> Critical topography posits its monadological object in terms of two modes. On the one hand it is intensive: a universe unfolds within the name place. Its iterations unfold within it.... But there is another aspect, place is to be thought of extensionally as mobile, a flow leading from one station to another…. In this extensional mode critical topography invites the consideration of the route taken…. critical topography aspires to be an approach of discursive elaboration that permits the assemblage of material things with the signifying tokens of words and images…. The tasks of critical topography are to mediate and to diminish the gap, to bring through inscription, representation, and to be both in the world and about the world at the same time.[10]

We might consider this to be the "place-work" of critical topography, wherein one turns to an interdisciplinary amalgamation of materials which are connected by their being the product of an individual's experience of a site. The interdisciplinary nature of critical topography permits one to draw on a wide range of materials to conduct one's inquiry into, and the resultant elaboration of, place. As such, unlike most inquiries which work from a general concept or claim, seeking a deeper understanding through particular examples or proofs of the phenomena under study, critical topography works instead from the particular to the general. This approach invites a way of working that derives theory from within the example: the way one comes to articulate place at a particular site suggest to us ways of approaching and articulating the occurrences of place at other locations. This allows us to devise ways of thinking and articulating place, for a place can be anywhere, it merely requires a witnessing "I" for whom it exists.

[10] Jonathan Bordo, email message to author, January 2017 .

Aesthetic Chorography

The approach being presented in this dissertation builds on Bordo's critical topography, drawing strength from its monadological approach to place and its major thematic concerns with respect to experience, attachment, attention, and belonging, and isolates language as a key component of this approach. By exploring how language constitutes place, such that we might consider it place delimiting, the unfolding particularity of things is addressed, through the study of a series of real-world, place-language, symbiotic relationships. As shown by Bordo's critical topography, the study of place can only be approached through the study of places, and it is in this way that the relationships between place and language will be drawn out in three parts.

The first part explores the complex epistemological relationship that exists between place and language drawing on the works of place theorists Jonathan Bordo, Robert Macfarlane, Rainer Marie Rilke, Henry David Thoreau, Walter Benjamin, Peter Van Wyck, and E.V. Walter, as well as the work of semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure to articulate a place theory of language and, as a consequence, a recollective theory of place. The role that childhood, knowledge acquisition, and memory come to play in the epistemological elements of this relationship will also be explored, particularly as this relates to the topic of loss. The promotion of a local focus, wherein the concept of the parochial, in its Classical Greek sense, is revisited and lays the foundation for an approach to the conservation of place.

The aesthetic application of this place theory of language will be taken up in part two which revisits and recasts the art historical narrative of Land Art, making a case for reinterpreting British environmental art which has, to this point, been called Land Art.

Through this reinterpretation, the British School of Aesthetic Chorography comes to be presented as a logical and natural evolution of the landscape genre as an artistic mode. By exploring the work of aesthetic chorographers, all of whom are interconnected, certain defining characteristics of aesthetic chorography as a practice with respect to place and language, come to present themselves. These defining characteristics include an environmental ethic, documentary techniques, an interest in the particularity of place and of the natural processes that occur at that place, and the use of the book as a means of collating and disseminating work. Key figures in this school include Ian Hamilton Finlay, Thomas Clark, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, Alec Finlay, Richard Skelton, Autumn Richardson, Helen MacDonald, and Robert Macfarlane. All of these artists, writers, and poets have helped to revive and shape anew the deeply held connections to place that have been present in the British Isles for millennia.

The third part of this dissertation returns to aesthetic chorography as artful expression of place experienced through physical contact and explores the ethical implications of aesthetic chorography as a conservational practice. This section will revisit the vernacular work of Lionel L. Ferguson and Ian Hamilton Finlay and introduce the work of Canadian vernacular artist Brian Nichols, paying particular attention to their respective gardening practices. Through the work of these artists, the aesthetic attitudes of (at)tending and care come to be taken up as integral to the practice of aesthetic chorography, and the role of the aesthetic chorographer with respect to place is elaborated, ultimately suggesting that places require chorographers to persist as places. Chorographers and their place-work further require a keeping place, something which is able to carry inside of itself the place and practice of the chorographer such that it can be preserved as a living entity, recalled, recounted, and shared with the next generation.

Conclusion

Landscape, as Bordo writes, is "a portmanteau for almost everything that human beings consider intimately and with desire about their material surroundings."[11] Landscape, as an aesthetic practice, at least since modernity, has been one of representation, wherein the land is rendered fit for human habitation and nature is positioned to be brought under the rule of mankind.[12] As Bordo summarizes, "Landscape is the spatial form of culture."[13]

Ferguson's painting, by contrast, provides his experiential response to the place question: Where am I? His rendering is the record. His attention is to place as it exists and he represents his experience of it without a desire to consume, or to render it fit for human use. Ferguson's representation of Desolation Sound is solely the product of experience and attention. Ferguson locates the Sound, which lacks a definitive "location" on a map, as here, resting in the bay, looking toward the shore, in the early morning when the mist rises from amongst the firs, obscuring the fjords and mountains that lie beyond. This is Desolation Sound, a place far from desolate, as its name betokens.

Ferguson, in his rendering, comes closest to the truth of the place on 16 May 2011. His offering is not a "landscape" in the conventional sense of the term, but an aesthetic chorography — an aesthetic expression of the place as subjectively experienced by him, the witnessing "I" for whom Desolation Sound was found as he cast his gaze off the side of a boat in the early morning light. Unlike a photograph, Ferguson's rendering does not

[11] Jonathan Bordo, "Canada, the Proper Name of the Wilderness: The Metaphysics of Absence in the Landscape Art of Canada from Tom Thomson to Edward Burtynsky" (Lecture, Institute of English and American Studies, Dresden University of Technology, Dresden, Germany, June 1, 2021).
[12] Genesis 1:26-28
[13] Bordo, "Canada, the Proper Name of the Wilderness", June 1, 2021.

presume to be the place that it shows, because it is an abstraction of the place, it is the place as Ferguson experienced it.

Chorography, when considered as an aesthetic practice, asks us to reconsider our conceptualization of place as an inert entity, an x-marks-the-spot on a map. Landscape, in aesthetics, has traditionally been, the picturing or framing of land as commodity, as an object fit for human consumption. By contrast, chorography is the experiencing of place; aesthetic chorography is the aestheticized articulation of the experience of place. Contemporary aesthetic approaches to the land are increasingly driven by environmental concerns, in various guises. Aesthetic chorography is landscape for an environmentally aware and climate concerned era. Chorography allows for place to be a living and ever-changing entity that is imbued with what Walter refers to as *energy,* "the capacity to cause changes in interest, feeling, or action."[14] Chorography does not ask for place to become like the biological specimen: pinned down and labelled beneath glass.

My contribution to critical topography is an open and inviting approach to aesthetic analysis which explores places as experienced and energetic entities. These are places which require engagement, attention and articulation for their conservation and continuance as places. The potential of local places to take on heritage status and the latent power of the parochially minded individual suggest means and modes of place conservancy. The case for conservancy and heritage, however, first requires that places be identified and articulated. It is this work and the role that language plays in this work that we address first.

[14] E.V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 215.

Part 1

"Once upon a time, words began to vanish from the language of children. They disappeared so quietly that at first almost no one noticed - fading away like water on stone. The words were those that children used to name the natural world around them: acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker - gone! Fern, heather, kingfisher, otter, raven, willow, wren... all of them gone! The words were becoming lost: no longer vivid in children's voices, no longer alive in their stories."[15]

Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris

Place

Any discussion of such a commonplace and overlooked and yet emotionally encumbered phenomena as place inherently requires one to begin by asking some questions. What is place? What is the difference between place and space? Is place found in space, or is it the other way around? How do we define place? What role does language have in our defining of place? How much of our definition of a place depends on dwelling? Need it be the dwelling of a human being to be considered a place or can places be constituted in relation to other beings?

The geographer or the scientist, in the search for place, would have us looking to an absolute point, a location, for they require an objective way of locating a place within space and, in doing so they treat place as an inert and concrete entity. But this is not the place we are looking for. Our search is for place in the subjective sense, where space can only be found inside the container of place, and place is identified and defined by a

[15] Robert MacFarlane and Jackie Morris, *The Lost Words*, (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2018), 1.

witnessing subject's personal experience. As E.V. Walter writes, "A *topos* or place is the container of experience."[16]

This part of the dissertation seeks to outline a recollective theory of place which relies on the primacy of language to constitute place as a mental construction and, as a consequence, to allow for its conservation through acts of recollection. Language is equally place-like in its constitution as it is requisite for formulating memory, and it is language that allows one to conceptualize place through experience and to recall and recount it.

That there is an intimate connection that exists between place and language is far from a new idea. Several eminent scholars and writers argue for the primacy of language in the constitution of somewhere as a place; they include Jonathan Bordo, Robert Macfarlane, Rainer Marie Rilke, Walter Benjamin, Henry David Thoreau, Peter C. Van Wyck, and E.V. Walter to name but a few. This part brings the place-work of these scholars and writers together with theories of language, knowledge, memory and childhood development to further develop the link between language and place and to advocate for the importance of place language acquisition in childhood.

Infancy and childhood are critical periods for the acquisition of place language and the promotion of what Walter would refer to as *chorophilia*, or "the love of place."[17] It is in this period of life that we see the true primacy of language played out for we require language in order to internalize experiences, to move beyond pure experience and store experience in memory as a kind of knowledge. In this, the word becomes the fragmentary substitute for the experience. This notion is picked up by Rilke in the Ninth Elegy

[16] Walter, *Placeways*, 72.
[17] Walter, *Placeways*, 215.

wherein bringing the name of a wildflower or even a description of the wildflower back down the mountain is presented as an effective substitution for bringing back the wildflower itself; one which has the added benefit of allowing the gentian to persist in its loveliness in its natural environment, the place where it is most beautiful.

> The wanderer does not bring a handful of earth,
> the unutterable, from the mountain slope to the valley,
> but a pure word he has learned, the blue
> and yellow gentian.[18]

The name of the flower is presented as existing coextensive with the flower. Things, such as flowers, can only be themselves, but word-names have the unique ability to be both word-names and the thing they take the place of. This quality of language is key when articulating a recollective theory of place and a place theory of language, for it both grounds place in the material world while also allowing for it to be entirely mental. Place can be of the world and of the mind simultaneously. There is, however, a further level of abstraction when it comes to word-names for place for, as Van Wyck writes,

> Naming… may lead us from the space of *topos* to *place*. That is, from a topography to a chorography. Walter writes that "a place has a name and a history." But the substitution of names, whatever the motivation may be, does not of itself accomplish this transformation. Bordo would call this the difference between a location and a destination. "That something is 'brought' to somewhere to make it a place might be called the *site* aspect of a place because it refers to all the investments that are brought from somewhere to a locality to make it a place. Those investments in relation to place are off-site to make it a place. In this convergence somewhere becomes a place. An address becomes a destination."[19]

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[18] Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Nineth Elegy" in *Duino Elegies*, C.F. MacIntyre (trans.), accessed July 30, 2021, https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~felluga/rilke.html.
[19] Peter Van Wyck, *The Highway of the Atom*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 67-68.

As Van Wyck identifies after Walter and Bordo, the name of a place and its history is not enough to make the objective space of *topos* into the subjective *place*. There are also cultural investments which are brought to somewhere to make it a place. The unity of the place name, or *toponym*, reaches beyond substituting the material features of the place, collecting inside of itself also the history of the place and all the ways a site is invested in culturally through acts of dwelling.

Thus, in the bringing together of language and place we find they exist relationally, symbiotically even, where one comes to be the proxy for the other. The language we have for a place impacts not only our understanding of that place, but also the nature of the place itself. Language is a mnemonic which remembers place *in absentia* and through time. Language is able to bear place away from location and time and recall it elsewhere at another time, such that material changes in a place's characteristics and features can come to be recorded, tracked and shared. The word also constitutes the place and allows for the word to be a place all its own: an island in a sentence that holds inside of itself an entire ecosystem. Desolation Sound as a toponym holds inside of itself not only the material place itself but also Ferguson's experience of it and his representation of it dated 16 May 2011. The toponym together with Ferguson's experience and representation brings Desolation Sound forward in time and across the country to my desk in Peterborough, ON in October 2021. Indeed, we could say language clings to place, building layer upon layer and, in its sedimentary accumulation, inscribes us onto the earth such that place is so saturated with language it is almost impenetrable. Nowhere is there a place without language.

Consider in this regard, the 2004 to 2008 happenings of a moor on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, Scotland as reported by Robert MacFarlane's 2015 book, *Landmarks*.

In November 2004, the engineering company AMEC in partnership with British Energy "filed an application to build a vast wind farm on the Brindled Moor."[20] To those who proposed the project, they were transforming a perceived *terra nullius* into something functional, indeed something beneficial, but to the locals, nothing could be further from the truth. In response to the proposed transformation of their home the locals collaborated to create a "Counter-Desecration Phrasebook" which showed just how full the moor was. It couldn't possibility be a *terra nullius*, every square centimetre had a feature, phenomenon and place that could not only be distinguished, but had a name. The Hebridean opposition to the proposed wind farm may, on the surface, seem parochial and indeed it is, but this is a new kind of parochialism. This work could only be done by the locals, because only the locals know the plenitude of the place. It is the recalled language for a place that admits one to it, in both senses of the word. While this example may seem exceptional, it is not. One need only look out a window and name every natural thing one sees or consider a drive between two major cities and think of all the signs one passes along the way. Indeed, one could argue that there is nowhere on the face of the earth, that is not like this.

The incident on the moor is symptomatic of the wider dispossession that is occurring the world over, a dispossession that puts pressure on what we understand by place, while simultaneously dispossessing us of the very conditions we need to constitute somewhere as a place: we are losing place and we are losing language. The contemporary condition we find ourselves in is all about existential threat: how many generations are left before humans too go the way of the dodo and the black rhino? We have adopted to designate

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[20] Robert MacFarlane, *Landmarks* (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 27.

this condition in relation to ourselves: the Anthropocene, the era of humankind.[21] Typical, environmentalist approaches engage the topic of the Anthropocene on the side of the great, the vast, the whole world; they also engage on the side of fear with undercurrents of capitalist misdirection. We might look to the recent work of Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky to help us understand the nature of these large-scale approaches.

In 2018, Burtynsky produced an exhibition, art book and documentary, titled simply *Anthropocene*. Burtynsky's photographs and film attempt to show the overwhelming condition of the Anthropocene. Images of catastrophic environmental destruction are turned into sublime objects, retouched tonally to heighten the drama of these seemingly abstract images, which, only on closer inspection, tell the truth of their tale. Sites of environmental alteration at the hands of man present both the effects that humans have on the land and the bizarre beauty with which it has occurred. There is both a drawing near and a distancing quality to Burtynsky's work. He asks us to face the reality of what we have made the world into, but he also distances us from his subject matter by creating images we can almost convince ourselves are beautiful.

[21] Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological* (London: Penguin Books, 2018).

Figure 3 - Edward Burtynsky, Oil Bunkering #2, Niger Delta, Nigeria 2016; © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.

The image above is one of the over 35 images included in Burtynsky's exhibition. From a distance the image appears to be of a river petering out into small streams in a remote location. It is only on close inspection that we realize the darkened land around the water's edge is not the swampland dark of water saturation, but something far more sinister; the grey vertical grasses around the water's edge are not the previous year's reed and swamp grass die-off but something much larger. Burtynsky titled this image *Oil Bunkering #2*, Niger Delta, Nigeria 2016 (figure 3). This image records the environmental effects of illegal oil bunkering in Nigeria, a practice that involves the siphoning off of crude oil from a legitimate pipeline by locals. This stolen crude is then refined in at-home

or remote distilleries and sold through back channels or put to personal use. These private distilleries have no checks, no balances, and the unusable by-products are dumped into the waterways where they pollute and destroy the natural environment. In the case of this image, the runoff from these distilleries has begun killing a forest. Roots of poison seem to wind their way into the forest, insidiously attacking the trees from within, gradually tuning them into the white skeletal figures, witnesses which surround the polluted water source.[22]

This image takes on a metaphoric quality, drawing us in through its organic shapes, seeming to wrap, wind, and caress nature. The fact that this is an embrace of death only becomes obvious through closer inspection. We might also say the same of capitalism: the global pathogen that is the progenitor of this scene. Capitalism lured us in through beautiful, shiny things and the desire to amass more. The beauty masks the horror however, because out of the desire for more, we were driven to exploit the land around us for its resources. This image also speaks to the desperation and degradation of morality caused by capitalism and by human exceptionalism. We feel the need to have more, so much so that we are willing to behave in amoral ways to acquire that which we believe we are lacking. This image stages the progression and the global permeation of the "Anthropocene". The islands of nature are becoming smaller.

These are big ideas. They purposefully attempt to be all encompassing and appeal to our sensibilities as 'global citizens' and 'inhabitants of the earth.' Burtynsky's images, along with the work of countless other artists who attempt to engage with the concept of the Anthropocene, approach the Anthropocene in the only way they know how – on the

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[22] Edward Burtynsky, "Anthropocene," in *Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, Forthcoming).

global, large, all-encompassing scale. This type of approach is ineffective. Large scale attempts to deal with the whole, only serve to produce diffused results: they shock and awe us into silence. Searching for a technological approach at the expense of place, community and nature is at best destructive and most certainly hastening our end. We do not need more wind farms; they are not the answer.

Instead, we would be well advised to turn our attention to the parochial, that which is local, near home, and explore means of caring for our own backyard. This is a complex notion that will be taken up in greater detail in part three of the dissertation. Suffice it to say that the first step in establishing this caring relationship for place is by beginning to attend to it, to give our attention and our senses to our respective places in a small way that attends to and develops a vocabulary for what is there so that we can share our places and our experiences of place with others. Language is the logical interlocutor for this transaction between the natural and the human and it is the way that language and place can be used and understood interchangeably that we will explore first.

Language and Place

Language and place are closely tied entities which, conceptually, require one another to be what they are and to provide us with frameworks by which we can come to understand them. Language is place-like in its constitution. Phonetic sounds together become words which are themselves names, sites of individual meaning; a singular locus in which the phonetic sound becomes arbitrarily allied with a concept. Taken together, these word-names compile their individual meanings into a discourse, a thought journey

which takes the traveller though the argument, sharing with them what the discourse is about, what sense it is trying to impart.

We can make similar claims for place. Place comes to be constituted through its various features and elements, both material and mental, and we can read the ways these things interact to construct this place as distinct. The features and elements of place, such as flora, fauna, geology, limnology, architecture, memory, narrative, event, as well as representation, coalesce into the place as a unity, the place as we experience it.[23] This is much the same as the way the words in a sentence are taken together to collectively communicate sense.

We can find evidence for this relationship between place and language in our own language. As Jonathan Bordo explains, the Greek root *top-* means place. This lexeme informs our understanding of the relationship between language and place:

> From the Greek root *top*, we get both *topos* and *topic*. The lexeme *top-* with the same root sits uneasily between geography and rhetoric. The former is a bounded space of human inscription and dwelling, while the latter is a space that holds a pattern of thought. Both *topic* and *topos* denote a kind of occupancy inscribed with people and language. Without writing in either case, there is no place. Thus, one might think of place as the space that falls between a bracket […]. Topography sets out a space, from the clearance of abstraction by establishing boundaries as the perimeter. Topography—because it informs place—fixes a place in objective physical space or as the space of language. It designates the brackets within which there is a human habitus or the dwelling of thought.[24]

This positioning of place as residing conceptually somewhere between language and physical location speaks to the nature of place itself. Although Bordo and Fitzpatrick

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[23] Walter in his *Placeways* makes a similar claim. See Walter, *Placeways*, 23.
[24] Bordo and Fitzpatrick, "Introduction" in *Place Matters*.

reference writing specifically as the prerequisite for place, surely, they are referring to language more generally and not just its written expression. As Bordo and Fitzpatrick identify, place only exists in so far as we have language to describe it and language is a function of naming and communicating our experiences.

Bordo and Fitzpatrick's remarks also capture how we consider place and how place is distinct from space, inverting the geographer's model to find space as existing inside of place. This reversal allows for space to be locatable and concrete, as opposed to the nebulous absence, "the clearance of abstraction", that becomes carved up into places through human interaction, between which there is only non-place or unassigned space. This inversion is essential in this kind of work because it acknowledges the persistence of existence outside of the human subject. A place does not need to be identified by the human, to exist and to be important.

As Bordo discusses elsewhere, however, human identification and naming of place through a toponym, such that a place comes to be constituted as a unity through the interaction between a site and a name, is what brings place forward in the human consciousness and allows for us to identify its constituent parts.

> By starting with the singularity of a place as the site of its work, Critical Topography is initiated by the initial colocation of a spot with a name to constitute a place…. Thus, it starts with the place mark as the most primitive deposition of a sign…. It begins with the unity of a singular place, the right here and now, as if that singularity contained within itself the universe. For Descartes, space was defined in terms of its extension, for Critical Topography place is intensive as the states and modes, a universe unfolding within itself.[25]

[25] Jonathan Bordo, email message to author, January 2017.

The world of the place unfolds from the place name because it is bound by it. The act of naming itself marks something out as distinct and unique from its surroundings and, as a result, we bring ourselves one step closer to claiming knowledge of a thing or a place. In this, there is an advancing from the general to the particular.

This idea appears in Aristotle's *Physics*, in which Aristotle discusses how one comes to knowledge. In the opening lines, Aristotle highlights the importance of not only experience, but also of advancing "from generalities to particulars" and the role that the naming of an object has to play in our knowing it. Aristotle writes:

> When the objects of an inquiry… have principles, conditions, or elements, it is through acquaintance with these that knowledge… is attained. For we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary conditions or first principles, and have carried our analysis as far as its simplest elements….Thus we must advance from generalities to particulars; for it is a whole that is best known to sense-perception, and a generality is a kind of whole, comprehending many things within it, like parts. Much the same thing happens in the relation of the name to the formula. A name, e.g. 'round', means vaguely a sort of whole: its definition analyses this into its particular senses. Similarly a child begins by calling all men 'father', and all women 'mother', but later on distinguishes each of them.[26]

While Aristotle is specifically dealing with how we come to scientific knowledge of objects through their "principles, conditions, or elements", we might consider how Aristotle's approach to knowing, as initiated through the interaction of sensory perception and language, and more specifically through naming, might also be applied to place.

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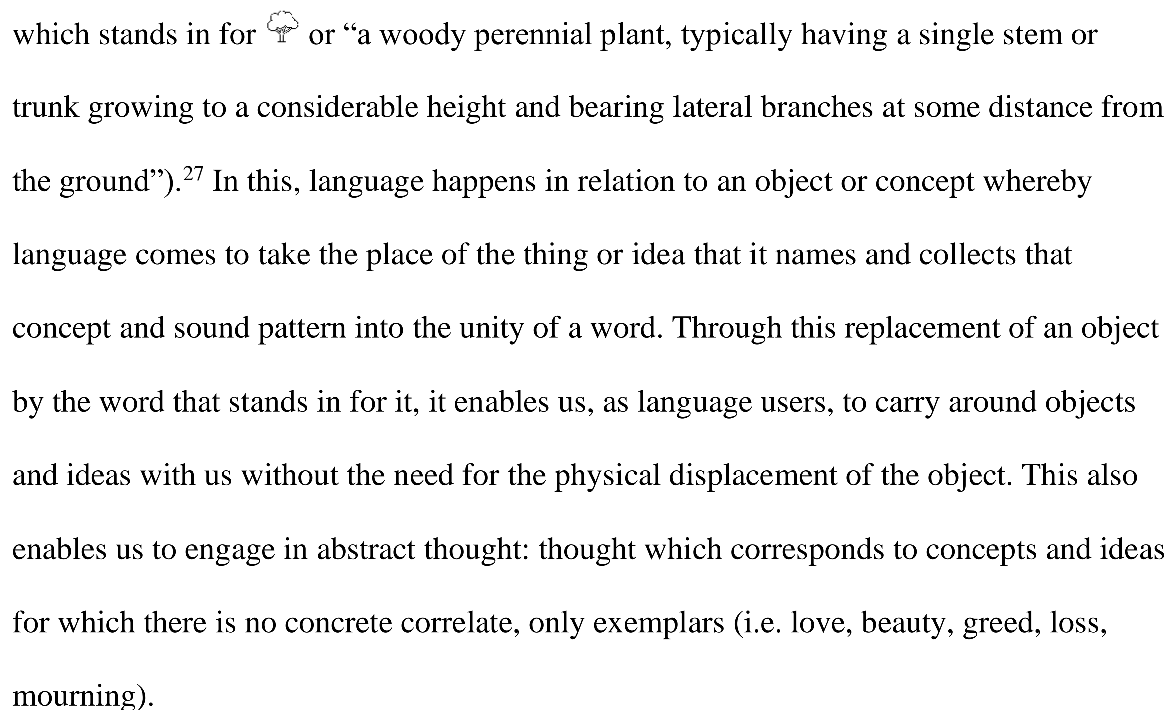
[26] Aristotle, *Physics: Book 1*, R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye (trans.), accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/physics/astrocourses/ast203/aristotlephysics_i.html.

Through the identification and naming of something or somewhere, we come to recognize it as a unity, a whole unto itself, and this recognition of the whole in turn allows us to investigate the constituent parts of that unity as both part of the unity and distinct elements in their own right. A city, for example, is collected under the unity of its place name. While it is composed of a plethora of people, plants, animals, institutions, buildings, parks, businesses, rules, laws, events, and more, each with their own names, these elements simultaneously play a role in constructing the unity of the city, defining that city in the present moment. These composing elements of a city have the potential to be places in their own right, each with its own distinct place name and history of engagement. This, we might imagine, is the functional definition of an address (i.e. Professor, Office Number, Scott House, Catharine Parr Traill College, London Street, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, North America, Northern Hemisphere, Earth, Milky Way, etc.); a person or witness, who may or may not be a place unto themselves, is located inside ever smaller spheres, each of which bears its own distinct name and the unity that falls beneath that name is always able to be considered as both a unity and as a collection of other unities which may or may not be considered primary conditions depending on the point of reference.

It is through this concept of first principles that we might also consider the work of Ferdinand de Saussure for he too begins with the word as a name. The relationship between the name and the thing that the word names is a foundational concept in the theorization of language Saussure formulates. Saussure's linguistic theory distills down to an exploration of the relationship that exists between the word, the sound pattern, and the concept, or sign, signifier, and signified (i.e. the word written "tree," spoken aloud as trē,

which stands in for  or "a woody perennial plant, typically having a single stem or trunk growing to a considerable height and bearing lateral branches at some distance from the ground").[27] In this, language happens in relation to an object or concept whereby language comes to take the place of the thing or idea that it names and collects that concept and sound pattern into the unity of a word. Through this replacement of an object by the word that stands in for it, it enables us, as language users, to carry around objects and ideas with us without the need for the physical displacement of the object. This also enables us to engage in abstract thought: thought which corresponds to concepts and ideas for which there is no concrete correlate, only exemplars (i.e. love, beauty, greed, loss, mourning).

Language and the word-name as a spoken, rather than a written, entity is particularly significant when we come to consider the role that language has played for the human species over the entirety of our linguistic existence.[28] One of language's most important functions after the articulation of need, is its narrative function, and in this, its ability to formalize memory and history, such that teachings and hard won knowledge might be shared with the next generation. Indeed, it has been acknowledged for millennia that language plays a fundamental role in memory, both in regard to its function as a repository and as a means of recovery. Saussure acknowledges the "prime conservative force" that is language and postulates language as a heritage object. He writes:

> No matter what period we choose or how far back we go, language always appears as a heritage of the preceding period. We might conceive of an act by

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[27] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 65.

[28] As distinct from a pre-linguistic existence whereby we as humans may have communicated in much the same way as dogs or horses do today – through a select number of meaningful vocalizations and a great degree of body language.

> which, at a given moment, names were assigned to things and a contract was formed between concepts and sound-images; but such an act has never been recorded…. No society, in fact, knows or has ever known language other than as a product inherited from preceding generations, and one to be accepted as such…. A particular language-state is always the product of historical forces.[29]

In this statement, Saussure captures two things: first, the concept that language is passed down from generation to generation and second that the history of language as a spoken entity is unknown (unlike that of inscription). In this we might regard language as our oldest human possession. It furnishes us with the ability to think about the world around us in the abstract and it allows us to share these thoughts with one another.

How communication occurs is also an element of language that Saussure addresses. He is notably place-like in his theorization of the way that the word uttered comes to assume value within a linguistic community. Saussure states:

> In discourse, on the one hand, words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together. This rules out the possibility of pronouncing two elements simultaneously. The elements are arranged in sequence on the chain of speaking. Combinations supported by linearity are *syntagms*. The syntagm is always composed of two or more consecutive units.... In the syntagm a term acquires its value only because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or to both.
>
> Outside discourse, on the other hand, words acquire relations of a different kind. Those that have something in common are associated in the memory, resulting in groups marked by diverse relations.... Those formed outside discourse are not supported by linearity. Their seat is in the brain; they are a part of the inner storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker. They are *associative relations*.[30]

[29] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 71.
[30] Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 123.

This articulation of the ways that words carry meaning both within and outside of discourse offers us both a deeper appreciation for the word as a vessel which, like place, amasses its symphony of signification over time, layer by layer. As Saussure identifies, within a discourse, words acquire their meaning based on the relations between the words as they are spoken one after another. Like a journey, one takes to the road one step at a time and the journey is formed, as discourse is formed, through the linear chaining together of places both passed through and rested in. In this, we might imagine a journey and Saussure's *syntagm* to be synonymous.

Outside of discourse however, the word in isolation forms connections to other words and concepts much more diversely, more tangentially. These relations are formed in the mind of the thinker/speaker and coloured by their own memories and experiences. In this, the word becomes a place, a site, which becomes enumerated and elaborated by that which environs it lexically and by that which resides inside of the word in its present form through its lexical relations. The connections that are made between the word-site and its *associative relations* rely on the witness-thinker, a person for whom the place-word is meaningful. In this we might imagine Saussure's *associative relations* of a word as akin to a chorography of place, an approach to place which expresses an individual's experience of that place: where and what is this place for me.

In fact, it may be said that Saussure has a place theory of language, such that place doesn't belong to the world at all, rather it is a mental operation performed by the human subject such that what we understand by place is already embedded in language. Saussure's place elaboration of the way words carry meaning helps us to come to a deeper understanding of the ways that place and language are akin conceptually. We might suggest that language happens both in place and in relation to place: meaning and

significance are arrived at through both the associative relations at the site and syntagms of the journey. We arrive at the meaning and significance of place in the same way, and we correlate the two through the unifying place name.

The toponym for a place has a particularizing force, one which singles the place out as unique, as distinctly nowhere else. It also has the effect of establishing a human knowledge of a place and the natural phenomena that inhabit the place. As with Aristotelian first principles, it is through naming, through discerning the particular from the general, that we come to know. This is one of the powers of place language for language is not only a place in so far as it takes the place of something else, it is also a mnemonic which allows for the displacement of place away from itself because it permits us to take a place with us operating in a referential way, pointing back to that which it describes without presuming to be onto-semiological in the way that a photograph does.

Rilke too, offers a place theory of language wherein language comes to take the place of natural phenomena, effecting a substitution, such that the traveller brings back with him language: words and perhaps a narrative of his journey, and leaves the things he saw, the earth and the blue and yellow gentian, to continue to exist in nature for the next traveller to experience also. Things are able to co-exist alongside language, this is the power of language: things are just things, words have the capacity to be both words and things.

The Rilkean positioning of language in this indexical and substitutional role is taken up in the work of walking artist Hamish Fulton. Fulton's art is directed by two foundational rules: 1. To create works which arise from his having walked somewhere only and 2. To leave no trace. Leave No Trace is an approach to being in the land that attempts to leave nature the way that we encounter it. This means that everything you

bring in with you, you leave with, and you do not take anything from nature. Like Rilke, Fulton does not pick the gentian, instead he leaves with his memory of it and perhaps a name.

Fulton requires name-words because his art leaves no trace and in order for it to be recognized as an art form a trace is required, even if only the distanced report of a memory. While he began by using photographs as evidentiary proof of his having walked somewhere, over the years Fulton's mode of reportage has become increasingly text based. Photographs, videos and other conventional documentary techniques attempt to be art objects unto themselves because they are able to make some conventional aesthetic claim through their established status as artistic mediums. For Fulton, these conventional art forms, distract from the walk, the true aesthetic centre of Fulton's work, and as such, are less able to perform the indexical function that Fulton desires of them. For this reason, Fulton takes the words for the experience he returns with and turns them into linguistic arrangements which perform an indexical function, pointing to and recording the walk in a way that is suggestive and invitational while also avoiding the attempt to be or show the experience of the place as a photograph or video might.

Hamish Fulton's *WILD ROCK* (1993) offers a fine example of his practice of reporting on his experiences. A grid of eight letters – four in white, four in black – footnoted by a note in white with the walk particulars: "Fourteen days walking fourteen nights camping Teton Range Wyoming Early Summer 1993". These words are set in a grey field, contained within a black box. Here, we are offered Fulton's distilled experience of his fourteen-day journey walking and camping in the Teton Range in Wyoming, USA. Featuring jagged snow-capped peaks and lush green valleys, the Teton Range is a portion of the Rocky Mountain range that sweeps down into the United States,

originating in British Columbia, Canada. Fulton has distilled his experience into just two words, an adjective and a noun: WILD and ROCK. The choice of these two words and their respective shades, white and black, suggest to the viewer a few things. WILD, printed in white, is the idea, that which hovers over the place and the walk work, qualifying the experience of the walk in the same way that it qualifies the place. The choice of white also likely correlates to the white peaks that cap the mountains, even in early summer, while also visually emulating the jagged peaks of the mountains that crown the range. ROCK by contrast, is printed in black, it is solid, concrete in its object-ness, rounded and blocky in its form, and underlies the jagged "wild" that lies above. Taken together these two words indicate a tripping hazard or a stone lodged in one's shoe. Even the maintained pathways in the backcountry of the Teton Range are littered with wild rocks that could present a tripping hazard.

While one can tease out the details and imagine what Fulton's experience might have been like, what we are presented with as viewers is not immediately accessible. What we see and read is all there is and the lack of obvious aestheticization of his offering encourages his viewers to look elsewhere for his art: it encourages us to look to the walk.

Fulton's work is first and foremost an act of experiential place-making which is recorded fleetingly through the intermediary of language. His minimalist reports of his walks become an ephemeral place-marker that recounts and recalls the particulars of the place in time, such that the place comes to be constituted though his curated language. This practice also allows Fulton to transpose a suggestion of his experiences to galleries and homes all around the world.

Words in Fulton's employ are a record and a marker of place as experienced and in this, they perform their native function. Words are devices which record and report, but

they are also a record unto themselves. As Saussure observed, any word, from a historical point of view, lays out its record for us, for in each word we can see clues to its provenance and the ways in which it has changed and evolved in form and in meaning over time. This provenance suggests the history of the word and, even fleetingly, its pre-history. It also suggests the history and values of the cultures who used it in its varying forms. When we use words in the present, we are not only speaking their present day meaning, but also their usage over time. Meaning is captured in each phoneme and lexeme, which, taken together, build meaning in the present day, and, distilled down to their component parts, open up a world of understanding and tangential correlations to other words that deepen our meaning through the words we choose to use in our discourse. In this way, language is sedimentary, and meaning is accumulated over time as generations adopt and employ language in diverse ways. Just like the fossil found in the geologic record, words are survivors of the past and vessels of memory that, more often than not, go unrecognized.

Language as Knowing

Humans, require the narrative function of words. When we lose the words for things we begin to have to suppose, to conjecture. Consider the site of Stonehenge in Somerset, UK: these stones and the stories we tell about them today, the meanings we have derived are all supposition informed by archaeology. Its forgetting was a function of a loss or suppression of language on some level and, as a consequence, the disuse of the site for its intended purpose. The combination of words which described what it was for stopped being shared. Indeed, the language used to talk about its various uses may have died out

entirely. The place itself fell into disuse because the community who used it was no longer interacting with it and it became a kind of ruins. Today, the generational language line that had once existed to talk about its uses, its construction, its place in the world has long been severed and we are left to just suppose.

We might say the same of a painting lacking a name, or when the name of a painting is forgotten, changed or suppressed. Without the title, the painting loses its narrative. We might suppose, we might fantasize, but the fact remains that F.H. Varley's *Indians Crossing Georgian Bay* (1922) loses its context when it was renamed in 1990s to *A Wind-Swept Shore* (1922) and not even by the artist but by the gallery which is now the custodian of the painting.[31] This renaming also causes the painting to lose its place. Without its title, the human indigenous subjects are erased from the painting and the location of the painting is displaced from the specific site of Georgian Bay to some shoreline in the wilderness. The eye is drawn instantly to the characteristic windswept pines on the ridge that we are taught to see in paintings by the Group: that wind-blown witness object[32] that, by virtue of its inclusion somehow makes the painting quintessentially Canadian and worth a few million dollars more. In this dislocation and erasure, the reading of the painting becomes a descriptive exercise. As Bordo describes, even with the title telling you that you are supposed to see human figures in this painting it is difficult to do so. He writes, "*Indians Crossing Georgian Bay* is a curious painting because the figures, descending a rocky ground, almost appear as if they were themselves part of the shield's carapace. It is difficult initially to discern them as human figures."[33]

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[31] Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine – Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," *Journal of Canadian Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 4, 1992, 124.
[32] Bordo, "Jack Pine".
[33] Bordo, "Jack Pine", 102.

As one can see in the painting pictured below, Bordo's assessment is accurate. The human figures are captured in the same tones as the rocks that surround them. The painterly style in which they are rendered is the same as the style used on the landscape that they are traversing. It is only in noticing the patterning on the blanket draped over the figure in the foreground that one comes to identify shapes that are not geomorphic in nature. As Bordo also highlights, after the changing of the painting's title comes to light,

> What was difficult to discern as human figures without the aid of a title, through the removal of the verbal sign, becomes almost completely indiscernible. Their presence vanishes once more, receding into the shield carapace. They have become rocks.[34]

In this, we can see how language, particularly language that is attached to a thing, aids in our understanding. The narrative provided by the title lifts the subtle nuances of a piece out of obscurity, focussing the attention of the viewer on a particular part of the work or helping the viewer to decipher the artist's intent. The title also takes on a memory role, reminding the viewer of the artist's intent once the artist is no longer present to advocate for their work.

In the idiom of Plato, *anamnesis* from *an-* meaning un- and *amnesis* meaning forgetting, refers to a Platonic theory which postulates that knowledge is established, in part, through recollection which is to say that we know because it was already known, we unforget. This theory of knowledge is primarily elaborated in Plato's early Socratic dialogues *Meno* and *Phaedo*. Tied to recollection is the practice of recounting, of restating that which is recalled in order to bring it into the present once more. When we recount, we bring together that which was severed so as to make it whole again.

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[34] Bordo, "Jack Pine", 124.

Memories are often the pruned or paired down fragment of the whole, the coin stamped and struck from the sheet of metal, and as we recall and recount our memories, we reintroduce the narrative back into the recalled fragment, thereby fleshing out and reanimating the memory. Through narrative, we make the memory whole again; we call absent parties back to our sides, we transpose them through time, we bring the dead back to life.

As such, when we consider the word-name as a unity, we come to realize that, like memory, a word also performs this recollective function: it brings phonemes, component parts, together to create a word through the speaking of the word as a unity. Thus, there is also a recollective or memory function to language in this way. The words, as a collection of sounds which, when strung together in the right order, carry the meaning of a specific concept or object, and in this hold that which they recall inside of themselves and permit their recollection in another time and in another place.

Writing is a further extension of speech and of the mnemonic function of language through which we claim knowledge. Unlike speech however, writing does not require one to hold and rehearse the knowledge held in language so as to remember it, one need only write it down and, provided the written record survives, it may be passed on to the next generation unaltered. While it can be prone to misinterpretation there is less loss in the written record than in the oral one and, in this, knowledge and memory becomes concretized.

This recollection and recombination element of memory appears in the work of Henri Bergson. Bergson views memory as existing along a continuum whereby the three processes of memory: pure-memory, memory-image and perception are in constant interaction, but always in the past. Bergson writes:

> Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; in truth, every perception is already memory. *Practically, we perceive only the past*, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.[35]

In this, Bergson highlights the essential role of memory in present perception, and by extension the role of knowledge. In order to understand the present, we must do this through the past. Our past experiences allow us to interpret our present ones, and in this moment of interpretation, we automatically pitch ourselves as existing, intellectually, one step behind the present moment. As humans, we enact this process of recollection and understanding, in part, through language.

Bergson discusses the flux that occurs between perception and memory and how, through the processes of generalization and abstraction, the mind comes to make sense of that which it experiences. In this process of making sense however, Bergson seems to suggest that the reality of the experience is illusive, the experience which we are trying to claim knowledge of will only ever coincide with the general idea, which can in turn be "crystallized into uttered words"[36] or remain an image that becomes part of pure memory. In this, we can understand Bergson's conception of the role of language in memory as having a formalizing quality, but one which generalizes and moves one away from knowing the particularity of the event, concept or object, because by virtue of giving the event/object/concept language, we are automatically drawing a parallel between this event/object/concept and other similar events/objects/concepts which suggests that there is a categorical or general quality to language in so far as it relates to memory.

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[35] Henri Bergson, *Memory and Matter*, (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 150.
[36] Bergson, *Memory and Matter*, 162.

Giorgio Agamben, in his essay "Infancy and History", seems to be considering something similar. Agamben explores the role that language plays in coming to knowledge and identifies infancy as a critical and pivotal time which begins as "pure wordless experience; an infancy both human and independent of language"[37] and in which language comes to be attached to experience. Agamben writes: "In terms of human infancy, experience is the simple difference between the human and the linguistic. The individual as not already speaking, as having been and still being an infant - this is experience."[38] In this way, Agamben's use of infancy is both literal and linguistic. Infancy, which describes the primary stage in childhood, comes to English through the French from the Latin infant "unable to speak", from in- "not" and fant- "speaking". This is the stage of life which is marked by both an absence of language and, as a consequence, is pure experience. In this period a gradual shift occurs as language comes to be attached to experiences and objects.

This act of naming, as we have already established in relation to Aristotle's *Physics*, is a requisite step in coming to knowledge. Bergson in his contemplation of memory is operating on similar premises in that there is experience which, when processed by the mind either remains as an inarticulate image, a pure memory, or it becomes generalized as it crystallizes into language. Through a Bergsonian lens, we might imagine all infant experiences as image based until language comes to be attached and connections of similarity begin to be drawn. This is the initial formation of both language and memory and, it would seem, there is a symbiosis in their development and function.

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[37] Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, (London: Verso, 1993), 48-9.
[38] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 50.

Prior to naming, whereby we attach language to an event, object, or concept, one must first experiment with the building blocks of speech: phonemes. In his discussion of the phoneme, Agamben is decidedly place-like in his approach. He writes:

> Phonemes, those differential signs that are both 'pure and empty' and 'signifying and non-signifying', do not strictly belong either to the semiotic or the semantic, language or discourse, form or sense, endosomatic or esosomatic; they are located in the correspondence-difference (in the chora, as Plato would have said) between two regions, in a 'site' which can perhaps be described only in its topology and which coincides with that historico-transcendental region - before the subject of language and without somatic substance - which we have defined above as human infancy.[39]

Agamben's characterization of phonemes as located in the correspondence-difference, somewhere in the utterance between the sound and the meaning, what Saussure referred to as "the bar", is intriguing. Agamben is using the language of place to talk about the nature of phonemes, those fragmentary utterances that are the smallest distinct sounds a human's vocal cords can make, building blocks that we combine and recombine in an infinite number of ways to communicate sense to another utterer of phonemes. He is also equating the correspondence-difference where phonetic sounds exist to Plato's *chora* making them at once empty and full, holding the potential to carry meaning, but, not unlike Saussure's *syntagm*, the phoneme requires the informing locus of a place in a word or an environment in order for the phonetic vessel to carry sense inside itself.

Chor- is a place delimiting lexeme (not unlike the aforementioned *top*-). Bordo discusses the distinction between topos and choros that is played out in Sophocles's Oedipus at Colonus. Bordo writes:

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[39] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 58.

> Antigone uses the word topos for 'place.' Oedipus claims that he knows the topos but he wants to know exactly where they are, at which spot he is standing, what place is this here. The word topos is unable to answer questions about place that require an address in an existential sense. The dictionary may extend the meanings of this word or add another word, but Oedipus at Colonus provides a word other than mere topos to meet this existential requirement, a requirement that makes speech and presence inseparable.
>
> The word that Oedipus uses is not topos as a place word, but the word choros. What is the difference? Colonus is singular; it is just that place, exactly there, no other. Its ascription is marked by the momentary, here and now existential of a subject asking what place is this. A place name is given by way of response: "Colonus." It is the address. This place here is choros, the singular specificity of a place here for Oedipus at this moment.[40]

What Bordo offers us here is the distinction between place in the general, regional, vague, even objective sense of *topos*, and place in the particular and specific sense of *choros*. Where is this place for me? Where am I in relation to this place, where is this place in relation to me? How does my presence at this place, define this place? What is my existential experience of this place? If we reconsider Agamben's remarks about the place of phonemes linguistically, the phonetic utterance then becomes understood as processed by the individual: what does this sound or combination of sounds mean to/for me? The *choros* of meaning is defined or understood in relation to the individual (Saussure would refer to this as the *associative relations*) and, as a consequence, without the individual to interpret the phonetic sound and attribute meaning to that sound, the phonetic sound, regardless of whether or not it bears semiotic potential, will fall towards non-sense or noise.

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[40] Jonathan Bordo, email message to author, January 2017.

For Agamben, the concern appears to be first, with experience as a way of knowing and second, whether or not this is possible outside of language. He is seeking after the idea of pure experience such that it is able to be considered outside of the human subject, almost by way of reconsidering Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*. Certainly, Agamben is building upon the idea that we enter this world as a blank slate, one that is then written upon by experience and this experience occurs wordlessly for some time between when experience begins, and language comes to be attached to experience; it is an even larger gap between when experience begins, and language comes to be used to communicate that experience. According to Agamben, "infancy is the origin of language and language the origin of infancy"[41] and in this we find an ouroboros who will continue to swallow his tail until such time as sufficient language forms so as to be communicable. Once there is language, there is no longer pure experience, and in its place is the potential for history because there is language to record, report and remember.

Loss of Language: Loss of Place

The correlation between language and experience occurs in a child's early years. If we accept that knowledge is recollective, then language acquisition in childhood is essential for our coming to make knowledge claims when we grow up. We might consider *anamnesis* as a kind of rehearsal of the sensory, whereby past experiences are revisited through the experience of a present, similar event and a connection is drawn between the two events which marks them out as related in some way. In this rehearsal, we come to claim knowledge through the recognition of similarities on the one hand and repetition on

[41] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 48.

the other. Claiming knowledge of something indicates that we are familiar with it, and familiarity would in turn suggest that we have encountered this thing or phenomenon enough times that we are able to predict with a degree of accuracy the various ways in which it will behave under certain conditions. It is in this repeated encounter and remembering that we can claim knowledge through recollection. Remembering in a way that allows us to come to a reasoned or logical knowledge, however, requires language.

We, as humans, need language for the world around us. It is how we see our world, how we experience it, how we locate ourselves within it, and how we remember it. The foundational vocabulary that informs this experiencing of the world, is developed in childhood. Agamben writes,

> in the human individual, exposure to language is indispensable for the acquisition of language. It is a fact whose importance can never be overemphasized in understanding the structure of human language that if a child is not exposed to speech between the ages of two and twelve, his or her potential for language acquisition is definitively jeopardized.[42]

Agamben is careful to note that he does not believe, as some of his contemporaries do, that language is written in the genetic code, but he does believe that childhood presents a critical period for language acquisition and that this has an effect across the lifespan. According to Agamben's theory language is the vector for memory and knowledge. If we need language to perform acts of memory and if memory is held inside of language, what then happens when we lose language from a cultural standpoint? What happens if there are certain common words that children are no longer exposed to during that critical period for language acquisition? If we accept the arguments laid out above, it would be

[42] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 57.

reasonable to suggest that a loss of language culturally could indeed be equated to a loss of cultural memory: in effect a cultural dementia.

In view of the intricate connection of language and place, what happens when the language we use for place starts to disappear from the vernacular? What happens when it is no longer made available to the next generation? Does that mean we lose place too? Is this loss ontological? Do we lose just the human connection to place or is there also a loss of the physical place? It is arguable that just as the loss of a species effects an ecosystem, so too does the loss of a word effect place, especially if the word lost is the toponym.

In 2008, it came to light that Oxford University Press had made a drastic alteration to its Oxford Junior Dictionary: nature and ecclesiastical words were replaced by techno-social ones.

Words deemed no longer necessary:

> Abbey, acorn, adder, aisle, allotment, almond, altar, apricot, ash, ass, bacon, beaver, beech, beetroot, bishop, blackberry, blacksmith, bloom, bluebell, boar, bramble, bran, bray, bridle, brook, budgerigar, bullock, buttercup, canary, canter, carnation, carol, catkin, cauliflower, chapel, cheetah, chestnut, christen, clover, colt, conker, corgi, coronation, county, cowslip, cracker, crocus, cygnet, dandelion, decade, devil, diesel, disciple, doe, drake, duchess, duke, dwarf, elf, emperor, empire, fern, ferret, fungus, gerbil, goblin, goldfish, gooseberry, gorse, guinea pig, hamster, hazel, hazelnut, heather, heron, herring, holly, horse chestnut, ivy, kingfisher, lark, lavender, leek, leopard, liquorice, lobster, magpie, manger, marzipan, melon, minister, minnow, mint, mistletoe, monarch, monastery, monk, mussel, nectar, nectarine, newt, nun, nunnery, oats, otter, ox, oyster, pansy, panther, parish, parsnip, pasture, pelican, pew, piglet, plaice, poodle, poppy, porcupine, porpoise, porridge, poultry, primrose, prune, psalm, pulpit, radish, raven, rhubarb, saint, sheaf, sin, spaniel, spinach, starling, stoat, stork, sycamore, terrapin, thrush, tulip, turnip, vicar, vine, violet, walnut, weasel, willow, and wren

Words required for today's child over seven:

> allergic, alliteration, analogue, apparatus, attachment, bilingual, biodegradable, block graph, blog, boisterous, brainy, broadband, bullet point, bungee jumping, cautionary tale, celebrity, chatroom, childhood, chronological, citizenship, classify, colloquial, committee, common sense, compulsory, conflict, cope, creep, curriculum, cut and paste, database, debate, democratic, donate, drought, dyslexic, emotion, endangered, EU, Euro, export, food chain, idiom, incisor, interdependent, MP3 player, negotiate, square number, tolerant, trapezium, vandalism, and voicemail.[43]

These alterations were chronicled by a number of major newspapers who, at the time, were up in arms about these changes and although these changes are alarming, they are not necessarily alarming for the reasons capitalized on by the media. These alterations are not deletions. The nature words that were displaced out of the Junior Dictionary, still exist in the Concise and Long-form Dictionaries. These displacements instead mark the first step in a gradual shift toward obscurity, and it is on this point that I raise the alarm. When Oxford University Press was pressed as to why these alterations were made, they indicated that "the dictionary needed to reflect the consensus experience of modern-day childhood."[44] While there are certainly many laudable inclusions such as donate, bilingual, and tolerant, which serve to expand our acceptance of one another and our sense of community and cooperation, we should also mark the inclusion of the language of environmental loss: drought and endangered. Notice that this language allows us to talk about what is absent, soon to be absent, or causing absences without acknowledging the magnitude of the loss. These are words that blanket the underlying biodiversity of what is

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[43] Julie Henry, "Words associated with Christianity and British history taken out of children's dictionary," in *The Telegraph*, (London: The Telegraph, 2008), https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/3569045/Words-associated-with-Christianity-and-British-history-taken-out-of-childrens-dictionary.html.

[44] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 3.

disappearing, the biodiversity that is marked, in many ways, by the words that were culled.

Robert Macfarlane uses the Oxford Junior Dictionary alterations as a point of entry, showing the close relationship between language and place in his *Landmarks* text. Macfarlane is careful to note in a footnote that "It is worth clarifying that OUP dictionaries operate according to a central lexicographic principal of description rather than prescription: decisions on inclusion or exclusion are based in the main on frequency of usage across a substantial corpus of texts."[45] This remark of course absolves Oxford University Press of any kind of unwitting oversight, but as Macfarlane goes on to write: "The OJD deletions are therefore chiefly symptoms of a wider cultural disengagement with nature, rather than its cause."[46]

While I agree with Macfarlane that the relationship is not necessarily causal, I would argue that it does contribute to a negative feedback system. The diminishment of nature language may not be because we have lost language for it, but, as a result of our turning away from nature and the land. A more urbanized lifestyle has caused nature words to fall into disuse and this negative feedback cycle has continued because if we can't engage with an object linguistically through the process of naming, we stop seeing the object as distinct from its environment. Such linguistic extinction, arguably, ultimately leads to ecological extinction, which is to say that without words to distinguish the incredible biodiversity among trees, we will stop noticing the difference between the maple and the oak and the alder and eventually there will be a homogenization of tree either in favour of

[45] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 390.
[46] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 390.

the economic or the aesthetic. There is a symbiosis present in this phenomenon that cannot go unacknowledged. This is the case in both the positive and negative direction.

One might also ask, “but are not some of the nature worlds taken out of the dictionary redundant?” and this would be a reasonable query. We are specifically addressing the Oxford Junior Dictionary, a publication that is limited to a certain number of pages, so as to not overwhelm young learners and to provide a tome of reasonable size for transportation. As a result, the number of inclusions is, naturally, limited. After all, do children not encounter cauliflower and beetroot in the grocery store if not on their dinner plates? One would hope that this is indeed the case and that children have experiential encounters with the fruits and vegetables which have been omitted from the dictionary, but this also leads one to consider, with the now commonplace occurrence of spellcheck and other assistive technologies, whether the purpose of the dictionary has changed. Is the purpose of a dictionary to check the spelling of the word, or is it to search for the word’s meaning and correct usage?

It used to be that the dictionary served all of these purposes and more, but perhaps not anymore. If the functionality of the dictionary has fallen away from the checking of spelling and towards the checking of definition and usage, away from being a physical object and towards a digital, searchable entity that holds within itself a kind of intelligence that allows and compensates for spelling errors, then perhaps the nature of the words captured in the physical (and digital) format of the text too has changed. One encounters fruits and vegetables experientially and surmises how to spell the word phonetically in order to come close enough that technology can correct it for them and, as such, it becomes more important for the dictionary to be an entity of ideas and concepts as opposed to concrete objects.

This is not to say that this alteration in functionality, and the resultant alteration in the content, of the dictionary is appropriate, it is merely to point out both a potential counterargument and, simultaneously, to highlight that the change in what we might call a *foundational vocabulary*, that is captured by the dictionary is not the result of just one thing. In fact, it is just one symptom of a much larger and more complex cultural shift that is taking place. As MacFarlane writes, "A basic literacy of landscape is falling away up and down the ages"[47] and there is a very complex set of factors that are contributing to this phenomenon. We might consider the incidence of the dictionary as a microcosmic event which suggests the development of a cultural dementia, particularly with respect to nature and place words.

Landmarks and *The Lost Words*

Macfarlane's remarks on the Oxford Junior Dictionary's replacements occur within the context of his book, *Landmarks*, which recalls lost and disappearing words for the land and nature in the British Isles. Macfarlane collected words from all over the UK and from various vernacular languages that drew on the medley of languages which inhabited the British Isles over the past 10 000 years. Troves of lost, parochial, and hazily recalled language for the land and natural phenomena of generations past and present were collated into glossaries, distinguished by the types of places from which the words originated: Flatlands, Uplands, Waterlands, Coastlands, Underlands, Northlands, Edgelands, Earthlands and Woodlands. Words such as *ammil*, the meaning of which is captured in Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter* (1927): "The icy casings of leaves and

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[47] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 3-4.

grasses and blades and sprigs were glowing and hid in a mist of sun-fire. Moor-folk call this morning glory the ammil"[48], or *zwer*, the "whizzing noise made by a covey of partridges as they break suddenly from cover"[49] are remembered in Macfarlane's book.

Each of the glossaries listed above is prefaced by an introductory essay which draws on narratives of lived experience in the kind of places that the language that follows describes. This drawing together of narrative, lived experience and site-specific words serves multiple purposes. Each narrative invests us in the place and paints a topography of that place, such that we, the readers, are both more accepting of and see the need for the strange language that follows. We are better able to appreciate the ways in which the language interacts with the place and can see the niche that requires this site-specific language. These ecologies that Macfarlane describes require the words he has collected, as much as the words require the places. We are able to learn something about the place through these lost words and their meanings: the common sights, the important events, the changes we humans should pay attention to, and the features that mark out this place as somewhere special. Through these essays and glossaries Macfarlane encourages us, his readers, to consider the way that language functions in our lives and in our relationships, not just to other humans, but to the world around us, a world that may not communicate with us in words, but which requires us to have words for it so that we can acknowledge it and our place within it. Language to Macfarlane is indeed so precious that he describes his book as a "word hoard", recalling the hoard of treasures guarded by the dragon in the Old English epic *Beowulf*: that which we hold dearest, stolen away and hidden from us,

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[48] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 40.
[49] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 49.

waiting to be discovered, but only by one brave enough to face and fight the dragon of obscurity.

Macfarlane's *Landmarks* offers chorographic illustrations of Plato's anamnesis *par excellence,* and it is the same anamnesic operation of recalling and recounting*,* that Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris aspire towards, and arguably achieve, in their recent collaborative art-book *The Lost Words: A Spell Book*. This large format "spell book" operates in the multimedia of word and image and conjures back from impending obscurity twenty nature words that were retired from the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* in 2008.

Acorn, adder, bluebell, bramble, conker, dandelion, fern, heather, heron, ivy, kingfisher, lark, magpie, newt, otter, raven, starling, weasel, willow, and wren emerge from beneath fern fronds and betwixt blades of grass to the eagle-eyed observer to become acrostic poems which paint the object linguistically, descriptively reconstituting its place within its and our world. These poems are paired against visual representations of the poem's subject, painted in exceptional realism and set against a background of gold. This rendering recalls the use of the halo in sacred art and the medieval manuscript illumination tradition, whereby manuscript illuminations were embellished with the application of gold-leaf or gold-shell. The use of a gold background to surround the figure dominating the image marks the represented subject as special, as if each of these plants and animals were sacred or holy and allow them to stand emblematic for all members of their species. These gilt representations and their poems are prefaced and with the word emerging from the non-sense of isolated letters and epigraphed by an image of these flora and fauna interacting in their natural habitat. These series of two-page spreads tumble into one another as they work co-operatively to recall and recount these creatures and plants.

The size of the book is imposing. In its largess, it is a distinct aberration on the bookshelf and even requires one to reorganize the spacing of one's bookcase in order to accommodate it. It refuses to be hidden among other books. When standing on a shelf it is taller than your average large format art book and, as such, draws the eye and asks to be taken down, asks to be opened and engaged. This book requires direct contact, not only for the reading experience, but also for its scale. The pages would not easily fit on a screen without some loss to the experience. This size also creates a place in which these creatures, plants, and words can interact.

The book begins, "Once upon a time," and in doing so makes this a text that exists in, upon, and outside of time. This traditional storybook beginning makes timeless that which is to follow, and it suggests that we are dealing with an allegory of sorts. As such, we should be on the lookout for its hidden truths and lessons. This invocation of time also makes us conscious of time, a theme that is picked up not only in the rhythmic metre of each of the text's poems but in the associated theme of loss that hangs like an ominous storm cloud over the introduction and several of the natural habitat two-page spreads. There is the suggestion, both linguistically and visually, that time is running out and that this book is an attempt to stop time, or even reverse it.

The word choice and construction of these luscious poems make reading them aloud a requirement. Lips, tongue, mouth, and jaw savour the exercise of forming the curated collection of language which create a habitat for the bramble to wrap itself around, the ivy to scale, the otter to tumble through, and the bluebells to cover. The book itself becomes an ecosystem, through which goldfinches flit, guiding us on a journey through their home and through the language that we attach to that home in order to better understand it and to remember it. "A word," Ong writes, "is an event, a happening, not a thing, as letters

make it appear to be"[50] and yet, in a literate society we too often forget the 'event-ness' of a word for literacy has changed the way we think. Through the interactions of the time theme, the imagery, and the language, it is obvious that Macfarlane and Morris are all too aware of this fact.

Furthermore, the opening lines which preface the poems that follow, attend to the power of the spoken word and pick up on another theme: enchantment, a theme that also appears in Macfarlane's *Landmarks*. Enchantment comes to English through the French, ultimately from the Latin *in-* and *cantare* which means to sing. Much like abracadabra, which is believed to have been derived from the Aramaic *avra kadavra* "it will be created in my words", enchantment suggests the creative power of words spoken or sung aloud. Indeed, the preface states: "it holds not poems but spells of many kinds that might just, by the old, strong magic of being spoken aloud, unfold dreams and songs, and summon lost words back into the mouth and the mind's eye." This statement of intent is also a suggestion of how one should read this book. Its audience is universal, its words are meant to be shared.

My son loves turning the pages and talking about the animals and the plants that he sees, especially the otter, an animal he is already familiar with from our frequent trips to the Peterborough Zoo, and this is perhaps more to my point. My son, at three, is already drawn to that which he finds familiar, to that which he recognizes, to that which he already has language for. One of my son's first words was "duck". Of course, like most children, he began with the requisite "Mumum", "Dada" and "Hi", learning that these words attracted or conjured the desired person, and all the things that that person

[50] W.J. Ong, "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought", *The Written Word,* ed. G. Baumann, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 24-5.

provided, back into existence, not unlike abracadabra, but the word “duck” was different. It was his first display of a naming operation. At about 11 months old, shortly after he began walking, he brought me a yellow rubber duck and said “duck” and toddled away. I called him back over and asked him, “what’s this?” He replied, “duck.” This was the first time I had noticed him performing a spontaneous and self-initiated naming operation wherein he attached a word to a thing in a way that wasn’t accidental. He has continued to engage with ducks in the natural world by noticing them and talking about them, but this is only because he is familiar with them, because he developed a language for them.

I noticed him performing a similar linguistic operation more recently, but this instance involved a shift from the general to the specific. English is a language that is particularly good at both providing specificity and creating categories which capture several things under a single word. The word ‘thing’, in and of itself, is a catch all for any object. As a word, “thing” embodies the duality of the English language, having been traditionally used to refer to the event of a meeting, assembly, or council, but, over time, shifted from being used to describe the event itself to the matter being discussed at the event. Other categories that arguably enter into the same kind of ambiguity as “thing” include: ‘tree’, ‘flower’, ‘animal’, ‘plant’, ‘fish’, ‘snake’, ‘rock’, ‘dirt’, and the list could go on. In the case of my son, we were out walking, and he saw a robin and said, “Look Mum, a bird.” I replied, “Oh yes, I see. Do you see that he has an orangey-red tummy? He’s called a robin.” “Ooh, a robin.” He replied and then asked me what I thought the robin was doing.

This event, in and of itself, is perhaps unremarkable, however, when we were at the park a few days later, he saw another robin and said, “Look Mum, a robin. I think he’s looking for worms.” He internalized that this bird was distinct from all the other birds, that a robin is a bird and a robin. Categorical words, like “bird”, “rock”, “fish”, “nature”,

hold inside of themselves an immense biodiversity, and perform the same blanketing and obscuring operations as the language for loss that replaces the biodiversity of earlier iterations of the Oxford Junior Dictionary. If we accept the arguments of ecolinguists Alwin Fill and Peter Muhlhausler,[51] then we also understand that without a diverse vocabulary which identifies the biodiversity of our world, we run the risk of not making distinctions and, as a result, not knowing when things change or when diversity dwindles.

Critical Periods

Language formation happens in a child's early years, and it is essential to the child moving beyond pure experience toward the formation of memories. Following along with Plato, we find ourselves articulating a theory of place that is both recollective and attached to language; the site of its happening is a stage in human development: infancy.

Agamben is not the only one who looks to childhood as a critical period. Benjamin and Thoreau both identify childhood as the time when attachment or connection to place occurs. Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood* observes how one grows up in place and shows how the place of one's youth comes to have a hold over the individual that is so strong that one must be "inoculated"[52] against the pain of leaving it. Benjamin effects this inoculation through the metaphorical packing of his suitcase, writing down memory fragments, each one rooted in place (i.e. Tiergarten, his aunt's sitting room, etc). Each of the places Benjamin recalls is presented through an act of storytelling. This weaves Benjamin's experience into the places, thereby attaching him to that place and simultaneously recalls

[51] Alwin Fill and Peter Muhlhausler, *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, (London: Continuum, 2001).
[52] Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood c.1900*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 37.

and recounts that place in a formalized way through the interlocutor of language. This ultimately permits Benjamin to take place with him.

Thoreau too, in his *Walden*, cites childhood and his childhood memories of Walden as a potential attachment point to the place of Walden. Thoreau writes: "When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory."[53] Here the pond is at the heart of this place, the x-marks-the-spot, as water often is, for water sustains all things magnanimously. Young Thoreau is not brought to the shelter or to the earth that is worked by humans, indeed there is no mention of architecture, instead he is brought past those things to the life sustaining pond. This is, of course, not to say that just because Thoreau grew up here that he has a right to hold dominion over the place or to decide what may grow there or even to be in the place at all, but rather that his youthful attachment to the place is an important consideration because, through his co-existence with the place as one of the life forms which co-dwells in this place, Thoreau is presented as one who has developed a relationship with the place through his devotion of attention to that place, the origins of which reside in his youthful attachment to the place.

This connection between youth and place is an essential one. The prior conditions under which the concept of place comes to be experienced by the child is explained by the developmental theory of attachment. Derived from the work of psychologists John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, attachment theory explores and documents the way that

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[53] Henry David Thoreau, "Walden," in *Thoreau*, (New York: The Library of America, 2008), 446.

primary caregivers interact with infants in early life and the ways this impacts the child's development throughout life.[54]

At its most basic, attachment theory defines four attachment types that are possible between the primary caregiver and the child: secure, avoidant, ambivalent, or disorganized. These types of attachment felt by the child derive from the primary caregiver's availability and responsiveness to the child's needs, particularly in early life. In a secure attachment style, the child knows that they are safe and that they can rely on the caregiver for their needs. They use this person as a safe base from which to explore their world. In this sense, the primary caregiver becomes a portable place, a shell, that the child takes with them as they explore and learn about the material world, a shell they can return to when they find themselves feeling overwhelmed or frightened.

In these relationships, the primary caregiver also helps to furnish the child with the language they require to consider the world around them. This language permits the child to identify the things they come into contact with and to know or recall it the next time they encounter the object or phenomena. We require the referent to structure our engagement with the world of objects around us. When the object becomes detached from the referent, as can be seen in Magritte's *La Trahison des images* (1929), the representation, is able to be recalled but it is unable to perform the object's function. An object can only be an object, but a word or a representation can be both a word and what it shows or describes. In this we see language as an essential mnemonic that allows for anamnesis to occur.

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[54] Inge Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth," in *Developmental Psychology,* Vol. 28, No. 5, 1992, 759-775.

By reattaching language to things and phenomena and by rehearsing that language we sing that which is absent back into existence. When we consider this in relation to the arguments put forward by Agamben, Benjamin, and Thoreau regarding the role of childhood in the formation of a foundational vocabulary, knowledge of the world and attachment to place, we begin to comprehend why the unwitting ideological shift in the Oxford Junior Dictionary is so alarming. The Oxford Junior Dictionary is the document which holds all the language presumed to describe or discuss the experiences of childhood and the fact that this list is populated on the basis of usage frequency statistical data suggests an obvious 'progressive' and 'techno-social' ideology that is being pushed. Our children are being encouraged to have less language for place, and more language for virtual non-places, many of which are invented. In this, there is a distinct *denaturing* of our children.

Denature is a term that comes to us out of biology. When a protein or other biological macromolecule is denatured, its characteristic properties have been destroyed by an external force (such as heat, acidity, etc.) which disrupts the protein's molecular conformation. When the molecular conformation is disrupted, the protein is no longer able to perform its function. This is why, for example, a fever can be a beneficial immune response to infection because the increased body temperature causes bacterial enzymes to denature, effectively killing the bacteria.[55] The loss of place language in youth is a *denaturing* of them for it disrupts their ability to be connected to the world around them in a material way. It also highlights the fact that the loss of place that occurs through this loss of language will likely be felt on a molecular level.

[55] "Fever." 2020. August 13, 2020. https://med.libretexts.org/@go/page/7943.

Without a linguistic foundation in nature words, words that connect our children to the world around them in real and material ways, there is no chance of these words being recalled and recounted at the right moment. As MacFarlane writes,

> "It is not, on the whole, the natural phenomena and entities themselves are disappearing; rather that there are fewer people able to name them, and that once they go unnamed they go to some degree unseen. Language deficit leads to attention deficit."[56]

The words for those natural places we cherish so much will wilt, wither and disappear into the annals of the arcane. It is through the loss of language and the attention deficit that we lose both the land materially and our sense of belonging to it and in it. There is a depreciation that happens when we decathect, when we withdraw our feelings of attachment from the world around us, particularly when this occurs in anticipation of future loss because this means that we will not share the world around us as we knew it, even if those places are shrinking, with the next generation and if we don't share it with them and furnish them with the language to consider and discuss it, it will disappear into obscurity entirely.

In order to combat this, it is essential to encourage a deliberate and linguistically based attachment to place in children. This is only able to occur as they explore their world. We must be active participants in their nature language acquisition by attending to their expressions of interest and by furnishing them with the language to express the places and natural phenomena they encounter. It is essential that this takes place on the local level, so that they come to name the things that they can see and touch. We must show them how to be parochial in their interests and attention, as well as global. This will

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[56] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 24.

help them to know to tend to these creatures and plants in the future and to share them with the generation that comes after them. There is, after all, as much wonder in the humble dandelion as there is in the exotic bird of paradise.

Positively Parochial

> **Parochial**, *adj*. and *n*. /pə’roʊkiəl/
> Etymology: Anglo-Norman *parochial*, *parochiel*, *parrochial* of or relating to an ecclesiastical parish, (as noun) ecclesiastical parish, and Middle French *parochial*, *parrochial* of or relating to an ecclesiastical parish (13th cent. in Old French; Old French, Middle French, French *paroissial*), (as noun) priest (14th cent. as *perrochial*) and its etymon post-classical Latin *parochialis* of the rural parts of a diocese (6th cent.; also as *parroechialis*), of an ecclesiastical parish (11th cent.; frequently from 12th cent. in British sources), (as noun) parishioner (1789, c1250, c1340 in British sources), alteration of *paroecialis* of a church province (6th cent.; < *paroecia* (see parish n.) + classical Latin *-ālis* -al suffix1), after *parochia* (see parish n.).
> A. *adj*. 1. a. Of or belonging to an ecclesiastical parish. b. Of or relating to a civil or (formerly) poor-law parish. Now chiefly *hist*. 2. *figurative*. Relating or confined to a narrow area or region, as if within the borders of one's own parish; limited or provincial in outlook or scope. 3. *Church History*. Of or relating to the charge of a bishop in the early Church. *Obsolete. rare*.
> B. *n*. 1. A parish church. *Obsolete.* 2. A parish clergyman or schoolmaster. Now *rare*.[57]

The word parochial, today, can, and does, take on negative connotations. Parochialism likely brings to mind the short-sighted, bigoted, NIMBY bumpkin whose view of the

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[57] "parochial, adj. and n.", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2021, https://www-oed-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/view/Entry/138040?redirectedFrom=parochial.

world is restricted to a five-mile radius from their front door and informed by fear-mongering news stations and here-say. This derives from parochial's figurative use in the late 18th and 19th centuries where it adopted the meaning of "limited or narrow", particularly as it came to means and modes of thought and effectively became an antonym for worldly. Parochial as an adjective, which indicates that something pertains to a parish, came into use in English in the 14th century. The Oxford English Dictionary locates its first recorded use in Fragment C of Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*, a Middle English translation of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun's allegory-satire *Le Roman de la Rose.* Consequently, it arrived to English from the Anglo-French *parochial*, from the French *parochial*, from the Late Latin *parochialis*, from *parochia*, which is the Late Latin term for a diocese. *Parochia*, is an alteration of the Late Greek *paroikia* "a diocese or parish," from *paroikos* which means "a sojourner" in the Christian writers and "neighbour" in classical Greek. *Paroikos* is a compound word comprised of *para-* "near" and *oikos* "home". If we consider the term parochial in its Classical Greek sense, we can see it as descriptive of that which is neighbouring, local, near home, even lying in one's own backyard.

It is in the Classical Greek sense that I resurrect this word. Parochialism is not small-mindedness in the 21st century. Rather, it is descriptive of a concern for and a deep attachment to a place that is local to us, a place that we know intimately through having experienced it regularly. Parochialism is now a concern for that which is *para-oikos*: near home. Recall the previously mentioned example of the Hebridean moor in more detail.

In November 2004, the engineering company AMEC in partnership with British Energy "filed an application to build a vast wind farm on the Brindled Moor."[58] To those who proposed the project, they were transforming a *terra nullius* into something functional, indeed something beneficial, but to the locals, nothing could be further from the truth. As Macfarlane expounds in detail:

> The proposed farm – which would have been Europe's largest – consisted of 234 wind turbines, each of them 140 metres high (more than twice the height of Nelson's Column) and with a blade span of more than 80 metres (longer than a Boeing 747 measured nose-to-tail). Each turbine would be sunk into a foundation of 700 cubic metres of concrete. The generated energy was to be ducted off the island and down to the centres of need by 210 pylons, each 26 metres high, joined by overhead lines. To service the turbines and pylons, 104 miles of roads would be built, as well as nine electrical substations. Five new rock quarries would be opened, and four concrete-batching plants established. In total, around 5 million cubic metres of rock and 2.5 million cubic metres of peat would be excavated and displaced. By AMEC's own account in their initial application, 'the effect on the landscape resource, character and perception [of Lewis would be] major and long-term'.[59]

In Macfarlane's account, what becomes painfully obvious is that this proposed project was 1) being presented as something that was for the greater good (not necessarily for the good of those living on the island) and 2) that it would substantially affect the aesthetics and experience of the island.

Those who proposed the project were thinking primarily from the environmentalists' perspective. Here was a location that had good, consistent wind readings and where the land was already clear of trees and tall structures: it was a wind farmer's paradise. This

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[58] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 27.
[59] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 27-8.

wind farm could offset less sustainable energy production on the mainland and the proposed location was open, unused land. What these foreigners were unaware of however, was the close kinship that the inhabitants of the island felt with the moor and the peat bogs. Here were a people who had inhabited and relied on the moor for generations for fuel, food, and identity, not to mention the "long aesthetic relationship between the Hebrideans and their land." According to Macfarlane, around 80% of the island's inhabitants expressed opposition to the plans. This is parochialism in the 21st century; this is parochialism as a means of conservation.

I am not the first to advocate for a revisiting of the parochial as a means of conservation. The UK's Common Ground Trust has been working productively in the conservation of local places for many years. Open Air Production's documentary on the Common Ground Trust, a not-for-profit founded in 1983 by Sue Clifford, Angela King and Clifford Deakin "to seek imaginative ways to engage people with their local environment,"[60] invites viewers to rethink their relationship with the natural world around them. In this documentary, Sue Clifford discusses the importance of the concept of the parochial to their mission. She says:

> "All of the things we do are about locality and crucially about people's relationship with their place. What we are trying to do is to lure people in a social way to engage with the looking after of that place. That doesn't mean to say that we are parochial in the negative sense, on the contrary we try to be very positively parochial, but of course a lot of what happens at the local level has a universal relevance."

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[60] "Home," Common Ground, Common Ground Trust, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.commonground.org.uk.

It is, of course, logical for the name of a trust which advocates and works for the protection of the local to be called "Common Ground", for they are interested in just that: the conservation and preservation of the commons.

Conceptually, the commons, at its most basic level, refers to things that are shared by groups of people. Traditionally, the commons addressed lands and natural resources that were held by collectives, or held in place for collectives, and were able to be accessed and used by anyone. Today, the concept of the commons has bled into areas of media, ideas, health, and urban life, whereby the commons is anything that is held and maintained for the use of everyone. Examples include, parks, web forums, and open access data. This concept of the commons has particular resonance in the UK, where the idea of the commons has existed for hundreds of years and to this day there are over 7000 registered commons: places and lands which can be accessed by anyone and, in some instances, where resources can be harvested, such as firewood and peat for personal use. It is from this tradition that Common Ground Trust, in part, draws its strength and significance. Its work is to grow and improve upon the commons and to make the commons accessible and inviting to all.

Common Ground as a name also draws on the adage "to search for or find common ground" and this too speaks to their mission. They want to find common ground within communities both literally and figuratively in order to simultaneously contribute to the growth and improvement of communities, and to encourage those strengthened communities to protect and preserve that which is special and distinct about their communities. To put it another way, the Trust seeks to employ that which is special about a community physically as common ground for a community to gather on and around in order to improve the quality and cohesiveness of the community socially.

On their website, Common Ground refers to the special qualities of a place as its "local distinctiveness"[61], by which they mean to identify and preserve all the features of a place that make it the place that it is, as distinct from every other place. This intention highlights the ways in which our world is becoming increasingly homogenized. Consider a subdivision: every house, street and garden looks the same, because it is easier, cheaper, faster, to operate in this homogenized way. By addressing the local distinctiveness of a place, one then becomes attuned with how their place is unique and that awareness then allows for action on the one side, and celebration on the other. Common Ground Trust enacts this by looking to find cultural ways of celebrating and calling attention to this local distinctiveness. The Trust employs the talents of poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians, to articulate and iterate the specialness of a place, employing the arts to make emotional arguments.

Figure 4 - Wayside Carving I, Peter Randal Page, 1985-6. By permission of the artist.

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[61] "Home," Common Ground.

The way that art allows for place-making is captured in Open Air Production's documentary which captures the work of sculptor Peter Randal Page.[62] The documentary references Page's first commissioned project by the Trust. *Wayside Carvings I, II, III* (1985-6) (figure 4) were a series of Purbeck marble carvings set in Purbeck stone walled niches along the bridleway between Daggers Gate and Ringstead Bay in Dorset, UK, approximately 30 paces apart.[63] This coastal bridleway inspired the forms of Page's three sculptures, which all are reminiscent of seashells. By taking the natural form, enlarging it and then setting it in the niche of a stone wall, these objects could be imagined as votive offerings to both the earth and the sea and invite walkers of the bridleway to reconsider the sanctity of the place they are walking. These objects also invite walkers to take a pause in their walk, engage their senses, and attune themselves to the place they are walking. In this way they have both a disruptive and an indexical function, pulling the walker out of the act of walking and pointing to the scenery that surrounds them, ideally in hopes of highlighting the place's "local distinctiveness".

This project was completed as part of Common Ground Trust's Local Distinctiveness Project, an endeavour which sought to place sculptural objects along public rights of way in order to change the ways that people interact with these footpaths. By virtue of placing these sculptural objects, they ask those who walk the paths to take another look, and they invite those who do not walk the paths to come and enjoy them. The resultant re-engagement with the local brought about by the placement of Page's sculptures is just one

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[62] Peter Randall Page, *On Common Ground*, (London: Open Air Production, 1987), film.
[63] Peter Randall Page, "Wayside Carvings I, II, III," Peter Randall Page, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.peterrandall-page.com/sculptures/wayside-carvings-i-ii-iii/.

of the many ways that Common Ground Trust has employed the arts to encourage people, young and old, to re-engage with the places they live and to help them to identify elements that both make that place unique and may also require protection.

Conclusion

In the advancement of the parochial, refigured in its Classical Greek sense, Common Ground created an approach to conservation that, over the last thirty five years, has proven itself highly effective, so much so, in fact, that many its foundational concepts have been picked up and applied in other instances where there are places that require a level of human intervention in order to be protected, most significantly from progressivism, development and the interference of other humans.[64] This invitation to engage the local in an aesthetic way and this calling of attention to what is unique and therefore special about a place, inherently requires language. As nature writer Tim Dee writes, "Without a name made in our mouths, an animal or a place struggles to find purchase in our minds or our hearts."[65]

The work of English place poet and musician Richard Skeleton is about the tensions that exists between presence and absence, memory and loss. He is a conservationist of language and of place and his work both problematizes and performs the work of conservation, documentation, and memory. Skelton, together with his partner Autumn Richardson, started a small self-funded press to publish their art, music and poetry along with the work of friends and collaborators. One such publication is *Reliquiae*, a bi-annual

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[64] See the discussion of Gordon Young's Bird Stones at Mill Road Cemetery in Part Two of this dissertation.

[65] Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 24.

"literary journal that interleaves ecologically aware writing from the past and present, ranging from the ethnological to the philosophical, the lyrical to the visionary."[66]

The cover of the first volume of *Reliquiae* is printed with the following poem. The first five lines appear on the cover the final four lines on the back cover.

> I sing a little song,
> someone else's worn,
> little song,
> but I sing it as my own;
> my own dear, little song.
>
> And so I play
> this worn out,
> little song
> and I renew it.[67]

This poem speaks to the power of recounting or retelling, and the inherent renewal that takes place when language, story and song pass between two people. There is a rejuvenation that takes place in this transfer, a turning back of the clock, a making new once more. In the transfer between two people the learner moves from not speaking (*infancy*) to speaking and, through the acquisition of knowledge via recalled language, the language itself becomes rejuvenated and reinvigorated both in the sense that the song is imbued once more with youthful energy and that there is both an undoing and an adding on that occurs in the transfusion. We can renew the worn out little songs of others by playing them as our own, we can renew language in the same way.

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[66] Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson, "Reliquiae," Corbel Stone Press, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.corbelstonepress.com/reliquiae.
[67] Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson (eds), *Reliquiae: Volume 1*, (Newcastleton: Corbel Stone Press, 2013), cover.

This part began with the suggestion that there is a dispossession occurring the world over. Humans are being dispossessed of both land and of language, both of which are requisite for human life on this planet and which rely on one another symbiotically to persist in an era that devalues both to the point of violence. This chapter calls attention to that which is disappearing and asks the reader to consider how we might sustain it and where this work should begin.

Theorizing the complex relationship that exists between humans and the natural world in the face of modernity has preoccupied a great deal of thought since the 1990s. This is particularly the case in the U.S. where landscape in a post-colonialist context and the complexities of environmentalist thought emerged alongside the rise of anti-environmental policy and human exceptionalist sentiment in the mid-1990s.[68] This has led to mainstream environmental theories of the last 30 years which position "Nature" as an anthropocentric construct, an other that is understood through and structured by human thought.[69] We have even gone so far as to redefine geologic eras according to this anthropocentrism; Holocene no more, we are now living in the era of man, the Anthropocene.

More recently, this conceptualization of the natural world has been taken up in philosophy in the form of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) which "argues that nothing can be accessed all at once in its entirety… [and] that thought is not the only access mode."[70] OOO postulates that all entities are capable of perceiving and experiencing that which they come into contact with and that no one perception is more or less valid, or

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[68] William Cronin (ed), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996) 19.
[69] Cronin (ed), *Uncommon Ground,* 19-22.
[70] Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*, (London: Pelican Books, 2018), 33.

more complete, than any other perception. In this, as Timothy Morton writes, “OOO tries to let go of anthropocentrism, which holds that humans are the centre of meaning and power.”[71] Even in this letting go of anthropocentrism, OOO retains its attempt to take on all things, to be global, super-massive, universal even.

These two approaches to environmental and ecological thought, although distinct, seek to articulate macro, systemic level approaches to human-nature relations and environmental crisis. In their attempts to become closer to the natural (non-human) world, more grounded and rooted in perception, both these approaches remain almost exclusively in the nebulous realm of thought. In their attempts, as Donna Haraway terms it, “stay with the trouble”,[72] they treat environmental crisis as a global problem to which citizens of the earth should approach with a globalized or even universal concern. This approach has paralyzing implications: complexity and inaccessibility of ideas ultimately leads to confusion and inaction.

An anthropocentric, universal scale approach, as has already been shown, is not how this dissertation proposes to “stay with the trouble.” Rather, this dissertation proposes a release from global concern and a return to parochialism, to tending for our places. This is a micro approach could have global implications but needn’t. We should concern ourselves with where we dwell, with our own backyard, with the species with whom we co-dwell, with our communities and allow the fruits of our labours to inspire the actions of others.

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[71] Morton, *Being Ecological*, 34.
[72] Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

We will now turn to explore the small-scale parochial acts of some UK-based artists and writers in the face of the Anthropocene whose labours we can explore to inspire our own. This discussion of their parochial place-work is arrived at through the contemporary, yet contrasting, anthropocentric place-work of American artists. This dichotomy is made apparent in the inaugural Chinati symposium in 1995 which bore the title “Art in the Landscape”. This symposium unwittingly illustrated the gros difference that exists between American Land Art and contemporary British environmental art which, as we will see, is incorrectly also referred to as Land Art within the art historical grand narrative.

Part 2

"I don't own this land. I've only got permission to fly here. But in walking it over and over again and paying it the greatest attention I've made it mine. I know where its animals live, and how they move about it. Know that the larks sleep on the top of the hill, but on sunny mornings they move to warm themselves on eastward slopes…. I move toward the larks as if I could see them."[73]

Helen MacDonald

Art in the Landscape

Marfa, Texas is "tough to get to; tougher to explain. But once you get here, you get it."[74] Located in southwest Texas, Marfa is hundreds of kilometers from every major Texan city and requires careful planning to visit. A series of planes, trains, automobiles and accommodations must be arranged in advance. One does not just arrive here by chance.

Previously a water-stop and freight headquarters for the railway, a military installation over two world wars, the site of the James Dean film *Giant* (1956), and the enduring home of cattle ranchers and miners, Marfa has been an eclectic town "attract[ive] to creative spirits"[75] of all kinds for over a century. It is perhaps unsurprising that such a place would attract the likes of minimalist artist, Donald Judd, who, with the help of the New York based Dia Foundation, purchased the abandoned 340-acre site of Fort D.A. Russell, in 1979. Judd wanted to create a museum which would showcase and preserve

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[73] Helen Macdonald, *H is for Hawk*, (London: Penguin Books, 2016), 239-40.
[74] "Plan Your Trip to Marfa," Marfa, 10 October 2021, https://visitmarfa.com/getting-to-marfa/.
[75] "About Marfa, Texas" Marfa, 10 October 2021, https://visitmarfa.com/history-of-marfa-texas/.

site-specific contemporary art installations in an environment that would allow them to remain truly site-specific. Marfa fit the bill and the Chinati Foundation was born.

As implied by the name, site-specific installations are designed with a particular place in mind. The piece does not hold meaning inside of itself as a figurative sculpture might, but rather they derive meaning from their interactions with the site they occupy. As a consequence, they aren't intended to move. Conventional galleries often do not take these kind of objects spatial needs into consideration. When the aesthetic function of an object is to objectify experience, the space that surrounds the object is as much a part of the aesthetic experience as the object itself. Judd wanted to create a place where minimalist pieces could be experienced as they were intended to be experienced by the artist and not merely how they appeared in the curated gallery setting.

Judd's *Freestanding Works in Concrete* (1980-4), offer an excellent illustration of site-specific installation on a grand scale. A series of 15 geometric concrete structures, these were created as a consequence of an agreement between Judd and the Dia Foundation. While the terms were not specific, the agreement required that Judd produce one site specific sculpture per year over five years for placement either in Marfa or elsewhere in Presidio County, Texas.[76] Judd's finished work expanded to 15 sculptures over 4 years. These were placed in a line which ran "parallel to the road on the outermost edge of the Chinati property."[77] These structures were designed with mathematical precision and Judd's sketches (complete with measurements) along with the chronicle of the difficulties Judd experienced finding a manufacturing company that was able to create concrete slabs to the exactness required by Judd is a testament to his meticulousness.

[76] Marianne Stockebrand, *Chinati: The Vision of Donald Judd*, (Marfa: Chinati Foundation, 2010), 54.
[77] Stockebrand, *Chinati*, 54.

These structures are each comprised of a series of open and closed concrete rectangular prisms in a variety of orientations which are triangular or rectangular in shape. These open and closed structures create space by admitting and obstructing light. These pieces are an excellent example of how minimalism shifted the aesthetic object from the form created by the artist and on to the experience of the viewer encountering that object. Their placement in the land parallel to both the road and the horizon in a field of yellow-green grasses devoid of other structures, also works to frame the land and structure the experience of the lands that surround the gallery and living spaces at Chinati and perform for a viewing public what site specific art in the American tradition is intended to do.

Donald Judd would renovate the property extensively converting the existing structures and outdoor spaces into site-specific installations and gallery spaces, a project he pursued until his death in 1994. In the years since Judd's death, under the directorship of his long-time collaborator, Marianne Stockebrand, Chinati has grown into an internationally recognized, contemporary art museum which invites artists from around the world to participate in artist-in-residence programs and curates a wide range of both academic and aesthetic content.

On 30 September,1995, shortly after Judd's passing, the Chinati Foundation held its inaugural symposium, titled "Art in the Landscape". This two-day symposium brought together a number of big names in the contemporary Land Art scene and academia at that time. Talks were offered by minimalist artist Carl Andre, art historian, Michael Charlesworth, walking artist, Hamish Fulton, art critic and curator Lucy Lippard, art historian, Ann Reynolds (who discussed the documentary process of Robert Smithson), and earth artist, James Turrell. The talks and a concluding roundtable discussion, were moderated by art historian, Richard Shiff. The symposium sought a conceptualization of

"Land Art" in the late 20th century. The talks offered at the Chinati symposium advanced the landscape tradition away from both the highly commodified unique art object so prized in the high modernist period and the kind of colonialist landscape art which W.J.T. Mitchell identifies as "an exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression."[78] The Chinati symposium sought to place the representational landscape tradition aside, so that land and nature as an interactive aesthetic experience might be explored. Particular interest was placed on the ways in which the artists in attendance created interventions into the land or refigured the land in order to shape the experience of the viewer, thus making the gallery or installation going patron the primary witness through their interactive experience.

During the panel discussion of the Chinati Foundation's symposium the presenters were asked a series of questions about land art, the role of scale and language in land art and how land art fits within the wider landscape tradition. In response, Carl Andre read Wallace Stevens' "The Anecdote of the Jar":

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground

[78] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 2nd edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee.[79]

Upon reading the poem, André remarked that it "fe[lt] precisely like what it is to make a work of sculpture."[80] Stevens' poem identifies the framing effects of placing a human made object in the wilderness; human intervention in the natural world, has a cultivating and a culturing effect such that it can no longer be constituted as wild. André is directing the framing and culturing capacities enacted by this kind of intervention toward a work of sculpture, particularly a sculpture which is created for a particular site. In Andre's practice, as in the practices of Judd, Smithson, Turrell, and many other American Land artists, this is the intent of their art. Their sculptures are not created with the intention of being an object unto themselves but rather as an insertion into the environment whose function is to order or direct the experience of the viewer. We might recall Judd's *Freestanding Works in Concrete* in this regard.

At the "Art in the Landscape" symposium, there was one presenting artist whose sensibilities seemed not in harmony with those of his peers. British walking artist Hamish Fulton's response to the positioning questions posed to the panel is noteworthy:

> It is a little difficult for me to just deposit into this conversation my points of view. It is difficult because my art is about walking. It is not about the issues of

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[79] Wallace Stevens, "The Anecdote of the Jar," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 76.
[80] Marianne Stockebrand, *Art in the Landscape*, (Marfa: Chinati Foundation, 2000), 119.

> U.S. land art or European outdoor sculpture. The differences center around either constructing something or nothing in the landscape. What I build is an experience, not a sculpture. My wish is to leave as few traces of my passing as possible. My walking experiences are the reverse of creating sculptural changes, subtractions or additions to the land.[81]

Fulton's remarks were not acknowledged at the time by the other artists and scholars present. They continued their conversations about landscape and sculpture: discussing how landscape can be understood to be a political device and how sculpture, when placed in the land, is a marker of human presence left behind as an enduring symbol of that presence, such that the sculpture comes to fulfill the same functions as a traditional landscape painting. Fulton's remarks, however, are suggestive of the differences between what the Americans call land or earth art, and concurrently created British environmental art. It is the defining of this distinction and showing how British artists arrived at their expression of sited art organically is the concern of this part. We will begin with a discussion of the Land Art movement and the international Environmental Art scene of the 1960s in order to set up a contrast and to highlight the unique forms of work taking place within the UK. The work of Scottish artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay will be explored as laying the foundation for the redefinition of Land Art within a British context. A case for the formation of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography will be made and the work of several of its major contributors will be investigated.

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[81] Stockebrand, *Art in the Landscape*, 119-20.

The American Land Art Tradition

The Land Art movement in the United States arose out of the abstract expressionist, minimalist and conceptualist movements of the 1950s and 60s. Robert Smithson is widely viewed at the vanguard artist who transcended these movements and provided the grounds for the kind of work produced by artists such as Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria and Carl André. As a writer and critic, Smithson also created a critical vocabulary through which his work and the works of other Land Artists would come to be recognized.[82] As Robert Hobbs notes, "Before 1963 Smithson regarded himself as a painter. He belonged to the large group of post-Beat, existentialist followers of Abstract Expressionism. Like many frequenters of the Cedar Bar in New York City in the late fifties and early sixties, he attempted to use himself as a crucible for forging a genuine, felt experience."[83] His period as a painter was ultimately discarded by Smithson. He even went so far as to destroy many of these early works because he felt the tensions at play in them were "unresolved" yet, "from these early works he retained an interest in opposites and a desire to resolve them through art."[84]

One of Smithson's few remaining paintings, *Dead Wood* (1959)[85], which is an oil on canvas, offers an example of this early work. This piece, along with the better-known oil and collage on paperboard titled *Quicksand* (1959), the piece responsible for Smithson

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[82] Ben Tufnell, *Land Art*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 17.
[83] Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 11.
[84] Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, 12.
[85] "Deadwood," Holt/Smithson Foundation, accessed July, 30, 2021, https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/dead-wood.

being offered his second solo show at the Galleria Lester in Rome,[86] display clear points of connection both with each other and with the abstract expressionist movement. The somber earth tones and vertical structures in this early work evoke in the viewer a sense of being drawn in while simultaneously being excluded from his works. *Quicksand* gives the viewer the sense of being watched, both from above and within, of being judged and found wanting. No one is coming to save you from Smithson's *Quicksand*. *Dead Wood* too leaves the viewer feeling trapped; caged behind bars, beyond which the light attempts to seep in, inviting the viewer to try to reach the light and truth that is ultimately inaccessible to them. Be that as it may, we can see from Smithson's titles an interest in the earth and nature, an interest that is played out in many of his later works as he moves beyond painting and begins to work in the realms of minimalism and conceptualism.

During the decade that followed, Smithson would invent ways of working that would move beyond abstract expressionism and minimalism and provide a vocabulary and methodology for a new kind of art, retrospectively named: Land or Earth Art. Smithson's site/non-site displays, which worked to bring a place into the gallery through the use of maps and photographs as well as natural materials brought in from the site, worked in concert to provide gallery goers with an experience of place that was otherwise unavailable to them.[87] This way of working would be an important way for Land Artists to provide an experience in the gallery which justified the work they undertook elsewhere. The work they did elsewhere was work that was not possible to bring into the gallery in any other way because it needed to be where it was in order to exist at all.

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[86] "Robert Smithson – Quicksand, Catalogue Note," *Sotheby's*, 11 May 2011, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.125.html/2011/contemporary-ii-n08745.
[87] Ann Reynolds, "Casting Glances: reconsidering Smithson's "documentary" process," *Art in the Landscape*, (Marfa: Chinati Foundation, 2000).

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), for example, was created with bulldozers, "displacing some 6,000 tons of black basalt rock and earth from the adjacent shore to form a coil 1,500 feet long and approximately 15 feet wide, winding counter-clockwise into the lake."[88] This work not only changed the appearance of the lake in which it was built, but also the adjacent shoreline. Rozel Point in Great Salt Lake, Utah, bears no resemblance to the place it was before the arrival of Smithson. *Spiral Jetty* is a work that is intended to be experienced, to be walked, but it is largely inaccessible to most but the most patient and stalwart as it is located miles from any major roadway and frequently entirely underwater, sometimes for years on end. Smithson brought this site into the gallery through the use of film and site/non-site displays so that the gallery goers of New York could experience Rozel Point, Utah without ever having to leave the city.

Art history has tended to present this story in such a way as to see the land art practices of this period as derivations of the same theme and collect them together under the category: Land or Earth Art. Smithson, along with contemporaries Michael Heizer and Walter de Maria are seen as performing a radical shift out of the gallery and the studio and into the land. This return to the land as site to be experienced reconsidered the relationship between humans and the land in new and increasingly material and performative ways. In this there was a return to an aesthetic and tactile relationship with the land that invoked the land-human relationships of prehistory, an idea explored by Lucy Lippard in her *Overlay* (1996), in which she relates the Land and Earth art of 1960s and 1970s America to the earthworks of ancient cultures.[89] Land was once again no

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[88] "Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty," Dia, Dia Foundation, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.diaart.org/visit/visit-our-locations-sites/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty.
[89] Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

longer something to be looked at from outside, no longer something to be framed as it had been by the painted landscape tradition, rather it was something to be experienced.

It is true that, drawing on the theoretical work initiated by minimalism and conceptualism, Land or Earth Art sought to de-commercialize the unique art object, turning attention towards the value of experience, while retaining deep connections to the galleries of New York, pursuing many of the same ends as their more commercialized counterparts in terms of legacy and restricted access, subject to actively engaging in practices of "land-scaping" as a means of inscribing themselves and their existence into deep time. Unlike the verdant landscapes which were engaged in the European traditions, land worthy of attention and creation in the US was largely dead and treated as such: deserts and dead lakes were considered prime real estate; the land was better off for having been built upon or altered from its natural state.

We might consider Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) and James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (1979- Present), in this regard. Both Smithson and Turrell perform massive alterations of the places they engage artistically. Turrell's *Roden Crater* occupies the inside of an extinct volcanic cinder cone in the Painted Desert region of Northern Arizona. It now bears no resemblance to the place it was before the coming of Turrell. Shaping the bowl of the crater alone, required the movement of over 1.3 million cubic yards of earth.[90] When complete *Roden Crater* will feature 6 tunnels and 21 viewing spaces all of which were created to allow for the viewing of natural light as a time and place bound phenomena. Turrell harnesses the light of the sun during the day and the light of the stars, planets and moon at night to provide viewers with the opportunity to

[90] "About," Roden Crater, Skystone Foundation, accessed July 30, 2021, http://rodencrater.com/about/.

experience these phenomena in a way that is impossible in our light polluted world. In 2015, the opportunity to experience Turrell's crater came with the hefty price tag of $6,500 USD.[91]

These exclusive sites are characteristic of the American Land Art approach and speak to the legacy value that seems to be common among American Land Artists of Smithson and Turrell's vintage. Carl Andre referred to the impulse to mark sites as "the same as the dog pissing on the lamppost." These terraformed sites become monuments, a signature on the earth's surface an inscription of the artist's existence into deep time. Nature is not meant to reclaim this land. The artist has come to inscribe himself as an author in and of nature, transforming that portion of the earth into a work of art. [92]

Arte Povera

The monumental inscriptions of the self into place, as performed by land and earth artists like James Turrell, Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer, largely prefigured the art historical narrative of the Land and Environmental Art movements. This narrative continues to inform not only the practices but also the perception of artists working in and on the land up to the present day. It can be said that the American approach to Land or Earth Art has come to dominate the art historical discussion of artists who work outdoors with natural materials with little deviation, focussing on the way that these works seek to objectify experience as their connecting trait. This tune doesn't tell the whole story and, in many ways, glosses over distinctions and divergent growths that

[91] M.H. Miller, "James Turrell Allowing Limited Visitors to Roden Crater for $6,500 a Person," *Artnews*, 2015, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/james-turrell-allowing-limited-visitors-to-roden-crater-for-6500-a-person-3634/.
[92] Stockebrand, *Art in the Landscape*, 120.

have occurred in the American and European approaches to nature, the land, and, most importantly, place since the late 1960s. This approach also causes works to be discussed and shown comparatively when the connections between them are often tenuous.

Environmental Art within the European tradition. for example, was less concerned with the inscription of the self into place and more concerned with, as Jonathan Bordo writes, "the work that art has to do."

> Through the emphasis that this art places on its practice as work, time and its transitory aspect come to the fore. Rather than advancing art as an ergon (work), as an achievement or oeuvre, its perpetuity as a form, instead contemporary art emphasizes the work art has to do. It has tasks, agendas, and once completed its work is over.[93]

Bordo's remarks addressed the work of Giuseppe Penone, an Italian contemporary of Heizer and De Maria, who worked in the woods near his home in the late 1960s. Penone's conceptual outdoor art practice is to be considered as an early contribution to arte povera, not land art. The Tate Modern's glossary of art terminology states that, "the term was introduced by the Italian art critic and curator, Germano Celant, in 1967."[94] Arte povera, literally "poor art", sees the shift away from traditional artistic practices and materials, choosing to work instead with found materials such as soil, rags and twigs and by "using such throwaway materials [the artists] aimed to challenge and disrupt the values of the commercialized contemporary gallery system."[95] Works of the arte povera practitioners are noticeably organic in their form, moving away from the formalism of minimalism and

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[93] Jonathan Bordo. "History Lessons: Imitation, Work and the Temporality of Contemporary Art." *Art History* 31, no. 4, (2014): 806-25.
[94] "Arte Povera," Art Terms, Tate Modern, accessed July 30, 2021, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/arte-povera.
[95] "Arte Povera," Art Terms.

the materials and forms of high modernism. Arte povera is seen as "the Italian contribution to conceptual art"[96], its conceptual focus turns toward poverty as a way of living a good life and seeks to aestheticize ethical quandaries.

Figure 5 - Door Tree - Cedar, Giuseppe Penone, 2012, photograph by Joshua White / http://jwpictures.com/ Reproduced with permission of the photographer.

[96] "Arte Povera," Art Terms.

Poverty as a way of living a good and therefore ethical life comes out of the teachings of St Francis Assisi. After receiving visions first from God and later from Christ, St Francis gave up his wealth, turning toward a life of extreme poverty as Christ had directed him to do in a vision. Francis of Assisi would spend the rest of his life preaching Christ's values of poverty and renunciation, to the followers of a now enormously wealthy church in an attempt to restore the values of Christ to the Christian faith. St Francis was magnanimous with his teachings, even preaching to the animals and the birds. It is for this reason he is now considered the patron saint of ecologists.

Arte povera would draw on the teachings of St Francis when coming to a conceptualization of the kind of art they were trying to create. Economic hardship in Italy at the time drove an interest to move away from the commercialized gallery system. Practitioners of arte povera aspired toward an aesthetics of ethics: an aesthetic practice that asked viewers to reconsider how they live their lives. Consider, by way of example, Penone's practice of exhuming trees from wood destined for the lumber yard, a painstaking process that removes sections of the trunk, ring by ring to reveal the sapling within (figure 5). Bordo writes:

> Penone fabricates what potentially appears to be the rebirth of of a living tree from a piece of lumber that sets up an undecidability problem: either the making of a tree from lumber is an ethical act of anamesis as a gesture of apology that would make of the tree an end station, a resultant, a detritus, and a soft value, or the making a tree from a board is simply the quintessence of Western poesis itself - the tree work as artwork as the essential completion of the very tree itself, an art object and the hardest of Western objects.[97]

[97] Jonathan Bordo, "The Witness in the Errings of Contemporary Art," *The Rhetoric of the Frame*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 180.

Bordo describes Penone's trees as performing an "ethical injunction [to] *leave alone* which in turn places an ethical corollary on the viewer: *In order to leave alone, you must change your life*."[98] According to Bordo, it is in this way that Penone's trees bear witness to the tree that once was and, by doing so, remind the viewer of the life of the tree, its longevity, and how the way humans presently live their lives contributed to the tree's untimely end. Bordo's reflections on the work of Penone also call into question the value of both the tree and the art object. Is the tree more valuable as lumber or as art? From a commercial standpoint, Penone work has both has stripped away the value of the tree, turning a large timber into a sapling, and attempted to avoid the world of commercial art by creating a work of art out of unconventional, found, non-art materials. The true value of the log and, by extension, the value of the living tree as well as its status as an aesthetic object are thus problematized in Penone.

Through the arte povera movement on the one side and the land art movement on the other that we can observe the divergent paths of the European and US approaches to creating contemporary landscapes.

Redefining Land Art in the UK

In order to continue to motivate the differences that can be seen in Penone, consider Fulton's *Ajawaan* (1987) as illustrative of the differences between the US and UK approaches to "land art" as well as the influences of arte povera on British artists. *Ajawaan* (1987) is an artist's book which records the eight days that Fulton spent walking in Saskatchewan's Prince Albert National Park. The book is comprised of three main

[98] Bordo, "Witness in the Errings," 180.

components: a white cover with the title and artist's name, a single page which bears the image of a still lake broken only by the concentric rings of a singular disturbance below which is printed the walk particulars and a five-panel accordion pull out which bears the panoramic image of a very still lake on top of which Fulton has printed fifteen columns of of seven four letter words. The words present us with a paired down narration of his walk in a multi-sensory way that captures Fulton's sensations along his journey.

It is important to remember that for Hamish Fulton, the work of art is to be found in the walk and when the walk is complete the art is over. What Fulton brings away from the experience and shows in a gallery or publishes in an artist's book are no more than a record of his artwork, a snapshot proof of his having been somewhere and done something. Therefore, what we have presented in *Ajawaan* is a record of Fulton's art, an art that is no longer accessible by an observer or gallery patron. It is only accessible at one remove, through Fulton's art book. His presence at Prince Albert National Park is but a documented memory.

As we can see from *Ajawaan*, Fulton's art is not easily understood when trying to bring it into conversation with the likes of Andre, Smithson, Judd, and Turrell. Rosalind Krauss's essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", originally published in 1979 and reprinted in 1983 as part of Hal Foster's collection *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, presents the work of Fulton as existing, within the expanded field of postmodernist sculpture, somewhere between landscape and non-landscape. Krauss includes Fulton's work under the category of 'marked sites' where the site of his work is marked by his 1) having worked there and 2) his photographic (or other) recording of his

having worked there.[99] The ‘form’ Krauss assigns to the work engaged in by Fulton suggests an intimate, tactile connection with the place itself, however, it also understands and presents walking as occupying a kind of sculptural mode wherein, not unlike a site-specific sculpture by Judd, the presence of the person or object in the land informs or frames the ways in which we experience the site that it marks. As such, in Krauss’s presentation, walking art then becomes not dissimilar to a landscape painting, the land which surrounds the sculpture becomes presented to us anew, re-framed by the artist’s “work”.

Using Krauss as their guide, American art history understands Fulton’s art as existing within the same sculptural, Land Art typology as Andre, Smithson and Turrell whose work effects, what Michael Fried terms, “an objectification of experience”.[100] From Fulton’s perspective, nothing could be further from the truth. Fulton rejects both painting and sculpture and, as such, he rejects an art of “objectification”. Fulton’s object is his own experience of walking somewhere. The pieces that are ultimately brought into the gallery are a translation of that experience, a referential document and not an “artwork” in the conventional sense. Fulton’s remarks capture this disconnect and allow us to better understand how what Krauss offers is in fact a misinterpretation of walking art.

Further evidence for the misapprehension of the distinctions between the US land art movement and a concurrent and related, but arguably separate, movement that took place in the UK is provided in Rebecca Solnit’s *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Solnit

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[99] Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987) 43-56.
[100] Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood (1967)” *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 148-172.

devotes a chapter of her book to the postmodern practice of walking as an art form. Solnit references the work of Lucy Lippard, writing:

> "Lucy Lippard... traces the parentage for walking as a fine art to sculpture, not performance. She focuses on Carl Andre's 1966 sculpture *Lever* and his 1968 *Joint*, the former made of bricks lined up to extend from one room to another so that the viewer has to travel, the other a similar line but this time of hay bales in a meadow traversing a far greater distance... By incorporating an oriental notion of multiple viewpoints and both implied movement and direct intervention in the landscape, Andre set the scene for a sub genre of dematerialized sculpture which is simply, and not so simply, *walking*," concludes Lippard."[101]

What Lippard, and by proxy Solnit, seeks to establish is a characterization of walking art that looks for its origins in the American minimalist movement.

If we return to Lippard's original text, we find the assertions slightly more nuanced, more willing to acknowledge that, "The English landscape, with its network of old lanes and tracks and public footpaths, and the English culture itself, encourage walking and the tempo of walking as North American spaces and paces do not."[102] This is a sentiment that also finds recapitulation in Solnit's text, albeit in a more heavy-handed way, "England, on the other hand, has never ceased to be pedestrian in scale, and its landscape is not available for much further conquest, so artists there must use a lighter touch."[103]

Both Lippard and Solnit, in their remarks, however, display a rather American imperial approach to the topic, one that neglects the likelihood that there is a precedent for this kind of work in the UK without the need for there to be an American connection. Solnit's assertion that Britain's "landscape is not available for much further conquest, so

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[101] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 269.
[102] Lippard, *Overlay*, 125.
[103] Solnit, *Wanderlust,* 270.

artists there must use a lighter touch" is frankly a lazy way of accounting for the oceans of difference that are present between the practices of the American land artists and their contemporaries in the UK. To say that the reason British creators opted not to create a Smithson-esque *Spiral Jetty* in the Thames or a Heizer-esque *Double Negative* on Dartmoor on account of the unavailability of land also seems enviously inappropriate, as a way of undermining the work that is created in the UK and negates the fact that the differences we see between the US artists and their UK contemporaries is not a result of the British artist seeing what the Americans were doing and wishing they could do the same, but couldn't. Rather the UK artists were engaged in a way of working that is entirely their own and walking as an aesthetic practice is just one way that British artists are reimagining the landscape tradition.

It is also worth noting that, according to an interview with Richard Long in 2009, published in The Guardian, Richard Long began making walking art (which the article mistakenly refers to as a subtype of Land Art) in 1964, two years prior to Andre's *Lever* sculpture.

> "Back in 1964, when Richard Long was 18, he went for a walk on the downs near his native Bristol. The countryside was covered in snow, and faced with a pristine expanse of silent whiteness, he began rolling a snowball through it. When the snowball became too big to push any further, Long took out his camera. He did not take a snapshot of the giant snowball; instead, he photographed the dark meandering track it had left in the snow. The ensuing image, one of his earliest works of what is now called land art, is named Snowball Track. Pure and simple. And, in its purity and simplicity, it denoted all that would follow."[104]

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[104] Sean O'Hagan, "Interview: One Step Beyond," The Guardian, May 10, 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/may/10/art-richard-long.

This early walk work would result in Long's expulsion from the first art school he attended: the West of England College of Art in Bristol.

Long would return to formal education a year later after gaining admission to Saint Martin's College of Art in London, a school that touted modernist sculptor Anthony Caro among its teaching faculty and that "had a reputation for making, as the influential American critic Clement Greenberg put it, "the strongest new sculpture done anywhere in the world at this moment.""[105] It would be here that Long would create his *A Line Made by Walking* in 1967 wherein Long documents, through the use of a photograph, his walking back and forth at a site until the grass parted to show his passing presence. This work would mark the beginning of a new kind of dematerialized art on the global stage: walking art.

> "As Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate, writes, "In *A Line Made by Walking* (1967)... Long changed our notion of sculpture and gave new meaning to an activity as old as man himself. Nothing in the history of art quite prepared us for the originality of his action."[106]

Despite Serota's mischaracterization of Long's work as a sculpture, we can agree that Long's *A Line Made by Walking* is aesthetically revolutionary and an original aesthetic gesture. It was the Clement Greenberg who laid the foundation for the interpretation of innovative new works produced by the students of Saint Martin's to be counted as sculptures, a notion that both Krauss and Lippard appear to accept and work to develop a provenance for. Solnit parrots Lippard's assertions and, as we can see from Serota's and

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[105] O'Hagan, "Interview: One Step Beyond."
[106] O'Hagan, "Interview: One Step Beyond."

Tufnell's remarks, this is a characterization that finds recapitulation by British art critics and scholars also.

In coming to their discussion of walking art as an aesthetic form, Lippard and Solnit look to the work of Richard Long as establishing the paradigm without mention of Hamish Fulton in Lippard's case and with only a passing note in Solnit's book. This is interesting for not only does Fulton report his earliest walk work, *Ivinghoe Beacon – "Coup" Stick*, taking place in 1963, prior to Long's 1964 walk in the snow and Andre's 1966 *Lever* sculpture, it is arguable that Fulton is in fact more radically puritanical than Long in his approach. Fulton is the artist who pushes the walking art form to the absolute limit. Consider Bordo's reflection on the role of silence in walking art:

> The withdrawal of speech and its prohibition would be part of his repertoire of decisions to concentrate his aesthetic into the very act of walking for its own sake. Walking that takes place in silence demonstrates the virtue of silence, recalling the monastic vows of silence and practices of meditation as spiritual ascesis. Shut down is one thing, a vow of silence is another. The withdrawal of speech to create an aureole around the walk is a piece of other decisions to protect the aesthetic integrity of the walk — the paucity of tokens including photographs that evidence the walk, perhaps even notebooks. Thoreau on his sojourns carried and disposed of his notebooks even under the most challenging circumstances. Above all Fulton did not bring back to the Gallery representations of his sojourn in the manner of Richard Long. Nor did he make discourse the accompanying condition of his walking as the necessary supplement to the work in the way that Goldsworthy transforms his installation making into performances through his speech acts of Heidegerrean eloquence about time, nature, dwelling and death.
>
> By withdrawing the accoutrements and appurtenances of communication as requirements for his walking, Fulton establishes each walk as singular act to be undertaken and achieved with an inwardness that is protected by Silence. It is one

> thing to be driven into silence, quite another thing to choose silence as a meditation.[107]

Bordo's reflections are particularly interesting in that they invite the reader to reconsider the relationship between the work of Hamish Fulton and the work of Richard Long, particularly insofar as we know that they are not infrequent collaborators, completing several "walk works" together over the past 50 years.

What we see in the work of Fulton, when we address it alongside the work of Richard Long, is the dearth of traces. Long's work is overtly sculptural in many ways. He draws on the site/non-site practice inaugurated by Smithson, bringing synecdoches for the places he walks into the gallery: using mud and clay to festoon gallery walls, bringing in gathered sticks and stones to be arranged into natural forms in the gallery, using maps and photographs which also feature displaced materials in the land to show where and when walks took place and to mark Long's passage. Fulton employs very few of these tactics because he is adamant that he does not want to shift the aesthetic centre of his art away from the walk itself.

While Long employs physical representations for place and photographs which capture his minimal, although noticeable, reorganization of the land, Fulton looks to the word, the line and occasionally the photograph to record his walks and bring them into the gallery. Apart from typographic design, he offers little else. Fulton takes this approach so as to not deprioritize the walk, to not afford his viewers anything else to look at other than the experience of the walk, and to leave as little trace of his passage through the land as possible. This choice to leave no trace both allows for Fulton to attempt to erase

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[107] Jonathan Bordo, "Walking with Hamish Fulton into the Vanishing Point vers le Canada," *Place Matters,* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, Forthcoming).

himself as the intermediary and to leave the place as close to the way he found it as possible so that should his walk works succeed in inviting gallery goers to have an experience themselves, they will find the places he walked as unmarked as Fulton found them himself.

It is time and place that figure most prominently in Fulton's work and yet are fugitive, barely leaving any intrinsic traces — no stones, barely a photograph, not even it seems, a Thoreauvian notebook. We cannot say the same about the work of American Land Artists. Monumentality and the inscription of human presence seem to be the foremost intention of these works and it is for this reason that I will now be proposing a restructuring of the way we view and categorize what has been, up to now, collectively referred to as Land Art internationally.

The British School of Aesthetic Chorography

It might not immediately make sense to cast the walking artist Hamish Fulton as a central figure of the British environmental art scene, what I have come to call the British School of Aesthetic Chorography precisely because it is so intangible and mobile. In the grand narrative of British environmental art, many consider Fulton to be a marginal figure, an artist working in the style of Richard Long but in an even less accessible way. Fulton's art is distinct from Long's and takes a much more considerable aesthetic risk than most of his peers in the way that he offers very few discernibly aesthetic materials for viewers to look at.

As we have established, environmental art practices in the UK were born out of the same international art milieu as American Land Art and Italian arte povera and informed

by similar theoretical and aesthetic concerns and issues, particularly with respect to landscape traditions. Yet, the British School of Aesthetic Chorography drew more heavily on the Arte Povera movements of Italy and the Artist Book movements of the early 1960s in their searching for ways to engage in an aesthetic practice that avoids creating unique art objects which hold surplus value.

Several young British artists connected over the emerging concerns of minimalism, conceptualism, and the dematerialization of the art object at the cusp between aesthetics and ethics while adhering to deeply held cultural eccentricities and habits with respect to walking, nature, place, and the documentation of experience full of local history. Their work is place centred because it is time based.

To elucidate the creativity of these historically saturated environmental forms of art I will begin by turning to the work of Thomas A. Clark, a regional Scottish conceptual artist and poet who employs language and typographic design to create his work. Clark, along with his wife Laurie, are the owners of Moschatel Press, a small art press which publishes limited runs of bookworks, cards, and poetry, and Cairn Gallery, an artist run gallery space in Pittenweem, Scotland for land, minimalist and conceptualist art. It is noteworthy that the Cairn Gallery has shown the works of many prominent British Chorographic Artists including Ian Hamilton Finlay, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy.

The Hidden Place

Figure 6 - The Hidden Place, Thomas Clark, 2011. By permission of the artist.

Thomas A. Clark's print, The Hidden Place (2011) (figure 6) highlights the depth and longevity of aesthetic place connecting art practices present in the British Isles. This poster, which is based on a site-specific wall painting that was made at Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh in 2010, which, in turn, was the product of the The Hidden Place project which was initiated by Clark in collaboration with the Falkland Centre for Stewardship in 2008 and seeks to install place-name signs which "reflect on the meanings of Scottish place names"[108], offers "an alternative map of Scotland."[109] At the time of its initial viewing, the gallery published the following statement, which I quote in full:

> The Hidden Place is an alternative map of Scotland. Place names tell of old cultures, of history, geography, industry, religion and myth. Scottish place names have their origin in several languages; Gaelic, Pictish, Norse, English, French, Latin and Scots. In The Hidden Place over 100 place names are replaced by phrases revealing the original meaning of these names. Each place becomes a piece of condensed folk poetry, revealing the riches of the past with a quiet lyricism; bay of the bent grass, place of pebbles, slope of brightness. The Hidden Place is one long poem about the land and its people."[110]

At the project's inception, Clark published the following poetic statement of intent:

> "Places are often hidden behind their names. We see a name on the map or drive past a road sign and think we know the place. Of course, real knowledge is a slower process. Yet hidden within each name is a sense, the original meaning of the name, which may offer a clue to a place's particular identity. To know the meaning of a name is to begin to reveal the uniqueness of a place.
>
> door of the forest
> slope of watching

[108]Thomas Clark, "The Hidden Place Project," Moschatel Press, 2010, http://thehiddenplaceproject.blogspot.com.
[109] Clark, "The Hidden Place Project."
[110] Clark, "The Hidden Place Project."

burn of the birches

The Hidden Place is a project initiated by the poet Thomas A Clark, supported by Falkland Centre for Stewardship. Its aim is to install road signs throughout Scotland, giving the meaning of the local place name.

loch of the showers
place of splinters
fort of the two oars

Place names are repositories of local stories. They tell of old cultures, history, geography, industry, religion and myth. Scottish names have their origin in several languages; Gaelic, Pictish, Norse, English, French, Latin and Scots. Each name is a piece of condensed folk poetry.

blue cairn
corrie of the snows
green lochan

It changes our perception of a place to learn that Glasgow is a green hollow, Greenock a sunny hill, that Milngavie is a windmill, or that Pollockshaws is a little pool in the woods.

height of the fire
meadow of the yellow cattle
place of the cave

By the simple intervention of the road sign, The Hidden Place will make these meanings accessible to everyone who passes by. It will change perceptions of the map of Scotland. The Hidden Place will eventually amount to one long poem about the land and its people.

isle of the offering
church of the arrows
house of the fold

Thomas A Clark, 2008[111]

This document highlights the intense relationship between the Scots and their place. Clark's project began with the installation of road signs which provided the meanings of the place names, a practice that was inspired by a practice on the Ardnamurchan peninsula wherein "rivers, streams and burns are often accompanied by road signs giving their names in Gaelic. While pointing to the presence and importance of water, this practice beautifully and poignantly illustrates how place is particularised, marked and preserved by language."[112] Images of such signs found on Clark's blog are offered here by way of illustration:

[111] Clark, "The Hidden Place Project."
[112] Clark, "The Hidden Place Project."

Figure 7 - Abhainn Glac na H'Eaglais, Thomas Clark, 2009. By permission of the artist.

Figure 8 - Allt Torr na Moine, Thomas Clark, 2009. By permission of the artist.

As Clark shares, "'Abhainn Glac na h-Eaglais' is the 'Stream of the Hollow of the Church' and 'Allt Torr na Moine' is 'Burn of the Peat Mound'."[113] (figures 7 & 8) This practice, which "signposts" in a material way, draws attention to the land both as it exists in the present as well as the ways in which the land was used or held significance over time. It is interesting to note that the Ardnamurchan peninsula also boasts a comparatively high concentration of Gaelic speakers. The 2011 census classified the area as a Band C, which indicates that somewhere between 10% and 25% of the population speaks Gaelic.[114] This would suggest both a link between the Gaelic language and place as well as a quality of connection between these two things that is culturally driven, for it seems, in this example as in others, that, symbiotically, place preserves the language (that is notably dying to the south) and that the language preserves the place.

The finished gallery piece that is the product of The Hidden Place project (and the prints that were later created) shows the outline of mainland Scotland as well as the islands of the Outer Hebrides and is a simple representation of a map rendered in 3 colours: light blue water, cream land, and a darker blue outline. Clark then used the same darker blue to print 100 place names employing a Johnston typeface which is the corporate font of public transport in the UK, visually asserting to the viewer that this is not only a map, but a map which can be trusted for accuracy, dependability and timeliness. The place names depicted are not the modern ones; however, the names that appear on this "map" are the literal translations of Gaelic/Norse/Pictish and other historic toponyms which are or used to be attached to sites around the Scotland.

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[113] Clark, "The Hidden Place Project."

[114] "Gaelic Report (part 2)," Scotland's Census 2011, National Records of Scotland, 2015, https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/analytical_reports/Report_part_2.pdf.

These toponyms have all but lost their meanings today. Material changes in the environment, urban sprawl and simple forgetfulness has meant that the places don't necessarily resemble or contain the features they were named for. Successive series of invasions have also resulted in the toponyms being altered or replaced entirely by the ruling order such that traditional names/spellings have been altered or compounded with foreign prefixes and suffixes which obscure their origins and their meanings. Looking at this piece we are aware that it is both a represented place and an imaginary one. The locations lack specificity, there is no x-marks-the-spot for any of the names that appear over the rough representation of the Scottish lands, nor are there any equivalencies provided.

This is a Scotland that is both modern and ancient, these are the places that are obscured by time, modernity and memory. Clark continues to keep these places hidden by representing approximations of their locations, giving them toponyms that, in many cases, are so far removed from their modern counterparts, that even a savvy searcher would find locating these sites on a modern map, with certainly next to impossible.

The work of Clark is as much a remembering and recording of the past as it is a depiction of the ways in which the people of Scotland were connected to their place. Not only does Clark's map provide insight into details about the place, secrets that are both timebound and either forgotten or restricted to the local inhabitants of that place, but it also suggests something about the way that language was used by the early inhabitants of these places as mnemonic, mapping devices, a practice that was explored extensively by Cox in the 1990s when looking at the place names of Carloway on the Isle of Lewis.[115]

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[115] Richard Cox, *Place-Names of the Carloway Registry, Isle of Lewis*, (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1987), http://theses.gla.ac.uk/77502/1/10995550.pdf.

Names appearing on Clark's map corroborate these observations: "the drowned land", "the field of blossoms", "roe island", "the place of the dead", and "place of the cave". This speaks to both the long and enduring history of the deep topographic connection that exists between the Scots and their land, and the cultural role that language plays as mapping device, memory device and place itself.

Chorography

Clark, along with Fulton and many of their contemporaries, reflect upon and draw into the present this longstanding connection that exists between the people of the British Isles and their place, celebrating the particularities and peculiarities of that place as a singular site. They enact this through aesthetic chorographic assertions, developing the basic chorographic assertion "I was here" into an aesthetic or poetic expression of their experience of that place and, in their doing so, perform a celebration of the place as an entity that is alive, drawing to the surface all the tangible and intangible things about a place that make this place this place and not somewhere else.

A chorography, from the Greek *chōros* and *graphos*, is an articulation of a specific site, one which requires a subject (human or otherwise) in order to find expression because it exists not only in space, but also in time. This is distinct from a topography which offers a more generalized overview of a place – a place as defined by its relationship to other places. One might contrast a road map of Scotland with Clark's *Hidden Places* map as a way of exploring the distinctions between topography and chorography. A road map locates sites relationally, marking out sites which are important from a socio-economic perspective, but which suggest little about the site's cultural value.

Clark's map, by contrast, suggests less about the material location of the places, but offers instead certain secrets of the place. His map is chorographic because it tells us stories of places, what we might find there or what took place there if we were to visit the place ourselves.

We might then imagine this distinction between topography and chorography as the difference between writing *about* place and writing *in* place. Unlike topography, which offers an objective location, chorography requires a witness for whom the place exists. The witness, by expressing their experience of a place, effects an inscription of the self onto the place, however unlike Andre's 'dog pissing on the lamppost,' this inscription is metaphysical. In the chorographer's inscription, the presence of the self, yields token words, thoughts, a stop-time, a fragmentary memory, that endures beyond the experience by virtue of its expression or recording. This report of this place, at this moment, then comes to exist as a spectre over the place, leaving the place itself unaltered.

This articulation of *chōros* as this place right here, this place in relation to an individual and that individual's experience of that place, captures the nature of the aesthetic practices of several UK based artists whose work engages in ethical and aesthetic explorations and articulations of place that simultaneously seek to avoid the conventions of landscape. Through these articulations, artists who we might consider to be part of this school perform subjective celebrations of the natural and the particular in a way that leaves these things untouched.

Chorography suggests a method which produces an understanding of the depth of place and highlights the essential role that memory plays in our identification of somewhere as unique and special. Chorographies also permit an ephemeral marking of place, which goes beyond the work of the monument, the milestone, the X on a map, and

invites time and experience into the conversation, presenting the here and now for a subject in a way that is recorded and permitted to coexist alongside the place's forward march in time, an excerpted moment, a fragment of a memory. When the excerpt takes on an aestheticized form, it increases the likelihood that it will persist beyond the momentary experience, and individual memory, and translate the place as an experiential entity which exists materially in time and space to those who have not or cannot experience it for themselves. This is the kind of work being undertaken by several post-1960s UK artists whose aesthetic approaches to the land are in conversation with one another, not over land or landscape or even nature, but rather over place and the role of experience[116] that is a point of convergence between place and art.

The practice of aesthetic chorography as an art métier arose in the UK in the late 1960s and should be considered a School of Aesthetic Chorography over the course of the last 50 years. This school arguably encompasses two generations of artists, connected by their environmental ethics, their documentary techniques, their interest in the particularity of place and of natural processes that occur at that place, and their use of the book as a means of sharing their work with the world. Key figures of the first generation of the school, who were active in the 1960s through to the 1990s, include Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, David Nash, Roger Palmer and Andy Goldsworthy, however this list could easily be expanded to include several more artists of this ilk who were also engaging in similar practices.

[116] It is important to note the distinct differences that are apparent between the American and British approaches to the objectification of experience. While the American approach is interested in the creation of experience in a viewer which the viewer is supposed to wonder at as if it were an object, the British approach is for the artist to objectify their experience and then to record or express that experience in an indexical way that invites the viewer to seek out their own experience.

In 2013, Nicholas Alfrey, Joy Sleeman and Ben Tufnell curated a retrospective exhibition titled *Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britain 1966-1979*.[117] The twenty-four artists included in this exhibition, including those named above, are also of this school. Publications created to accompany the exhibition explain how the exhibition "reveals the distinct forms that Land Art took here in Britain: predominantly conceptual and ephemeral, hand-made and organic."[118] This statement unfortunately perpetuates the narrative that British artistic practices which attend to the land are derivative of American Land Art and shows the pervasiveness of the homogenizing Land Art typology, even when some of the artists whom the curators chose to include, namely Fulton, reject the categorization. It also, however, makes an important observation about the characteristics and approaches taken toward the art that was created in the 1960s and 70s, by members of this school an aggregate group which I am calling the British School of Aesthetic Chorography. While, as can be seen in Clarke's *Hidden Places* map, there is a long-standing connection between the Brits and their place which informs the culture of the British Isles, there is also a long list of artists who were working in the second half of the 20th century who were actively involved in creating work that is the product of tactile and experiential relationships with places. One of the earliest examples of this can be found in the art and poetry of Ian Hamilton Finlay. It is his work we will explore first.

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[117] Ben Tufnell (ed), *Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britain 1966-1979*, (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013).

[118] Southbank Centre, "Education Information Pack," Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britiain in 1966-1979, Southbank Centre, 2013, http://www.artscouncilcollection.org.uk/sites/default/files/Uncommon%20Ground%20-%20Education%20Pack.pdf.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

For one to understand and appreciate that the approach to the experience of land and place employed by British artists during the second half of the 20th century is distinct from the American Land Art movement, it would require evidence of pre-existing art practices in the land in late 1950s Britain. The origins of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography were deeply influenced by the work of Scottish artist and poet Ian Hamilton Finlay. Although Finlay had been writing poetry, short stories and plays for some time, it would be in 1958, that he would begin to engage in practices which would dramatically influence both the literary and visual art worlds through the founding of Wild Hawthorn Press in Edinburgh, UK. This small publishing partnership between Finlay and Jessie McGuffie began publishing the works of various contemporary artists and poets, Finlay included, through their periodical *Poor Old Tired Horse* (1961-1967) and other publications. From the start, the Press was known for the "uncompromising quality of its publications and for the possibilities offered for formal innovation."[119]

Through the press and his other endeavours, Finlay would come to innovate a number of literary and artistic forms, including the booklet-poem, the poem/print, the one-word poem and the "Concrete" Poem[120], all of which would make important formal contributions to the concrete poetry and the artist book mode.[121] Wild Hawthorn Press would also create a paradigm of small, locally focussed presses with an interest in producing art publications open to formal experimentation and innovation. Many of these

[119] Yves Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: A Visual Primer*, (London: Reaktion Books 1992), p. xi.
[120] A poem carved into an object which was designed to be set in an environment/place: therein entering into a linguistic and sculptural discourse with the place for which it was designed and placed.
[121] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 2.

presses also take a particularly chorographic approach to their content through their interest in the small and the particular; the local and the natural. In many ways, their publications become emblematic of the places they locate and present while doubling as a memory of that place, at that point in time. The work of these artists highlight and celebrate the place-like nature of the printed object. This practice is continued today by other small presses including Thomas and Laurie Clark's Moschatel Press, Simon Cutt's Coracle Press, Nicholas Johnson's Etruscan Books, and Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson's Corbel Stone Press.

Place, notably, was not only important to Finlay on the page, he was also known for his site-specific practices and public sculpture, many of which relied as heavily on language as his printed objects. Finlay's "avant-gardening" and sculptural poetic practices would culminate in his *Little Sparta*, the extensive gardens that surround his home in Stonypath, Dunsyre, Scotland. These gardens are marked by Finlay's neo-classicist "concrete" poems, sculptures and site-specific installations which draw together Finlay's diverse passions and politics, and engage in a conversation with the place and the local, discussing and drawing attention to what is there, as well as what was there, and things that have occurred there over time. By engaging in such practices of marking and by deploying language as a means of drawing attention to phenomena at a particular site, similar to the way a sundial draws attention to the passage of time and to the earth's movement, Finlay's endeavours engage in a critical topographical discourse with

Stonypath. The gardens at *Little Sparta* contain and are a record both of the place itself and of the things that took place there over the course of Finlay's life.

Consider, for example, Finlay's *Bring Back the Birch*,[122] (figure 9) a poem-object which calls for the now absent birch tree to be returned. The stone recalls a tombstone in its vertical orientation, its pentagonal, steepled shape and its placement on the ground. It stands to mark an absence and to recall what once was. In this way, it both acts as a marker of place and a holder of memory. It also performs poetically in its alliteration ("Bring", "Back" and "Birch"); in word length (Bring - 5 letters, Back - 4 letters, the - 3

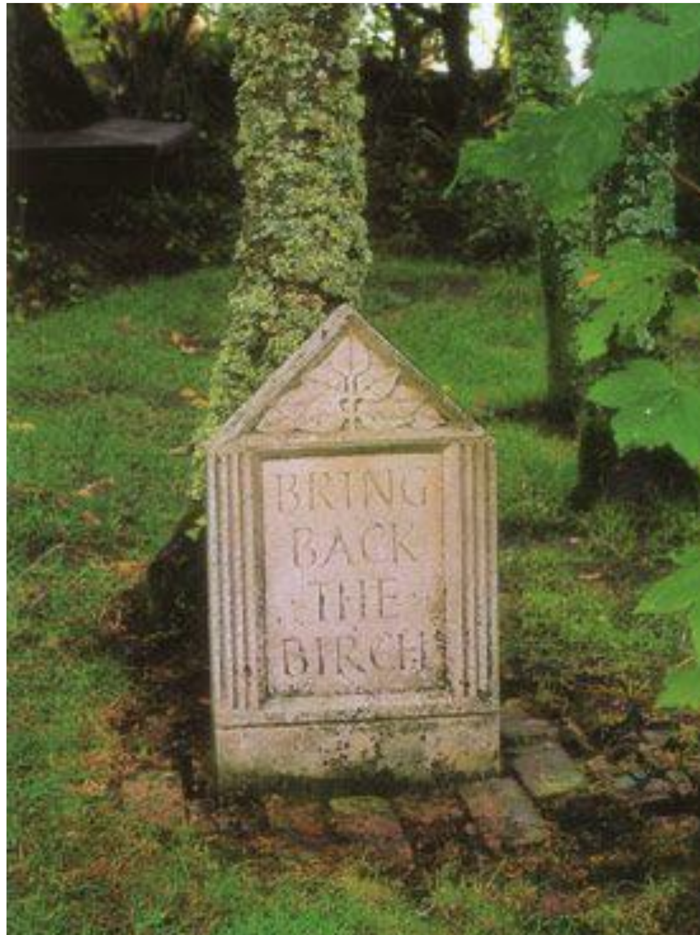

Figure 9 - Bring Back the Birch, Ian Hamilton Finlay, 1984 By courtesy of the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay.

[122] Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Bring Back the Birch (Stonypath)*, (Dunsyre: Wild Hawthorn Press, 1984).

letters, Birch - 5 letters) which loosely recalls the haiku; and in the availability of letters such that between the words "bring", "back" and "the" there are all the letters required to spell "birch".

While, at first glimpse, these assertions may seem a stretch, Finlay was known for his one word and concrete poems as well as poems which would show the alphabet missing certain letters. One of his printed poems *wave/rock* (1968)[123] (figure 11), originally a poem-object in cut glass (1966) (figure 10), provides a solid example of Finlay's poetic practice and the nature of Finlay's relationship to words. *wave/rock* (1968) shows the collision and superimposition of two words: wave and rock to suggest a third word: "wrack" (seaweed). As Finlay wrote in a letter to Emmett Williams in 1967, "The poem is "about" two imposing forces, but being a poem presents them in equipoise, resolved."[124] To Finlay, a single word could be a poem and the appearance of the word on the page or, more so, on a sculptural object, worked to explore the extent of our semiotic relationship with the word and the poem as needing to be "about" something.

Figure 10 – waverock (in cut glass), Ian Hamilton Finlay, 1966. By courtesy of the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay.

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[123] Ian Hamilton Finlay, *waverock*, (Dunsyre: Wild Hawthorn Press, 1968).
[124] Alec Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Selections*, (London: University of California Press, 2012), 28.

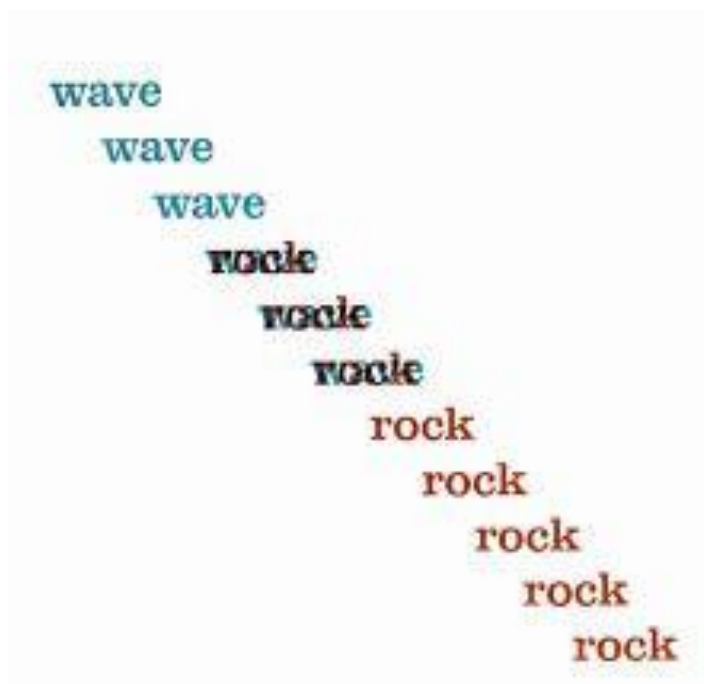

Figure 11 - waverock, Ian Hamilton Finlay, 1968. By courtesy of the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay.

Finlay's acute sense of place, both on the page and in the material world as well as his deep affinity for language would be two critical contributions that he would make to the British School of Aesthetic Chorography. As Alec Finlay writes of his father:

> More than any other poet of the modern era, Finlay realized the potential of the poem as an object that belongs within an 'environment'— though he would doubtlessly have preferred the term 'garden', 'grove' or 'landscape'.[125]

Over the course of his life, Finlay collaborated extensively with other artists and craftspeople, and was known for his prolific output. He also corresponded frequently with writers and artist all over the world; his son refers to him as "the greatest Scottish writer of letters since Robert Louis Stevenson; letters were his favourite emblem of friendship, his primary method of working with collaborators, and his weapon of choice."[126] This collaborative spirit would begin to build a network of artists, writers and scholars who

[125] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay,* 1.
[126] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 5.

would be early contributors to the School of Aesthetic Chorography, and inspirational conduits to younger artists working in the same milieu. These early contributors and collaborators include Thomas A. Clark, Gael Turnbull and Simon Cutts. Through his collaborations, Finlay would also contribute to the rise in a particular kind of public sculpture, which, although more commercial in approach, remains highly poetic and connected to place, engaging with the natural and finding ways of enacting a conservation or preservation of place through their work. We might consider the work of British public sculptors Peter Randall Page and Gordon Young in this regard.

As we note in the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, collaborations among aesthetic chorographic artists as well as the ever-increasing interest in expanding into new media, such as music and videography. There is also an increased interest in narrative and what is loosely termed “nature writing” or “geo-humanities” which cultivates a poetics of place. Artists and poets such as Richard Skelton, Autumn Richardson, Alec Finlay, Robert MacFarlane, Helen MacDonald, and many others who are actively creating works of literature, poetry, music and art which are clearly in conversation with the works of Ian Hamilton Finlay, Thomas Clark, Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy and others. These artists, writers and poets have also introduced, however, a new central theme to the school: loss.

Working through various kinds of loss, the loss of language, memory, place, or a loved one, informs and drives in many ways the work produced by these artists, writers, musicians and poets. While we can see in the early work produced by this school a sense of wonder at the world that surrounds us and finding ways of expressing and sharing that wonder in nature, the land, place and its processes whilst moving through and exploring it. The distinctive conservationist and preservationist imperative has developed over time.

This shift toward a conservationist mode among these artists, in many ways, has been informed by the work of the Common Ground Trust, a not-for-profit founded in 1983 "to seek imaginative ways to engage people with their local environment,"[127] on the one side, and the less productive influence of the declaration of environmental crisis on the other. Loss as a theme in the work of these artists is accompanied by an increased, or perhaps renewed, fascination with the concepts of home, belonging to place, and memory.

Home, in particular, has always been a driving force in the work of this school. Ian Hamilton Finlay's son references the role that homesickness played in the life and work of his father. Finlay spent much of his life longing for the sea. He longed for the seaside cabin he once inhabited on the isle of Rousay and often lamented that he would likely never see it again on account of his agoraphobia, an illness he notably accounted for as a "cultural homesickness".[128] Many of his works attest to this longing for the sea. At Stonypath, the front garden contained an old ash tree which

> Finlay celebrated with a stone plaque 'MARE NOSTRUM' ('Our Sea'), after the Roman Mediterranean: 'except on very calm days [...] the ash fills the garden with its sea-sound. When people ask why so many poems refer to the sea, or comment that it is odd to find so many sea-references so far from the sea itself, I often point to the Ash tree and say, *That* is our sea.'[129]

This is perhaps why Stonypath was able to ultimately become home for Finlay, because he was able to find the sea without needing to leave home. All he had to do was to stand in his front garden and close his eyes and he was there.

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[127] "Home," Common Ground, Common Ground Trust, 2021, https://www.commonground.org.uk.
[128] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 17.
[129] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 39.

We will now take a closer look at those artists whose work may have been influenced by the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay and who we might consider as some of the key figures in the School of Aesthetic Chorography as I have come to theorize it.

Peter Randall Page

Figure 12 - Granite Song, Peter Randall Page, 1991. By permission of the artist.

Peter Randall Page is a UK based sculptor who studied at the Bath Academy of Art from 1973-1977. He uses local materials to create naturally inspired forms. Page's biography reads:

> His practice has always been informed and inspired by the study of natural phenomena and its subjective impact on our emotions. In recent years his work has become increasingly concerned with the underlying principles determining

> growth and the forms it produces. In his words "geometry is the theme on which nature plays her infinite variations and can be seen as a kind of pattern book on which the most complex and sophisticated structures are based.[130]

Page's sculptures have been placed along public rights of way in the UK as a means of inspiring locals to engage with the lands that surround them. As has been discussed previously, walking is an important British pastime and public rights of way are one way that this activity is encouraged. In 1991, the Common Ground Trust commissioned Page to design and fabricate a series of sculptural objects to be placed along public rights of way in the area surrounding his home in Drewsteignton, Devon, UK. This was done as part of the Trust's Local Distinctiveness Project, an endeavour which sought to place sculptural objects along public rights of way in order to change the ways that people interact with these footpaths. The commissioned sculptural objects ask those who walk the paths to take another look, and they act as a kind of invitation to those who do not walk the paths to engage them.

Granite Song (1991) (figure 12) was one of these sculptures; it appears as if it is merely a boulder split open, however on closer inspection one will discover that Page has carved a meander-form on the exposed interior surfaces making it appear as if the rock was in fact a seed, something with the potential for life. This sculpture was placed on a small island in the middle of the River Teign and it is visible from the Two Moors Way footpath[131] inspiring the wonder of the locals. The landowner of the island where *Granite Song* was placed, recounted how one passerby remarked to her that he thought, if all the

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[130] Peter Randall Page, "About," Peter Randall Page, 2021, https://www.peterrandall-page.com/category/about/.
[131] Peter Randall Page, "Granite Song," Peter Randall Page, 2021, https://www.peterrandall-page.com/sculptures/granite-song/.

boulders were split open, they would look the same on the inside. This is a testament to the organic nature of Page's craft and speaks to the way that public sculpture like that practiced by Peter Randall Page and Ian Hamilton Finlay creates place and inspires a deeper engagement with and attachment to place.

Gordon Young

We might also consider the work of Gordon Young, one of the UK's preeminent public artists, as performing similar place creation work, particularly in the case of his *Bird Stones* (2014) which were designed for placement around Mill Road Cemetery, the now defunct overflow cemetery for 13 of Cambridge's parishes.[132] Located in the district of Petersfield, Mill Road Cemetery is a Grade Two Listed Site with Historic England. This designation was conferred on Mill Road Cemetery in 2001 due to the age and cultural significance of some of the monuments and buildings and because of the presence of indicator species for undisturbed neutral/calcareous grasslands. This type of grassland site is unique because of the unlikeliness that it was ever used for large scale cultivation. This has resulted in unusual biodiversity for such a small, urban space. It is believed that there are over 110 species that inhabit the cemetery – among them 42 species of bird, 23 species of butterfly and several species of woodland animals and insects, not to mention a wide range of flora.[133]

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[132] "Art in the Cemetery," Mill Road Cemetery, 2021, http://millroadcemetery.org.uk/art-in-the-cemetery/.
[133] "Wildlife," Mill Road Cemetery, 2021, http://millroadcemetery.org.uk/wildlife/.

For Mill Road Cemetery, Young created seven *Bird Stone* pieces. Of the seven "Bird Stones", six are made entirely from different types of local stone which reflect the stone used in the existing Victorian monuments; the seventh (dedicated to the Dove) is made of wood and stone. Each of these pieces appear to stand a little taller or larger than a person and exist within the cemetery as a sentry, watching over the protected space. Each stone is adorned with little cutouts and a bowl is cut into the top of each one to create a shallow rainwater catch basin that functions as a birdbath (figure 13).[134]

Figure 13 - Black Bird Bird Stone, Gordon Young, 2014. Photo by Jonathan Bordo.

[134] "Art in the Cemetery," Mill Road Cemetery.

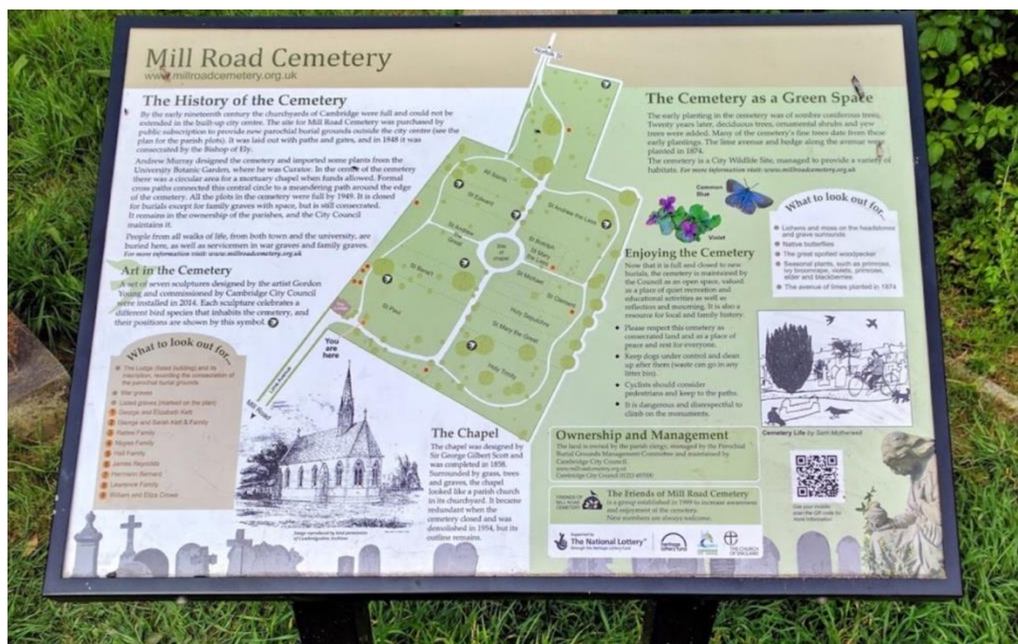

Figure 14 - Map of Mill Road Cemetery. Photo by Jonathan Bordo

Young's seven *Bird Stones* are an example of a minimally invasive aesthetic place alteration. While something new is being added to the place, the object in question is aesthetically and ecologically in conversation with its existent surroundings. These *Bird Stones* bring the ecological peculiarities of the place, through the invocation of the bird species found at that site, together with the site's social function as a cemetery in their monumental form and material similarities to the surrounding Victorian monuments. Young's installation invites both quiet contemplation and movement through the site as they are both an invitation to look and listen for the named species, and collectively the stones form a walking trail around and through the cemetery (figure 14).

This purposeful addition of aesthetic objects that are in conversation with what is pre-existing, reinvigorates the space and becomes an invitation to return to the site for those who are familiar with it as well as being a show of intention to reimagine the place, as influential 19th century graveyard designer John Claudius Loudon had imagined defunct

cemeteries of the future would, as a community green-space that is both mindful of its previous function as consecrated ground for the burial of the deceased, as well as its present function as a valuable green-space within an urban community that has its own thriving and almost rural ecology and biodiversity.[135]

As an ecological signifier of place, Young's *Bird Stones* enact a renewal in the present, reinvigorating the cemetery as a kind of simultaneous ecological and cultural *Lieu de Mémoire*.[136] As such, Young's *Bird Stones*, like Peter Randall Page's sculptures in Drewseignton and Ian Hamilton Finlay's "concrete" poems at *Little Sparta*, reinvigorate the local relationship to the site by both calling attention to the site and by reinvesting in the site, symbolically and literally, as a place of value to the locals.

We can also see distinct connections between the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay and that of Hamish Fulton and Richard Long, particularly when it comes to their printed materials, and of Andy Goldsworthy particularly with respect to some of his projects and installations. Unlike Ian Hamilton Finlay, on account of his debilitating agoraphobia, Fulton, Long and Goldsworthy spent much of the early part of their respective careers engaging with places that weren't home. Fulton has walked various locations in over 25 countries, circumnavigating glaciers and ascending to the top of Mount Everest. Long and Goldsworthy have similarly performed their respective practices at sites around the world. Goldsworthy's *Nova Scotia Icicle* (2001) was created during a residency in Nova Scotia, Canada as a response to the meander-forms he saw the rivers taking as he flew over the province.[137] Long's *Papers of River Muds* (1990) collected muds from rivers around the

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[135] "Layout and Design," Mill Road Cemetery, 2021, http://millroadcemetery.org.uk/layout-and-design/.
[136] Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire – tome 1*, (Montréal: Gallimard, 1997).
[137] Andy Goldsworthy, "Nova Scotia Icicle," Rivers and Tides. (Germany: Mediopolis Film, 2001), film.

world and used them to make papers which were collated into an artist's book, published by Lapis Press.[138] We also see in the work of these three artists an influx of environmental ethics in their work. While Finlay, it would seem, lived a simple life, one that found pleasure in found materials and homemade toys, he did not cultivate this simplicity as an aesthetic of ethics. Fulton, Long and Goldsworthy, but contrast do, imposing strict parameters on their aesthetic practices: not leaving traces in the landscape, not employing any non-natural materials other than occasionally a small pocketknife. It is to elaborate the artistic practices of these three artists we now turn.

Hamish Fulton

For Hamish Fulton, "an object cannot compete with an experience." Fulton engages with the landscape as a 'walking artist', sojourning in the land as well as in the urban centres, but always walking from and to, even if the place he begins and the place he ends are the same. On these walks he takes from the land nothing more than an experience – something that happens in the space between him and the land as he passes through it, touching it but never taking from it. He records his experiences in words and photographs. What he shares in a gallery is not the land or a simulation of the experience itself but the record of an experience, one that has been gained through material engagement. He does this, largely, through 'word-and-image art'. He distils his experiences to a select handful of words, which he then displays in pictorial and typographical configurations that tell the story of his journey.

[138] Richard Long, Papers of River Muds, (Culver City: The Lapis Press, 1990).

The story he shares is told so sparsely that the viewer is left to their own devices and imaginations to fill in the details of his experience by divining them from the photographs, layout, and typesetting of the text. Michael Auping, quoted in Robert Stacey's *Walking in Woods: Notes on the Visitations of Hamish Fulton*, identifies three basic image/text combinations in Fulton's work:

> The first type consists of a landscape photograph with an inscription below simply describing the length, direction, duration and date of the walk. The second type differs from the first in that the inscription refers to something not present or apparent in the photograph…. In the third type of work, Fulton uses either of the aforementioned approaches to text, but chooses to focus his attention on specific images he encounters along the way…. The texts are derived from an ongoing journal Fulton keeps of all his walks.[139]

This could be expanded to include some of Fulton's more recent practices which include textual, typographic pieces that do not include an image at all and simply rely on the size, structure, placement, colouration, and relationships of one word to another such that distinct similarities between Fulton's lithographs and Ian Hamilton Finlay's concrete poems are discernible. These word/text combinations are then displayed either as a single photograph which is placed behind glass in a wood frame (set in a mat, on which is printed factual information about the walk) or, more recently, in almost billboard/poster fashion either as lithographs or directly on the walls of galleries. Fulton's records have also found the form of artist books, which have proven to be an effective medium for the 'at home' sharing of experience.

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[139] Robert Stacy, "Walking in Woods: Notes on the Visitations of Hamish Fulton," *Northward Journal*, No.47, 1989. 12-27.

Consider Fulton's *Rock Fall Echo Dust* (1988) by way of example. It stands at one further remove from Fulton's experience for the viewer than the aforementioned *Ajawaan* (1987). In *Ajawaan*, there was at least an image of the place for the viewer to project the mental images conjured by Fulton's words into. In *Rock Fall Echo Dust*, there is no such offering. We are met with a grid of sixteen letters – eight in red, eight in black – footnoted by a note in red with the journey particulars: "A twelve and a half day walk on Baffin Island Arctic Canada Summer 1988". This is perhaps even more spartan than most of Fulton's pieces. Usually, we get some indication of weather or lunar phase. Here, we merely get the description of a naturally occurring phenomenon: a rock falling, presumably in a canyon, and the aftereffects of that event. One might imagine this was quite the large rock that fell given the scale and proportionate size of the words describing the event to the subsequent text offering the walk details. It is as if this one event defined the entire experience. One might imagine there were several of these rock fall events, such that for twelve days it was all he heard, but the fact that the text is in the singular suggests one large scale event.

Something this piece does recall for us is the adage about whether or not a tree falling in the woods makes a sound if there is no one, no human subject, present to hear it. Because of Fulton's presence to experience the rock falling, it makes a direct and full impact on him, such that it is the implied defining moment of his journey, but it also asks us to think about what happens in nature when there is no one there to observe. What do we miss? What are we not listening to that nature has to tell us? Fulton also does not indicate what might have caused this event: could it have been his passing, the presence of the human subject in the land, or had the rock simply reached its gravitational tipping point?

Contrast *Rock Fall Echo Dust* (1989) with Ian Hamilton Finlay's w*averock* (1964). While the similarities are perhaps not entirely obvious, I would draw one's attention to the usage of not more than two colours and the choice to present the words in all uppercase or lowercase as well as the simplicity of the layout and usage of sans serif fonts. There are also distinct stylistic similarities between the work of Finlay and Fulton and Richard Long. Consider Long's *A Seven Day Walk on Dartmoor* (2012). While there are stylistic differences there are also incredible similarities and it is arguable, particularly when we also consider Clark's *The Hidden Place* (2011) that this is more than mere coincidence and it is indeed likely that there is influence and connection amongst these artists. They are not creating in a vacuum.

Richard Long

What Richard Long offers, like Fulton, is an approach to expressing the ways in which one experiences the land. Long's approach is more sculptural in nature than Fulton's and, like Finlay, he uses insertions in the land to alter the viewer's perception of the place they are seeing. Unlike Finlay, Long's sculptural materials are predominantly stone, mud, and chalk; his visual materials are photographs and words. As we have seen above, Finlay's insertions into the land were much more polished; he worked with nature to inspire and to create the final effect, but his insertions into the land were designed and pre-constructed for the place. Long's sculptural practice, by contrast, involves displacing found objects and natural materials in order to create organic forms which he then photographs. In some instances, he removes material from the environment entirely in order to bring them into the gallery in Smithsonian site/non-site fashion. He pairs this sculptural practice with one

that is much more akin to Fulton's practice: taking photographs or creating pseudo-concrete poems that track his walks both visually and linguistically: recording traces, sights, observations, or times and distances spent walking and then displaying them to the viewer, in an attempt to 1) document his having completed the walk-work and 2) share his experiences.

Long's *A Circle in Alaska* (1977) offers an example of his pseudo sculptural practice in the land. Here, Long creates a circle on a beach in the Arctic Circle out of Bering Strait driftwood. This construction is made as part of a larger walk he is engaging in and it is then photographed to record Long's passing. There is a kind of othering in this practice: something that can also be seen in Goldsworthy's work. By imitating an organic shape in a size, orientation, and location that is unnatural, Long asks us to look again or to look differently. As Jonathan Bordo writes: "The image is not of a place… but it captures the artist's contact with the place. It is the record rendered by artistic means of the subject's existential presence at that place."[140] Although Bordo's statement was directed at modernist landscape paintings in the Canadian tradition, it also bears deep resonances in relation to not just Long's work, but also Goldsworthy's and Fulton's. Long's images and the images of the alterations he makes to the landscape are his marking and capturing of his presence and the traces of his passing, of his having experienced the land at that place. The images we see in the gallery are not the works themselves: they are the records of the work.

[140] Bordo, "Jack Pine," 116.

The same cannot be said for Long's installations of stones. In the case of *Niagara Sandstone Circle* (1981), stones were collected in the area (in this case, the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada) and brought into a Gallery setting. The stones are then arranged in a circle on the ground. The stones are not numbered or mapped and each time the stones are laid out, the arrangement is unique. This extraction of material from the land such that the land might be brought into the gallery space allows for something unique to happen, something different than bringing photographs or word-and-image displays of the outdoors and outdoor experiences into the gallery, even when these photos are of outdoor sculptures that may or may not continue to exist. In these instances, by bringing the thing itself into the gallery the object becomes a synecdoche for the place it came from. If the photos and pseudo-concrete poems are Long pointing to the places he has walked, the stones are the places themselves. The stones gesture to the land, both seen and unseen, and say: "here are my bones, this is what I am made of." Both are markers of connections to the land, both ask the viewer to look at the land in ways they never have before, to experience the land on their own terms and to reconnect with it, but they do so in different ways.

Andy Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy's practices are both connected to and distinct from those of Richard Long, Hamish Fulton and Ian Hamilton Finlay. Goldsworthy's methods of experiencing place, both at home and away, are perhaps best understood through Thomas Reidelsheimer's film *Rivers and Tides* (2001). This film chronicles Goldsworthy's

approach to and understanding of the land and its processes. The language Goldsworthy uses in the film to talk about the land suggests someone who does not engage the land as a passing observer. It is someone who steeps themselves in place until they understand the processes that make phenomena occur as they do. The film suggests that feeling grounded in the place where he is working is immensely important to Goldsworthy.

> I don't like that sensation of travelling. I feel dislocated. Uprooted. And it takes me time to re-establish roots again and when I arrive at a new place I have to begin work almost immediately. There's no period of research or resting. I go straight to work.[141]

This dislocation between want and need is palpable. The film then shows Goldsworthy moving through the land he is to engage: walking, climbing, observing the coast and the tide. Communing with the place through touch if only briefly.[142] As he moves he remarks:

> The tide is quite extraordinary: to have that liquid movement backwards and forwards, and the cold and its relationship to stone and fluidity. I am a stranger here. I am a stranger. So, I am so out of touch with it.[143]

This fretting of his stranger status eventually gives way when he finds materials and a place to create.[144] "I've shook hands with the place and begun,"[145] he remarks.

One of the pieces Goldsworthy creates on this sojourn is *Salmon Hole* (2000) (figure 15). It was created in an estuary in Nova Scotia, Canada, is in response to this observed turning of the pool by the river. The sculpture's construction and reclaiming are documented by the film and offers something to this piece that Goldsworthy's typical

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[141] Goldsworthy, *Rivers and Tides*, film.

[142] This movement through place before creating is mirrored towards the end of the film as Goldsworthy walks through his hometown collecting materials, suggesting that this is a fundamental component of his practice.

[143] Goldsworthy, *Rivers and Tides*, film.

[144] Arguably the objects he uses to create his seminal Nova Scotian piece are objects that would be familiar to him from home. By finding these similarities in materials and location it allows for Goldsworthy to connect to the place and start creating.

[145] Goldsworthy, *Rivers and Tides*, film.

approach to the documenting of his artwork (the photograph) would have missed. *Salmon Hole* is constructed out of pieces of driftwood that Goldsworthy found along the shoreline. He lay the pieces over a small tidal pool that he knew would be completely submerged when the tide came in. The pieces are interlaced, and the sculpture is held together by balance and gravity alone. Its construction was bound by time (it had to be completed before the tide came in) and by the availability of materials.

Figure 15 - Salmon Hole, Andy Goldsworthy, 2000 from Rivers and Tides, a film by Thomas Riedelsheimer. Image is reproduced by permission of Skyline Productions Ltd.

The piece gets its name from the place itself – in Reidelsheimer's film, a local man stops by to ask Goldsworthy what he is doing and offers the local history of the place – as kids they used to dive into the pool and at certain times of the year it was a place teeming with salmon: so many that they would be touching – the locals called it the Salmon Hole. Goldsworthy, in his temporary installation, intentionally mimics the whirlpool motion of water when it rushes in to fill a void. As Reidelsheimer's film documents, the tide comes

in and, because of the sculpture's somewhat protected location, it is not instantly smashed to bits by the waves. Instead, the salmon hole fills and the piece floats away gently spiralling from the shore, mimicking the whirlpool motion that its form suggests. As it floats away it slowly sheds pieces of itself, the driftwood being reclaimed by the ocean and carried away to be deposited somewhere else.

Goldsworthy's pieces, even those that are displayed in galleries, draw our gaze back to the land; they ask us to engage with the work where it was created, *in situ.* The place where the sculpture was created is as important as the object itself because there is a symbiotic relationship between the two. Sculpture for Goldsworthy is a place marker: an x-marks-the-spot. His sculptures are of and subject to the natural forces and forms present in nature: rivers, currents, tides, winds, the sun, time. Picturing the landscape is not enough for Goldsworthy: his sensory experience of the land must be internalized into his sculptures such that they are able to express qualitatively the first-person experience of the place itself.

Goldsworthy is also a meticulous documentarian of his work. Photographs and films of his creations are captured, catalogued and kept for reflection and review. This is a practice that is common among the aesthetic chorographers although it would seem that Goldsworthy's practice is by far the most extensive. This has led to the publication of two coffee-table book size tomes of his images, one focusing on his projects, the other on his ephemeral works from a ten-year period. Together these books attest to Goldsworthy's lengthy engagement with the natural world and all the ways he has found to make the backdrop of nature utterly conspicuous. No longer the environment, nature becomes the subject.

Alec Finlay

In recent years we have seen aesthetic chorographic artists developing a deepening interest in the poignancy of the *chōros*, as this place right here, experienced by me. In this, the size and number of the places explored by one artist decreases while the engagement at a singular site simultaneously deepens. This can be seen in the work of Alec Finlay, son of Ian Hamilton Finlay. The 2016 residency he undertook in Cairngorm National Park, located just a couple hours north of where Finlay grew up in Stonypath,

Figure 16 - Allt a' Cham lòn, Alec Finlay, 2016. By permission of the artist.

looked at "the role that place-names have in shaping our connection and understanding of…landscapes."[146] We might envisage this project as an extension of Clark's *The Hidden Place* (2011) referenced previously.

This residency culminated in a series of multimedia projects including, a blog, manifesto posters, a short film, maps, a book jointly published by Common Ground Trust

[146] "A World Among Wolves," Common Ground, Common Ground Trust, 2016, https://www.commonground.org.uk/a-wolf-among-wolves/.

and Trees for Life, and a series of photographs of handmade luggage tags which were used to both mark places and suggest the ways in which the placename deepened our understanding of human and ecological history at that site. Consider the image of one such luggage tag above (figure 16). Here we see the language first, slightly obscured, followed by the place. The words name the place: "Allt a' Cham lòn/Burn of the Crooked Pond". Beyond we can see the pond angling off to the left, the water quiet and still. The attachment of language in a very material way to place, employing the use of a very human object, the luggage tag — an item that has been used for centuries to parlay or identify an object in translation — explicitly signposts the presence of the human at that place. The fact that the luggage tag is handwritten further attests to the human presence in the land. This piece also offers stylistic connections to the school in the choice of alternating red and black text, as seen in the aforementioned works by Fulton and Long. Finlay's residency brought history, folklore, linguistics, culture and ecology to bear on a single site. This deep approach to a singular place resulting in a multimedia creation is characteristic of Finlay's aesthetic chorographic process.

Richard Skelton

Artist, poet, musician and publisher Richard Skelton has drawn upon and extended existing traditions of this school while allowing himself to become increasingly steeped in a handful of places. Skelton, along with his partner Autumn Richardson, uphold the paradigm of the small independent art press in their Corbel Stone Press and extends the media scope of the school into the auditory, creating esoteric soundscapes which hold in their resonant tones the undulations and capacious weight of the landscapes which they

inhabit wholly. Skelton's *Limnology* (2012)[147] (figure 17) is an edition of concrete poetry which explores the phenomena of waterways.

Figure 17 - Limnology, Richard Skelton, 2012. By permission of the artist.

For this volume, Skelton draws on the dead and dying languages used throughout the human history of the British Isles, collecting and preserving a host of inland water words from the Icelandic *á* for "a river" to the Welsh *ystre* meaning "line, string, row, series, stream; ford; limit, boundary; battle." Skelton then uses these words, interspersed with

[147] Richard Skelton, Limnology, (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2012).

English meditations and poetics to show the flow of water from the source to the sea both visually and poetically. His predominantly free verse English poetry, which structurally takes on the meander forms of a river or the delicate trickle, one letter at a time, of a tiny stream (figure 18), is interspersed with pages which are thick with dead and dying words for the river, the water, and the ways in which it moves and engages with the world around it. The words shiver across the page in a verbal-visual current, suggestive of what it is trying to say but cannot.

Figure 18 - Limnology, Richard Skelton, 2012. By permission of the artist.

In using languages that most have forgotten, and by layering letters hard upon one another, not unlike Finlay's *wave/rock* (1968), Skelton captures the sub-linguistic communications that happen between humans and natural phenomena. We don't need a word to know the water, but there is also so much that the water knows but cannot say. As a phenomenon that is living but not alive, water and the river have a memory that is older than humanity. It writes itself into the land in a language that humans cannot understand, for its inscription is out of scale, both in time and in place, with human understandings of these concepts.

Skelton's *Limnology* (2012) is also accompanied by an audio CD of the same name. It holds the music he composed to accompany his poetry. The piece is twenty-nine minutes in length and builds in a crescendo of chaotic, whirling and churning sounds which are predominantly string and percussion driven, increasing in speed and layered complexity to the one third mark, where the chaos at once comes together and slows slightly, although we remain aware of the complexity bubbling just beyond the audible. There is a haunting, otherworldly quality to the piece, an echo-y call that builds and recedes only to repeat again a few moments later. In the piece you can hear the currents, the rise and the fall, the multitude of ways the topography impacts the journey of water through various waterways to meet the ocean.

The rhythmic chaos that is Skelton's *Limnology*, both on the page and acoustically, speaks to the deep connection that Skelton developed with Cumbria, where he lived at the time. The county of Cumbria is where one will find England's Lake District, known especially for its exquisite topography and waterways. This magical place boasts the highest peaks and the deepest lakes in England. The rolling fells and the unique ecologies that occur in the Lake District are made all the more special by the presence of ancient

woodlands and a wide range of species that are found nowhere else in the UK. Water is what carved out the landscape here and what continues to connect and support the unique biodiversity. Skelton's poetry suggests this, picking up on the ways in which water moves some things while leaving others behind. The letters and words are the alluvium, parts of the whole that are available to thought and memory, even though the bulk has been washed out to the sea of forgetting.

Conclusion

What has been presented in this part is a re-framing of British environmental art practices over the last 60 years which I have named aesthetic chorography. These practices were not derivative of American Land Art innovations, rather they were organic reconfigurations of themes, trends and traditions such as walking, place marking, place name lore, gardening and printing that have had a long representation in the cultures and languages of the British Isles.

It is no wonder that Fulton felt out of place when attending the Art in the Landscape Symposium at Judd's Chinati Foundation. The Americans did not appreciate or understand what it is that Fulton seeks to accomplish with his art or the absolute aesthetic standard that he set for himself. Indeed, it is my suspicion that the Art in the Landscape Symposium at Chinati had planned to include Richard Long given his more sculptural approach to his art: moving sticks and stones to create forms in the land as a marker of his presence and passing.[148] It is far easier to bring the work of Long into conversation with

[148] This is an unsubstantiated claim. It is hoped that a research trip in the future will allow access to the archives at Chinati to see if this claim can be substantiated with archived correspondence.

the work of Carl André or Robert Smithson because his expressions are material and structure and shape how we view the land. Fulton, by contrast, is fastidious, he makes neither additions to nor subtractions from the land during his walks for it is his desire to leave the land as if he had never walked there. All that ever remains of Fulton's walks are a few photographs and a curated selection of words or numbers. Indeed, it would seem there was an assumption made, on the part of the Americans, that there were common cultural influences underpinning their work and Fulton's based on their knowledge of Long's walking art, when, in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. As Fulton himself said, "the differences centre around either constructing something or nothing in the landscape."[149] The Americans construct something material in the landscape, an object that is there to be looked at in addition to being experienced. Chinati, underneath it all is a gallery. The site-specific art it purports to house is not about place at all. It is about the aesthetic object as created by the artist as a commercial object and the object could, in theory be placed anywhere large enough and empty enough. Fulton constructs nothing in the land because his art is all about place. There is no object, rather his art primarily works to serve the place it recalls by recalling it and by identifying it, marking it out as someplace special, excepted from "out there" by virtue of his experiencing it.

Fulton's practice, thus, can be seen as the absolute, the epitome of the insular and locally focussed work of the aesthetic chorographic artists discussed in this part, for even in his international travels to places he has never seen and where he does not dwell, he approaches them as the local might – with intense inwardly focussed interest. After all, every walk has a beginning and an end. What takes place between those two points is the

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[149] Stockebrand, *Art in the Landscape*, 119-20.

experience that Fulton seeks to objectify. His books and walk works on walls are the record of that traceless and evanescent aesthetic object.

Fulton's practice also highlights an important ideological distinction between the American Land Art tradition and aesthetic chorography, that is, a desire to engage in establishing aesthetic practices that are ethically derived. The leave no trace ethic that Fulton brings to his art is but one example. Aesthetic choreographies are ethical commentaries which reflect on the human relationship with nature and ask the viewer to question their own way of life and their own lack of knowledge of and connection to the natural world. There is no such ethic at play in American Land Art. The Americans exchange ethics and ought for dominion and awe.

This part was framed by a quotation from Helen MacDonald's heartbreaking and joyous memoir *H is for Hawk*, in which she trains a goshawk as a means of working through the grief of her father's sudden passing.[150] The text explores themes of home, belonging, place, nature, the wilderness, community and loss. Macdonald, in her grief, becomes wilder and more unsettled than the hawk and it is through connections to place that she is able to find stability and peace.

In this quotation we see landscape presented anew and the form that it takes in the careful hands of the aesthetic chorographer. Landscape is no longer about the dominion over or ownership of place through commerce or birth, it is no longer about ownership at

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[150] It is duly noted that most of the artists discussed in this thesis are male. Helen MacDonald's rather brief engagement is a consequence of her being a marginal figure withing the school because her work, while apposite, because of its form, finds its place more so within UK nature writing, a related but distinct aesthetic field. A revision of this text for publication would see a chapter addressing female aesthetic chorographers and aesthetic chorographer couples and families. Female writers and artists to be addressed in greater depth include Nan Shepherd, Helen MacDonald, Nancy Holt, Ana Mendieta, Lisa Clark, Autumn Richardson, and the Boyle Family. This chapter would also explore coupling and familial collaborations and would seek to develop an argument for why these creative unions are prominent in aesthetic chorography.

all. Landscape instead becomes about presence, attention and the deep knowledge of what goes on at a place which extends beyond the human. What gives Helen the right to be present in the place she and Mabel go hawking and which Helen refers to it as hers, is not a legal document, it is the special attention that she has paid to the place, and the almost ritualized walking and observation that has taken place throughout her ongoing engagement with the place.

We can see these themes and practices in the work of the artists mentioned in this part. Aesthetic chorographers continue to find new and exciting ways of articulating and sharing their place, their right here, with the world. Their work however also is beginning to change the meaning of place. It moves us away from the traditional topographic and geographic representations of place and space, approaches which inherently invite capitalist conversations about property, ownership and borders. The work of the aesthetic chorographer presents the human relationship with place as symbiotic, derived from experience and time devoted to a place and the connection that comes about as a result of the care and attention paid to both the natural and the human elements of place.

We might understand Helen's relationship with her place as a parochial one. Parochialism, understood as attention paid to the *local distinctiveness* of a place by someone who is local to that place, comprises a large part of the practice of the aesthetic chorographer. Creative responses to place which celebrate its local distinctiveness assist both those familiar and unfamiliar with a place to engage with and experience it holistically. These are among the offerings of the aesthetic chorographer as evidenced by the work of the artists presented in this part.

As a consequence of the ethical standards which aesthetic chorographers hold themselves to, standards which involve leaving no trace or being suggestive of the way

one ought to behave with respect to place, aesthetic chorographers have had to devise ways of working which enable them to share their experience of their place without materially impacting the place itself. As suggested by the large number of chorographically oriented presses in the U.K. and the number of artist book/exhibition catalogues that have been produced by members of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography, the book is shown to have a key role in the collation and dissemination of place-work. Indeed, books have something special to offer to this kind of work in the particular way that they are distinctly place-like in their constitution. One need only think about how one talks about navigating a book: we site references on pages, interruptions while reading can cause us to "lose our place" just as bookmarks and dog-eared pages mark our place. Indeed, we might even begin to think about books as being proxy places for places themselves.

Thus, we might begin to think of the book as a nodal point which draws into itself language, place and memory, recording and recalling language in a way that is inherently place-like. It could further be argued that the book has the potential to conserve place, a site which can hold the traces of a place and bear those traces away from its material place in the world to be recalled elsewhere at another time.

This dissertation will now turn to explore how aesthetic chorography lends itself to the conservation of place as a heritage object. The heritage work of the Common Ground Trust in the UK will be revisited and the vernacular tending and gardening practices of two Canadian chorographers: Lionel L. Ferguson and Brian Nichols will be explored as framed by the poetic gardening practices of Ian Hamilton Finlay at his *Little Sparta*, a garden that is mindful of the European gardening traditions which inform many of its aesthetic choices. Through these artists and their sites, practices of tending and dwelling

will be explored and the role of the aesthetic chorographer in their caring for and curing of place will be unpacked. Finally, the keeping place, after Bordo,[151] will be explored as a way of thinking about the conservation of place and place-work of the aesthetic chorographer.

[151] See Bordo, "The Keeping Place."

Part 3

"A garden is not an object but a process."[152]

Ian Hamilton Finlay

In 1995, Hamish Fulton found himself out of place at the "Art in the Landscape" symposium because the kind of art in the landscape being discussed did not take place into consideration. It is suspected that Fulton was invited to attend under the misguided assumption that Fulton's walking art was the same as Richard Long's walking art. It is possible to bring Long's walking art into conversation with American Land Art. This is not the case with Fulton's. But what if it had been Ian Hamilton Finlay who was invited to represent European Land Art and outdoor sculpture? Leaving aside the utter impossibility of this, on account of Finlay's crippling agoraphobia, Finlay's work is decidedly more sculptural, organizing and framing what we see, hear, and experience through his sculptural insertions into the land. There is also some*thing* to look at in the work of Finlay, something that is absent from the work of Fulton. This is, however, where the similarities end, for Finlay's work, although avant-garde, is decidedly modernist in its orientation. Its interest is in the plenitude of language and the role that language plays in experience. The American minimalist/conceptualist artists who were present at the "Art in the Landscape" symposium, by contrast, were invested in pure experience which is unmitigated by language.

Indeed, bringing Finlay's art into conversation with that of Robert Smithson, James Turrell, and Carl André would have been next to impossible. Whereas Fulton was

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[152] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 40.

formally educated in the world of High Art and understood the place of Land Art within a complex art historical context as well as the role of the gallery and the economy that underpinned contemporary art, Finlay had no such training. His art arose out of his love of reading, literature, poetry and philosophy. In many ways, Finlay's practice might be thought of as a vernacular one in that his work was derived from his interests, his passions and the way that he viewed the world. His work derived from his place. The degree of notoriety that Finlay achieved was because his art is highly citational, each piece is hyper aware of its relationship to European history and culture and is careful about belonging to a cultural tradition. Each piece draws on poetry, art history and classical literature to make its argument as an aesthetic object. As such, its citationality provides us with a way of talking about it within the context of high art and art history and it is for this reason that his work continues to be discussed to this day but this citationality would not have enabled us to bring his work into conversation with American Land Art.

This thought experiment highlights how truly separate aesthetic chorography and American Land Art are right from their very foundations. While Land Art sought to strip language from experience and showed little interest in being in conversation with the places where they work – indeed, Land Art treats land as real estate - aesthetic chorography is intensely invested in place and in the role that language plays in our attachment to and experience of place. In aesthetic chorography there is no place that is not unmediated by language and the richest places are those most heavily endowed with language.

This part seeks to provide a justification for vernacular art as an aesthetic practice, particularly within the context of aesthetic chorography, through the exploration of the

place-work and sites of two living, Canadian artists, Lionel L. Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* and Brian Nichols' *Labyrinth* as framed by our understanding of Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*. The vernacular, as an extension of the parochial, is explored through Finlay and Ferguson's sites and the concept of dwelling as an extension of tending is developed. These site-specific explorations allow for the development of the métier of the aesthetic chorographer, showing how it is the work of the aesthetic chorographer to care for and cure place through minimally invasive, and ethically derived, acts of (co)dwelling, tending, and attaching appropriate language to place.

This work culminates in the postulation of the book as a keeping place, which can be used to conserve not only place but also the métier of the aesthetic chorographer. Keeping places resist the temptation to preserve something in a stagnant way, instead allowing for it to be a living entity which is conserved through human interaction, memory, culture, word and image as a living entity which is in a constant state of growth, development and change.

The Cottage at Dundevon

Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* was a magical place, a home away from home. Once an old school portable, Ferguson set it on blocks (figures 19 & 20), over the years constructing a walkout basement below and a story and a half of grandiose windows and steepled roofs above. These looked out over the pastoral scenes beyond. The hill itself was a cascade of stone steps, rock gardens, iron creatures and Japanese water fountains: an outdoor cabinet of curiosities. Inside, the rooms were filled with beds and bunk beds;

the walls were lined with books, art and shelves that held framed photographs and objects collected over the years.

For all eight grandchildren and their parents, the Cottage was a home better than home. It overflowed with love and creativity. Every surface, tile, board and nail that went into constructing it had a story to tell: every wall was a palimpsest of happy memories. The family would often spend as much time inside as they did tramping the woods and hills that surrounded it. The cottage was not just a building; it was part of the landscape. Ferguson made sure of that. At times, when one was wandering in the woods, the only way to find the cottage was by the old TV antenna that reached up into the sky; the weathered rough pine siding all but blended into its surroundings. The Cottage was of nature; it was where the family was closest to it; it was where they could understand what it meant to be in place.

The Cottage or *Dundevon* as the small handmade sign at the bottom of the long, steep driveway betokened, was the cabin in the woods of my mother's youth. In December of 1970, Lionel and Mary Ferguson purchased a five-acre lot in Northumberland County, just outside of Dartford, Ontario. This decision was driven by their wish to expose their four children to something other than suburbia. The family owned a five-bedroom home in North York, which they knew they would no longer need or want once their four children had grown, and with longevity in the family (both their mothers would live to the ripe age of 99) having an idyllic retirement spot seemed imperative.

The location of their cottage was largely decided by the expense of going north. Wooded lots to the north of Toronto, without a well or the ability to connect to electricity, were selling for in excess of ten thousand dollars and then there would be the added expense of well drilling, installing an electrical supply and building a structure. East of

the city they located a five-acre wooded lot with water bubbling out of the ground and an electrical pole at the bottom of the road. All for just three thousand dollars.

Ferguson, who spent most of his career as an architect for the Toronto District School Board, became aware of other boards selling off old style school portables in less than perfect condition. And so, for another two thousand dollars they were able to purchase, move and mount the structure on concrete blocks at the site they purchased. For the first few years it would just be “a permanent family tent, wood stove included,” but over the next 35 years they would gradually build the “finished basement and handsome second floor with studio.”[153] Ferguson claimed, “it was all done pragmatically so that when we could not tackle the winters its sale value would significantly help our return to urbia and a close by hospital.”[154]

Figure 19 - The school portable on blocks with the four Ferguson children. By permission of the Ferguson family.

[153] Lionel L. Ferguson, email message to author, January 8, 2021.
[154] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

Figure 20 - The school portable, purchased by Ferguson, being trucked the last few hundred yards up the hill to its final position. By permission of the Ferguson family.

From the beginning, Ferguson was in conversation with the site of Dundevon. Ferguson describes the lot as:

> A triangular 5 acres, three fifths wooded and the remainder open. The base of the triangle open section was, is, one third lush grass and wildflowers, then a steeper section with two large mature pines rising 25 to 30 feet to the remaining flat section with a beautiful view of a large farm. The open sections were separated from the woods by a farmer's track leading from the road to the height of the site. Wooded fence lines completed the picture.[155]

Ferguson characterized the site as "already beautifully landscaped when I bought it," however the site was not "landscaped" at all. In fact, it was the opposite of landscaped, it was fenced off and allowed just to be. The farmer's track and the wooden fence are the only indicators of human presence on the site at all. Otherwise, it was left wild. The steep

[155] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

section was too steep for agriculture and perhaps even a little too steep for cattle grazing. As a result, the site was not agriculturally viable. The wooded section beyond was left uncultivated because it was not worth the effort or expense and, eventually it was parcelled, severed and sold off. Ferguson did very little to alter the site further, rather, he conversed with it, permitting it to become a place in its own right, a place they christened Dundevon, a name that derived from their respective homes of Dundee, Scotland and Devon, England. As Ferguson claims:

> The site and the building type determined where the portable would be sited. The flat road level, too wet, the sloping area too steep, so the small level at the top with a good view was a natural choice.[156]

Figure 21 -The front view of the cottage c.1988. By permission of the Ferguson family.

[156] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

Figure 22 – Rear view of the cottage structure c. 1988. The second floor is incomplete. By permission of the Ferguson family.

The sustainable choice to recycle an old school portable further directed several architectural decisions. As Ferguson explains, the final design of the Cottage was:

> overwhelmed by the construction of the portable: a structure that was designed to be moved about. It limited where walls could be on a second-floor addition but enabled a completely open basement. No columns, no walls. All the roof weight was carried on the exterior walls. The interior walls on the two very large beams forming the roof.[157]

The renovations that Ferguson and his family would undertake in the years that followed, converting the old school portable on concrete blocks into a three-story structure, would be extensive, and yet, simple. The structure was mid-century modern in its influence, allowing form to be led by function. The walkout basement was completed in the mid-

[157] Lionel L. Ferguson, email message to author, January 8, 2021.

1970s, the two-level screened in porch followed in the early 1980s, the upper level of which offered a bug free sunroom and outdoor play area for when their 8 grandchildren were small (figure 21). The second floor would be erected in the late 1980s which would house Ferguson's studio, a bathroom with freestanding tub, a large master suite with a balcony, a large bedroom with a loft and a smaller bedroom with a small balcony which was used as a yoga and meditation space for Mary (figures 22 & 23). All of the materials and labour that went into these renovations were locally sourced and the work was done predominantly by family members or by local workers.

Figure 23 - Side view of the cottage structure c. 1988. The upper floor is incomplete. By permission of the Ferguson family.

These major construction projects were interspersed with landscaping projects which were, as much as possible, minimally invasive and worked with the existing landscape.

Any reshaping that went on, steps parking lot, pond were accomplished with local boulders and stones. Every boulder was found in road ditches, farmers fields, or

simply by the roadside when going shopping in Peterborough. I don't know how many tons we moved. Our only tools were, a long-handled spade, a plastic sled and a wooden ramp (to get the bloody thing into the car and out again). The orderly green patch at the back was not of my making, it's the septic bead. The sumac patch (figure 26) was inherited. The purchased bits and pieces are nothing other than making the place ours. Humans do it all the time: straightening, levelling, sorting, they just can't leave well alone.[158]

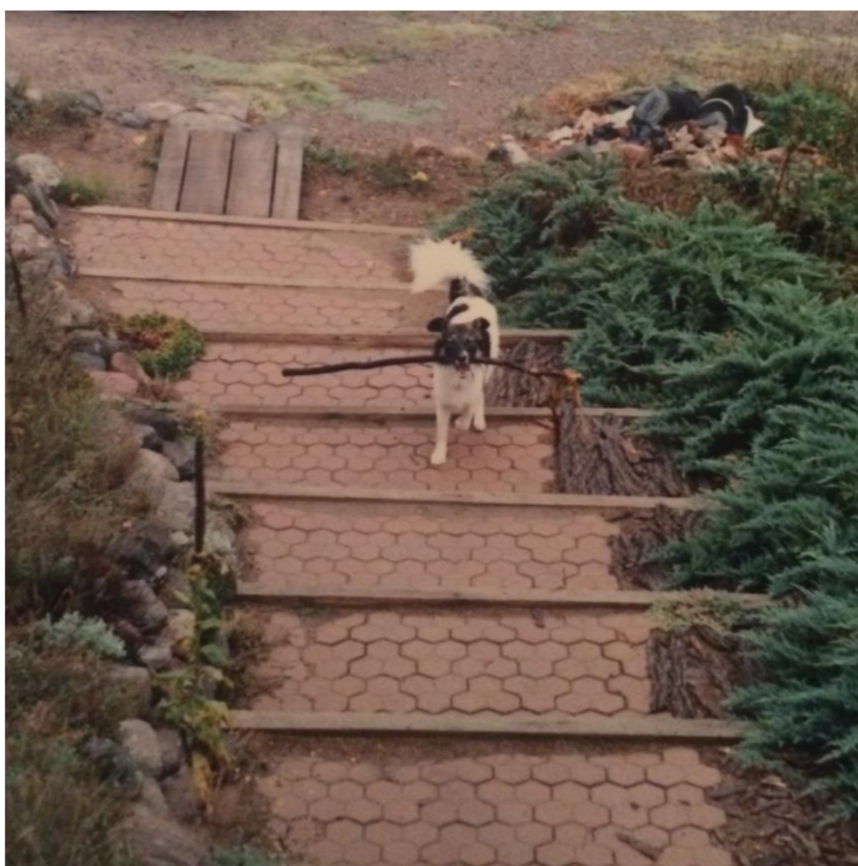

Figure 24 - The steps leading up to the cottage from the parking area located at the top of the farmer's track. Lionel and Mary Ferguson hand-picked all the stones used to build the retaining wall. By permission of the Ferguson family.

The Fergusons were fond of picking stones. Well into their eighties they were involved in the practice of collecting stones from various places, patiently waiting and observing until

[158] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

they saw just what they were looking for, for use in their ‘landscaping’ projects. You can see in the picture above how these stones were employed to create the retaining wall along the side of the steps (figure 24). These were all local stones, stones that hadn’t been moved since glaciers had deposited them or farmers had picked them out of their fields. All of the stones they brought to the site came from within a 100km radius of the site and I like to think that they were arranged as carefully and as mindfully in Ferguson’s projects as in any of Long’s or Goldsworthy’s projects.

Figure 25 - Two of the young grandchildren looking into the pond located at the bottom of the steps which led up to the upper screened in porch. By permission of the Ferguson family.

The purchased bits and pieces Ferguson is referring to are a small collection of outdoor ornaments, fountains, statues, and sundials that were added to the site in the later stages of completion: the final touches. They reigned like tiny deities over the site,[159]

[159] Ian Hamilton Finlay, interviewed by Udo Weilacher, *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art*, (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1999), 93-4, 98.

observing the comings and goes of the family, up and down the stepped pathway to the parking lot. They also functioned as teaching tools for their grandchildren, calling attention to the natural phenomena all around them: catching the rainwater, showing the passage of the sun, offering opportunities to discuss world religions or merely as an opportunity to practice observation skills. At the top of the path was a pond of koi fish and bullfrogs, surrounded by handpicked local stones and presided over by a large statue of Buddha (figure 25). The pond gurgled through three seasons; in the winter the koi were caught and brought indoors to live in large tanks so the cold and the raccoons couldn't get them.

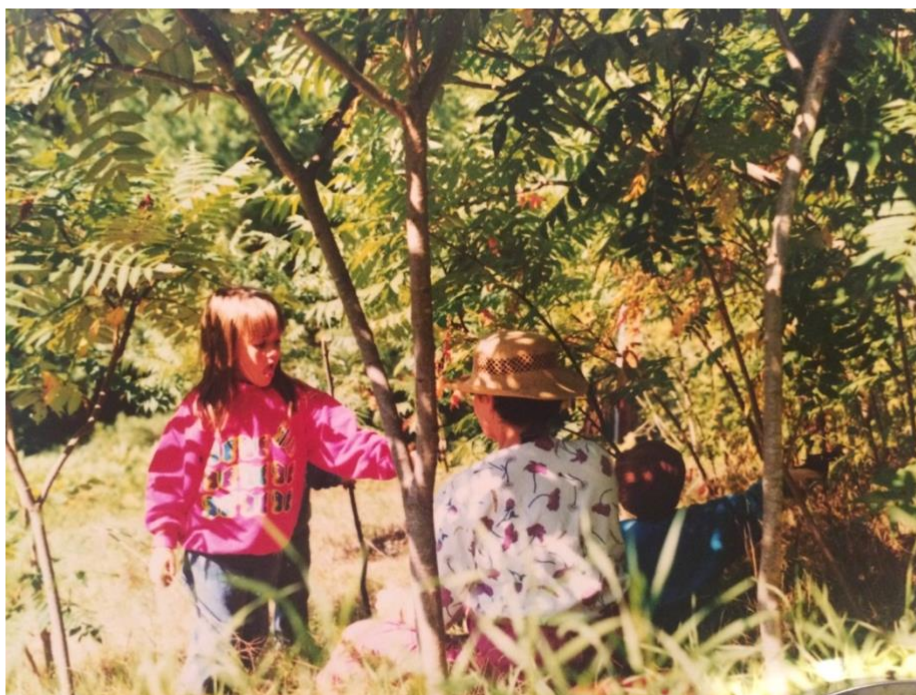

Figure 26 - Mary and two of the grandchildren sitting in the sumac patch. By permission of the Ferguson Family.

Walking was also a large part of Ferguson's practice, and he spent several years acquiring and then crafting an assortment of walking sticks that were kept by the door. The woods behind the cottage provided the perfect opportunity for his ramblings. There were no paths and Ferguson never cut any. Each walk was unique and left to Mother

Nature to decide. If she felled a tree during a storm, it was something to climb over, when the leaves fell in the autumn, they were left to fertilize the soil for the next year. The woods were a site for wandering and wondering, for getting lost and finding your way back again. The grandchildren were taught to walk in straight lines so that when they were whistled for at mealtimes, they knew how to find their way home.

And so, as Ferguson states,

> I had no choice, the building must meld into what was there on the only site available.... all decisions emerged from that, no paint, local materials, preserved wood, no Japanese maple.[160]

And meld into the site it did. Ferguson asserts it was not of his making, merely coincidence, but this is not so. Ferguson entered into a conversation with the place, he allowed for the design choices to be steered by the natural state of the site, bringing together materials that were at home on the site because they were local to the site, Ferguson merely "straightened, levelled, sorted"[161] and placed the materials he found. In doing so, he created an intentional place, a place that was mindful and welcoming of what had existed before.

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[160] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.
[161] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

Figure 27 - Watercolour painting by Lionel L. Ferguson c. 1993 of the view as seen through the picture window in his studio. By permission of the artist.

Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* also allowed for the flourishing of his visual art practice. Outside the large picture window in his studio, a small room on the second floor, off the master bedroom, a room which contained his mess (a representation of his creative mind), lay a simple pastoral landscape with the essential modern ornamentations — structures, telephone wires, fences and roads. He painted this view no fewer than a dozen times over the 20-year period that this particular vantage point existed for him (figure 27). These paintings captured the change of the seasons and of the skies. At times the land would be the focus, other times it would be the clouds, all of these paintings are awash with a hazy luminous glow.

What Ferguson created on that 5-acre lot was an early paradigm for aesthetic chorography as both a conservation and a picturing practice. Through his aesthetic

practices he made place obvious and showed his children and his grandchildren the closeness of humans to nature and to the land. Like Penone's trees, the *Cottage at Dundevon* also performed, what Bordo identifies as, "an ethical injunction to *leave alone*"[162] however, unlike Penone's trees, Ferguson's cottage showed how *leaving alone* was possible through the act of tending to place in mind as in action. It is to the exploration of tending as the métier of the aesthetic chorographer that we now turn.

Tending

The previous part began to explore the practice of aesthetic chorography, remarking that it moves us away from the traditional topographic and geographic representations of place and space and possessive individualist conversations about property, ownership and borders. The work of the aesthetic chorographer instead articulates the relationship with place as symbiotic, derived from experience and time devoted to a place and the connection that comes about as a result of the care and attention paid to place. The human tending to place can improve and conserve place without becoming an excessive burden upon it. As we can see in the work of the aesthetic chorographic artists discussed previously there is a desire to engage in establishing aesthetic practices that are ethically informed. Recalling the walks-works of Hamish Fulton, for example, these practices ask how one ought to act toward land, place and nature, while simultaneously offering an answer in their work as they conserve place.

The UK's Common Ground Trust has been working productively in the conservation of local places for many years. Sue Clifford and Angela King's ideas on the ways in

[162] See Bordo, "Witness in the Errings," 180.

which we can perform local conservation and the benefits of such an approach are further documented in Common Ground Trust's action guide: *Holding Your Ground*. In this text, Clifford and King discuss the ways in which one can preserve one's locality. They cite five main ways conservation can be practiced:

> 1) Landscape and wildlife survey and action;
> 2) Arrangements for management and access;
> 3) Leasing land and buildings;
> 4) Purchasing land and buildings; and
> 5) Habitat creation.[163]

Common Ground is responsible for a number of publications which call for individuals to celebrate and protect the local distinctiveness in their area, and the commission and placement of public sculpture along public rights-of-way in order to encourage people to engage with their surroundings anew. The Trust has engendered an expansion of these ideals and a proliferation of conservationist values to the common person particularly through the education system at the elementary level. The Aesthetic Chorographers of today embrace the local distinctiveness of the places which surround them and I would argue it is because they learned to celebrate their local distinctiveness young. This has also been suggested by Susan Owen's in her recent book *The Spirit of Place* which explores the way that the art and literature of Britain has shaped the way the British landscape has come to be perceived, although she doesn't site it in the work of the Trust, looking instead to more historical sources. In the closing pages of her book she writes:

> But the cultural climate is changing too, and new generations of artists and writers are reinventing what landscape means and how it can express our most profound preoccupations. Writing about nature and place, whether in novels, memoirs or

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[163] Angela King and Sue Clifford, *Holding Your Ground: An Action Guide to Local Conservation*, (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1985), 11.

> focused studies, has in recent years become a cultural phenomenon. Genres cheerfully spill over into each other - fiction is spiked with real on-the-ground knowledge; non-fiction is shaped by novelistic techniques - and each is enriched. What is striking is how many of today's nature writers focus on landscapes of a scale we can readily grasp, those that correspond to a human span. John Lewis-Stempel asks us to consider a meadow; Mark Cocker draws our attention to the crow; Rob Cowen leads us into an overlooked strip of land on the outskirts of a Yorkshire town; Olivia Laing takes us on a walk along the banks of Sussex's river Ouse. In the face of an overwhelming environmental crisis it seems as though, like Bede, we have become miniaturist, finding meaning and symbolism in details. Inspiration, too: these writers reflect the small, local ways in which most of us experience the natural world. By paying such close attention to our landscape, they invite us to do the same.[164]

The contemporary writers Owen references focus their work. The turn she effects toward miniaturism as an approach, finding the big picture in the details and the local, highlights the overwhelming depth that can be, and is, found parochially. These parochial places are deep enough and rich enough to create a lifetime of work as so clearly illustrated by Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*. It is possible to dwell and to create in one place. There is a wealth of possibilities right here. There is no need to go elsewhere.

The place-work of the aesthetic chorographer cultivates an attitude of tending or attending to place. The verb "to tend" meaning "to attend to, to take care of or wait upon, to pay attention to" comes from the shortening of the 13th century Middle English verb *atenden*. This verb comes to English through the Old French *atendre* which carried the meanings of "to be subject to, to direct one's mind or energies, and to expect, wait for, pay attention." This verb comes to the French from the Latin *attendere* meaning to "give

[164] Susan Owens, *Spirit of Place: Artists, Writers and the British Landscape,* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020), 284.

heed to," literally "to stretch toward" from *ad* "to, toward" and *tendere* "stretch". *Tendere* can be traced to the Proto-Indo-European root **ten-* "to stretch" wherein the notion is to stretch one's mind toward something. The Proto-Indo-European root **ten-* derives its meaning from "something stretched, a string; thin". This PIE root has prolific usage in the English language where it appears in music words, medical terms, religious terminology and even the humble tent. This same root has also been connected to the Latin *tenere* meaning "to hold" and it is through this line that we can trace **ten-* words such as tendency, tenet, tenancy, and tenure. *ten words are at once the anchor point and that which we stretch away from or toward. This root is also connected to the PIE root **tem-* "to cut" in the sense of a "place reserved or cut out" which the modern English word "temple" can be traced back to.

Thus, the verb "to tend" not only carries the sense of that which someone directs their mind or energies toward but also that which someone is subject to. When we apply this verb to the land or, more specifically, a garden we begin to see the complex symbiotic relationship that occurs between the person who tends to the land or garden, as a living entity, and the entity being tended to. Not only does it allow us to see the care and dedication but also the ritual and religious nature of this kind of relationship. We might imagine the land or garden to be a kind of alter, cut off from the world around it, given this special, revered status by virtue of its remove and its being under the care of a subject for whom this place is special. The garden is, further, where one stretches toward something be it an improved or deeper understanding of the natural world or one's own mind, or, as is the case of Ferguson's Cottage and gardens of Ian Hamilton Finlay, both.

Tending or attending is thus an essential attitude of the aesthetic chorographer for, regardless of the site of their gaze, the meditative and ritualized attention that they bestow

upon that site and, in turn, the ways they share their revelations with an audience, allow for the protection and celebration of that site. This aesthetic approach to tending a site, one which does not automatically seek to change a site in pursuit of some greater aesthetic vision, but rather converses with the place about what could be there or what aids the site to be what it intrinsically is, also allows for the creation of a paradigm which can be emulated at other sites.

The important role of attention in art, particularly art which is ethically derived, is not a new idea. In a 2016 interview, academic and poet, Jan Zwicky stated:

> This is an old and deep question: what are the social and political responsibilities of artists? Let me start with what I don't believe. I don't believe that morally concerned artists ought to devote themselves exclusively to making overtly 'political' art. That would actually be a very bad idea. Politics, I believe, are necessary; but in the form of positive programs and agendas, they are an attempt to systematize relations among humans (and, occasionally, among humans and other-than-human beings). In that systematizing, the particularities of reality — individual beings and places — are obscured. It's those individuals that we love, and our love for them is one of the reasons we want them to do well, to thrive. How then do we learn to see past the systematizing and the stereotypes? Many things can shake us up and point the way; but lyric art is one of the most important teachers. The attempt to lead an environmentally responsible life flows from, it is an unconstrained desire that arises from, deep attention to the natural world. That's where the poetry that I write comes from, too: it is, as it were, a side-effect of paying attention to the world. The art of others has direct political consequences in my own life in that it teaches me to see and to listen more acutely. That art can also strengthen my resolve when it protests injustice without trying to roll out a positive program. But the great political power of lyric art lies

> in its ability to hone our capacity to attend. That capacity is the foundation of our desire to respond to the world with care and respect.[165]

Zwicky's pointing to a "deep attention to the natural world" as the driving force behind an "attempt to lead an environmentally responsible life" encapsulates the way the aesthetic chorographer comes to their art. Zwicky also keys on the importance of lyric art in this kind of work. Much of this thesis has attempted to show the ways in which the lyric is deployed in the artwork of aesthetic chorographers such that the work of poets and visual artists are viewed as conversant with one another. Language, image, and art are brought together and understood to be reaching toward the common goal of tending to place and, by doing so, entering into a caring or custodial role with respect to place.

An aesthetic chorographic approach to place avoids the traditional topographic and geographic approaches to place and space, approaches which inherently invite possessive conversations about property, ownership and borders, and instead makes ownership, as Helen MacDonald identifies, a function of walking and attention.[166] By taking this approach to ownership, such that it casts ownership as a custodial relationship with a place rather than one of subjugation, one becomes part of the place, part of the pre-existing ecosystem rather than a burden upon it, or worse, an invasive species. This approach to ownership of place is explored by Thoreau, in his essay, "The Beanfield", wherein he questions his right to a place, to claim ownership of it.

> What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus. But why should I raise them? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer,

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[165] Jan Zwicky, interview by Yvonne Blomer, *Q&A with Jan Zwicky,* Victoria Festival of Authors, September 23, 2016, http://victoriafestivalofauthors.ca/2016/09/05/qa-jan-zwicky/.

[166] See the discussion of Helen MacDonald in the conclusion of Part 2.

> —to make this portion of the earth's surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse. What shall I learn of beans and beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work. It is a fine broad leaf to look on. My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil, and what fertility is in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. The last have nibbled for me a quarter of an acre clean. But what right had I to oust John's wort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden?[167]

In this passage, Thoreau is meditating on whether or not he has a right to exist in a place, let alone the right to alter that place for his own benefit. This meditation reflects on the nature of ownership: what gives Thoreau, or anyone for that matter, the right to decide the composition of a place, to decide what can or can't grow there, live there? The invocation of "Heaven" invites one to consider Christianity's stance on human-nature interactions. The Christian faith asserts that God gave man dominion over all the animals and all the earth.[168] This belief has arguably caused humans to believe that their will can be exercised over nature and that it is their will and their need that comes before all others. Thoreau is questioning this assertion and inviting the interpretation that perhaps this is not the case, perhaps there are there more and less acceptable forms of intervention at a site, perhaps any intervention at a site at all is unacceptable. In the case of Thoreau, he initially surmises that it is the bean plant and the care that he devotes to it that "attached me the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus."

[167] Thoreau, "Walden", 446.

[168] See Genesis 1:26

Thoreau also invokes Greek mythology in the forms of both Hercules an Antaeus in this passage. Hercules was the son of the god Zeus and Alcmene who was the daughter of the hero Perseus. Hercules was known for his feats of strength and courage. Antaeus was the son of the gods Poseidon and Gaea, the gods of the sea and earth respectively. Antaeus was known for challenging passersby to wrestling matches which he invariably won and upon winning he would kill his adversary. Antaeus drew his strength from his mother, the earth, and so long as he was in contact with the earth, his strength could not be matched. In Hercules' eleventh labour he would encounter Antaeus on his way back from stealing the golden apples of Hesperides. Hercules and Antaeus engaged in a wrestling match in which Hercules would kill Antaeus by holding him off the ground until his power drained away. By involving both Greek Mythology and Christianity in the same passage, Thoreau at once likens himself to a god wherein his drawing strength from the earth and his dominion over the earth are at odds. Thoreau resolves this tension in the final passage of his essay:

> We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden. Therefore we should receive the benefit of his light and heat with a corresponding trust and magnanimity. What though I value the seed of these beans, and harvest that in the fall of the year? This broad field which I have looked at so long looks not to me as the principal cultivator, but away from me to influences more genial to it, which water and make it green. These beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks partly? The ear of wheat, (in Latin *spica*, obsoletely *speca*, from *spe*, hope,) should not be the only hope of the husbandman; its kernel or grain (*granum*, from *gerendo*, bearing,) is not all that it bears. How, then, can our harvest fail? Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of

> the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds? It matters little comparatively whether the fields fill the farmer's barns. The true husbandman will cease from anxiety, as the squirrels manifest no concern whether the woods will bear chestnuts this year or not, and finish his labor with every day, relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also.[169]

In this passage Thoreau draws our attention to the fact that man is not a god, but rather he is just another animal who devotes his attention to place in the hope of that place bearing enough resources to sustain him for another year as it does the animals, for the fields do not look to him as their "principal cultivator", rather it is the sun, water and soil that sustain the crop, his tending labour is but a small offering and, as a result, he should be magnanimous with his crop, sharing it with the other inhabitants, including the woodchucks whom he previously identified as enemies.

Thoreau begins his "Beanfield" essay by asking what his rights are with respect to Walden and, indeed, whether or not he has any rights here at all. His conclusion, it would seem, is that he has no more or less rights than any of the other flora and fauna who inhabit this place. Just as the woodchucks live here and survive by the magnanimity of the sun, water and soil, so too does Thoreau. As such, Thoreau's rights, with respect to this place, are limited to those of any other animal. While he can claim the right to attempt for sustenance and survival, he does not have the right hold dominion over it as the Christian faith teaches.

From Thoreau's "Beanfield" essay we can derive suggestions of what it means to practice aesthetic chorography: to be of the world, part of it, and to participate in the

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[169] Thoreau, "Walden," 454-5.

living of that world as a piece of the puzzle, a part of the whole, which neither detracts from the site, nor adds to it in ways that are out of tune with the symphony of life already being played out there. Thoreau's approach to place and the earth is that of the mindful cultivator, not just in the sense of one who grows crops on the land, also in the Latin sense. Cultivate is derived from the Latin root *colere*, a root to which we can also trace the word "culture". In the Latin sense, to cultivate is not only the working of the land, but also the inhabiting, frequenting, practicing, respecting, tending and guarding of place. *Colere* is rooted in the Proto Indo-European **kwel-* meaning to revolve, move round, to sojourn, to dwell.[170] As such, cultivation is an important practice of the aesthetic chorographer for it brings together the familiarity of place earned through the act of dwelling and pseudo-ownership of place earned through frequenting, attention, respect, and work.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

We might apply this Thoreauvian meditation to the gardening practices of Ian Hamilton Finlay wherein the practice of tending becomes the symbiotic offering of the human to a place which in turn nourishes the human subject in some fashion: be it in mind, body or soul. In this regard, *Little Sparta*, the gardens and home of Ian Hamilton Finlay, offers a paradigm which we can use to explore gardens which are themselves aesthetic chorographies.

Finlay began his creative life as a writer, first of the short story, before gradually transitioning to forms of increasing brevity: the one act play, the poem, the concrete

[170] Douglas Harper, "Etymology of *kwel-," Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed November 4, 2021, https://www.etymonline.com/word/*kwel-.

poem, the one-word poem. Finlay's career is marked by what his son, Alec Finlay, refers to as "vertiginous shifts of form and subject matter — early plays, stories and poems, lyrical portraits of the Scottish Highlands; non-didactic Concrete poems of the 1960s; garden poetry of the 1970s; didactic revolutionary poems from his armed domain in the 1980s; the late return to the pastoral of the 1990s."[171] As Finlay became increasingly settled in place, the forms of his artworks, and writings too, became increasingly concrete and, more and more, he turned his attention to the material cultivation of the place around him.

Figure 28 - Apollo and Daphne (1987) by Ian Hamilton Finlay and Ron Costley. By courtesy of the Estate of Ian Hamilton Finlay.

The gardens at *Little Sparta* are extensive. Comprised of no fewer than 35 distinct sites, a main dwelling and no fewer than 6 outbuildings of varying size, this place was at once Finlay's home, his studio-gallery and his life's work. His gardens were "born of a

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[171] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 4.

youthful dream of philosophers wandering a classical landscape."[172] As Gary Hicks' hand-drawn map of *Little Sparta* (1992)[173] highlights, Finlay's gardens draw on several gardening traditions. From the creation of follies, such as his *C. D. Friedrich Pyramid* and his *Grotto of Aeneas and Dido*, to the frequent references to Claude Lorrain, and Nicholas Poussin, whose painted landscapes provided much inspiration for the 18th century English landscape gardens of William Kent, and even the posthumous inclusion of a *hortus conclusus,* it is obvious that Finlay is looking to the history of the English garden as inspiration for his *Little Sparta*.

Finlay's poetic objects which adorn the garden largely refer to classical sources and classical forms in order to make their arguments as aesthetic objects while, at the same time, entering into conversation with the sites they mark. It is in this way that Finlay's gardens are considered to be neoclassical in their inspiration. Consider, by way of example, Finlay's *Apollo and Daphne* (1987) (figure 28) created with the help of Ron Costley. This sculptural site at *Little Sparta* recalls the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne in which the Greek god Apollo falls in love with the virgin river nymph Daphne who despises him. In the myth Apollo chases her but before he can catch her, Daphne's father turns her into a laurel tree to keep her from him. This moment in the myth has been captured by Bernini in his marble sculpture (1625).

Finlay's version renders Bernini's figures as silhouettes cut from sheet metal and placed in a grove, forever stilled in the moment just before Daphne's transformation. The figures are obscured by the trees; red and green in colour, Apollo is instantly visible while Daphne could be thought to be a tree at a distance. The proximity of the sculpture to a

[172] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 3.
[173] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 38-9.

stream, just barely visible in the foreground of the photograph is also apropos given the role that water plays in the myth.

It may also be said that Finlay's affinity for the neoclassical garden was derived from his affinity for the poem and language. Like the gardener with his botanical specimens, the poet too grants each word its appropriate place and, by doing so, builds meaning. Finlay would undoubtedly take this assertion one step further, for as his son notes, "Finlay realized the potential of the poem as an object that belongs within an 'environment'."[174] And this is precisely what Finlay pursued in his art. One of Finlay's pieces most attuned to place is his *MARE NOSTRUM* (1966). As Alec Finlay recounts, when the Finlays moved to Stonypath in 1966,

> The area around the house was wild, except for an overgrown walled garden at the front, with lilac trees, currant bushes and an old ash—this last Finlay celebrated with a stone plaque 'MARE NOSTRUM' ('Our Sea'), after the Roman Mediterranean: 'except on very calm days[...] the ash fills the garden with its sea-sound. When people ask why so many poems refer to the sea, or comment that it is odd to find so many sea-references so far from the sea itself, I often point to the Ash Tree and say, *That* is our sea.'[175]

This piece calls attention to what is there, what was always there and, in doing so, co-opts the existing natural object (the tree) and phenomena (the wind) into his garden, celebrating it, caring for it and preserving it by attending to it. In the placing of this plaque on the old Ash Tree, Finlay also calls attention to the very phenomena that makes this place feel like home to him. As Finlay's son, Alec, notes, it was an intense homesickness that was behind much of his father's poetics.

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[174] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 1.
[175] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 39.

> Finlay was a ‘makar’[176] whose expansive poetics arose from a homesickness that was life defining, his vision shadowed by a profound sense of cosmological division: ‘The sum of my work is tragic. But it is centred on the lyrical; so much of it is pastoral, Virgilian.’[177]

Alec Finlay’s writings about his father consistently draw the reader, as Finlay himself was drawn, back to the sea. Finlay’s young life was marked by coastal homes and even settled at *Little Sparta*, Finlay was ever in search of the sea he feared he would never see again. In search of his sea, he wrote poems and dug ponds on which to sail toy boats, giving each one an island:

> Like Dunira, the island is a precursor of ‘hyperborean’ Stonypath, which he liked to describe as an “Inland Garden’ as if to emphasize his longing for the sea, for Orkney or perhaps even for the Bahamas of his birth. He gave each of the ponds that he dug in the garden a wee island, and each island a poem.[178]

MARE NOSTRUM was literally and metaphorically Finlay’s Inland Sea. The sound it made abated the homesickness that he felt and by attaching language to the site, he tended to it, preserving and caring for that which allowed for him to feel at home in his place.

The literal attachment of language to places and objects in his garden was important for Finlay. As the AVANT-GARDEner that he was, Finlay was known for not only his use of language in his gardens but also his unconnected or detached sentences on a topic. These were essentially a list of observations or theses on a subject that were held within a short sentence, a kind of thought-provoking aphorism, that was unconnected to the sentences that preceded and followed other than topically. Finlay himself imagined each

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[176] Scottish for a poet or bard, particularly one who has been appointed by an official body, such as the government, as the national poet of Scotland.
[177] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 2.
[178] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 15.

of these sentences as "the philosopher's 'hand-grenade'."[179] One might treat each of these sentences as a kind of meditation on a subject, one that invites the reader to consider all the possible meanings of the statement. Consider, by way of example, a small selection of Finlay's *Unconnected Sentences on Gardening*:

> "A garden is not an object but a process.
>
> Installing is the hard toil of garden making, placing is its pleasure.
>
> Superior gardens are composed of Glooms and Solitudes and not of plants and trees.
>
> A liberal's compost heap is his castle.
>
> Garden Centres must become the Jacobin Clubs of the new Revolution.
>
> Solitude in gardens is an aspect of *scale*.
>
> Certain gardens are described as retreats when they are really attacks.
>
> Trees are preserved by manners and not by economy wrappers.
>
> Ecology is Nature-Philosophy secularised.
>
> The murmur of innumerable bills was known to most great gardeners."[180]

These sentences are not only a meditation on the act of gardening generally, but also offer a touchstone for the consideration of Finlay's gardens at Stonypath, *Little Sparta*. Consider the sentence "Superior gardens are composed of Glooms and Solitudes and not of plants and trees."[181] This sentence calls attention to the creation of place within the garden. The role of the plants and trees are not necessarily to be objects of contemplation unto themselves, but rather to create spaces within the garden for the poet-thinker to occupy, to do his walking, thinking and composing. The sites that are marked on Hick's

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[179] Finlay, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 3.
[180] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 40.
[181] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 40.

map with numbers and, as a consequence, given names are not the trees and the plants, but rather they are the topoi that Finlay creates through the interaction of natural phenomena and the artist's interventions into the site.

As Stephen Bann observes, "In the East and in the West, poets and scholars have traditionally created gardens."[182] The creation of a garden is an externalization of the poet-gardener's interior landscape while simultaneously seeking, as eighteenth-century poet-gardener Alexander Pope wrote, a "place to stand":[183] a place for their thought to be reflected by the physical world. Ian Hamilton Finlay uses objects and installations in the land to create places for his thought to stand. In doing so, he also structures our experiences of the places he creates, deploying language facilitate this structured experience. It is essential to remember, as Zwicky identifies, the role of the lyric in making emotional arguments for place. This is even more important in the work of Finlay, for, as his gravestone reminds us, Finlay was simply a poet. His other undertakings were merely a consequence of his poetic impulses.

Gardening

While Finlay's gardens are unique in terms of their approach and the extent to which language is used to articulate the garden space as the site of poetry, the garden as a site of attending to and caring for plant life is far from a new idea. Humans have been cultivating gardens, in various forms, for millennia. Tending to plants and plots for produce and for pleasure remains an occupation for some and a pastime for many. Gardens, however, have not always sought the preservation of place or the land.

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[182] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 39.
[183] Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 39.

The garden as an aestheticized amenity to the domestic space of the home, one which offered a cultivated outdoor retreat experienced a notable revival in the Renaissance. Malcom Andrews writes, "*locus amoenus*, the 'pleasant place', was a phrase used in classical and Renaissance times to designate distinctively beautiful rural or garden retreats."[184] Andrews highlights the necessary features of the *locus amoenus*: "natural, or, if crafted, then crafted with predominantly natural materials, but it had also to be safe, partially domesticated and insulated from the world of public affairs."[185] This *locus amoenus*, was crafted as an outdoor space to wander, to spend time in "nature" in a way that was protected from both the world of public affairs and the dangers of the wilderness. The idea of garden as amenity would, over a 350-year period, spread from the villas of Renaissance Italy throughout Europe, influencing the way gardeners thought about planning, constructing, and cultivating gardens according to the tastes of the day.

The British landscape garden came to prominence in the eighteenth-century. Notable gardening figures from the period include Alexander Pope, William Kent, William Shenstone, and Lancelot "Capability" Brown. Kent would introduce the ha-ha to the British landscape garden, an innovation that saw walls and fences replaced with banks and ditches so that "the landscape and the beauties were brought (if required) almost up to the windows of the house; cows, sheep, and deer played their part in the scene—but the ha-ha kept them from peeping through the glass."[186] Kent would also be responsible for looking to the paintings of continental landscape painters Claude Lorrain and Gaspard Poussin and Salvatore Rosa to structure the picturesque scenes he designed.

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[184] Malcom Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53.
[185] Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, 53.
[186] Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening,* (Feltham: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1969), 196.

> Temples, obelisks, urns and other symbolic objects were provided to furnish the picture in the true Roman manner…. Once again Rome was the interpretation of English gardens, now in a rather odd way, for no longer was it the Italian garden, subtly designed in architectural magnificence, but the countryside and its antique corroding ruins. The cold, rigid logic of Palladian architecture stood in lax and artificially wrought scene. The stage management was still French, no longer that of the now condemned Le Nôtre, master of the art of gardening, but Claude and Poussin, mere painters.[187]

The turn away from the architectural Italian garden and the French parterre gardens of Le Nôtre toward the rolling hills of a countryside landscape, marked by ruins, informed by the landscape painters of the continent who created scenes for the unfolding dramas of classical myth. Pope and Shenstone too looked to the ideal landscape paintings of Claude and Poussin for inspiration for their poetry and garden design. Shenstone's garden was described by his publisher as follows:

> The house stood on a lawn, protected by shrubbery and a ha-ha. From it, a path twisted and turned across and around, up and down the hilly estate. Those who followed it were invited to rest on, ponder, or to admire the prospect from no less than thirty-nine seats…. Urns, obelisks, trophies, all engraved with memorial verses to a host of friends, stand by the pathway; piping Pans and other appropriate figures terminate the glades. Shenstone was, indeed, fortunate in the surroundings among which he made his Arcadia, with a 'back scene' of hills 'diversified with wood, scenes of cultivation and enclosures'.[188]

As referenced by Bann, Hamilton Finlay drew inspiration from the gardens and writings of Pope and Shenstone and through them the paintings of Claude and Poussin, even going so far as to "sign" some of his garden's picturesque views with their names.[189] Shenstone

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[187] Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 195-6.
[188] Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 202.
[189] See Abrioux, *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, 39.

also inspired Hamilton Finlay's writings for Shenstone, like Hamilton Finlay, was known for his *Unconnected Thoughts*. The following are a selection from Shenstone's *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening*:

> Gardening may be divided into three species—kitchen-gardening—parterre-gardening—and landskip, or picturesque-gardening: which latter is the subject intended in the following pages. It consists in pleasing the imagination by scenes of grandeur, beauty, or variety. Convenience merely has no share here; any farther than as it please the imagination….
>
> I have used the word landskip-gardeners; because in pursuance of our present taste in gardening, every good painter of landskip appears to me the most proper designer. The misfortune of it, is, that these painters are apt to regard the execution of their work, much more than the choice of subject….
>
> What an advantage must some Italian seats derive from the circumstances of being situated on ground mentioned in the classics! And, even in England, wherever a park or garden happens to have been the scene of any event in history, one would surely avail one's self of that circumstance, to make it more interesting to the imagination. Mottoes should allude to it, columns, et. Record it; verses moralize upon it; and curiosity receive its share of pleasure….[190]

We might compare these with the selection of Hamilton Finlay's *Unconnected Sentences on Gardening* mentioned in the previous section. The first thing we notice is that Hamilton Finlay's *Unconnected Sentences* are succinct and pithy, they hold to the sentence length stipulated and they are unconnected. Shenstone's 'thoughts', by comparison, are more varied in length, from a single sentence to larger paragraphs and while each thought stands on its own they are in conversation with one another to a

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[190] Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening*, 203.

greater degree than those of Hamilton Finlay. John Dixon draws attention to this comparison and writes of Hamilton Finlay's practice:

> This detachment or lack of logical or narratival connection also alerts one to an essential element of garden art in general that Finlay's particular perspective further endorses: gardens cannot deliver an overall message or story; what they can do, however, is trigger and prompt visitors to formulate their own larger visions and versions from the unconnected fragments discovered in the garden. This is surely what the eighteenth-century garden historian and commentator, Horace Walpole, meant when he 'observed . . . detached thoughts' in gardens: what Finlay adds to this perspective is the implication that it is for the visitors who stumble upon detached thoughts in a garden to make of them what they will.[191]

Dixon's identification of the fact that gardens do not have an overall message or narrative, but rather invite the visitor to make their own connections speaks to the practices of both Finlay and Shenstone and, indeed, most gardeners who create zones or areas within their gardens. Each zone or area is demarcated both spatially and topically, not unlike a room in a home. Inside the zones, each is driven by a theme or topic. We might refer to these zones as topoi – places in which topics come to be inscribed materially. In the case of Shenstone's garden, the zones were dictated by the "thirty-nine seats" or rest stops he had placed throughout his garden. These would have created for garden visitors directed and structured (framed) landscapes which would be viewed from the seat. Similarly, Hamilton Finlay's marked sites in his garden, as indicated on Gary Hick's map, impose structured experiences for his visitors. The difference we see between these two gardens is that Shenstone's preoccupation was with the creation of ideal landscape 'views'. Shenstone sought to be surrounded by representations of the land

[191] John Dixon Hunt, *Nature Over Again: The Garden Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 39-40.

and not the land itself. Hamilton Finlay, by contrast drew on a larger scope of gardening history to create experiential and poetic engagements at his *Little Sparta* while also working on a smaller scale. Finlay was not only influenced by the gardens and paintings of the past, he was also influenced by the art and poetry of his contemporaries and the place where he lived.

Dwelling

The most significant similarity between Shenstone's gardens and Finlay's are the fact that they dwelt where they tended. We might recall the words "cultivate" and its cognate "culture". Both words, coming through the Latin *colere*, are derived from the Proto Indo-European **kwel-*. The Oxford English Dictionary would have us trace the verb "to dwell" through the Old English *dwellan*, meaning "to lead astray, hinder, delay" to the Aryan root dhwel, "appearing in the Sanskrit *dhur* [meaning] to mislead, deceive."[192] This etymology however, as well as the order of the definitions provided by the Oxford English dictionary promotes the definition of the verb, "to dwell" as "to lead into error, mislead, delude; to stun, stupefy" as represented by its earliest recorded usage in English in Ælfred's *Boethius* which dates to circa 888. The sense of "to remain as in a permanent residence; to have one's abode; to reside, 'live'" does not appear in English until the Middle English period in the work of Robert Mannyng. These two senses of the verb 'to dwell' in English seem at odds with one another. One presents the word as something negative and underhanded, the other as something positive, relating to the concept of

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[192] "dwell, v.," OED Online, September 2021, Oxford University Press.

home. Home is not where one is waylaid, hindered or deceived, it is where one lives and makes life.

It would appear between "dhwel" and "*kwel" there is a common sound: *wel. While I have not seen this suggested anywhere, it would seem that there are grounds to suggest a connection between these two roots and their modern cognates dwell and culture. To this end we might consider Raymond Williams' keyword work on the word "culture". As Raymond Williams identified, "Culture in all its early uses was a noun of process; the tending of something."[193] In this statement, Williams calls our attention to both the fact that *colere,* and by extension **kwel-,* were active words, words associated with process of tending but also of dwelling which accompanied the work of tending, of living and making living possible.

It is in the garden that the tending sense and the dwelling sense of **kwel-* come together. It is through the aesthetic attitude of tending that humans perform the act of dwelling in place and, by doing so, preserve and nurture the place. The garden, in this way, becomes the interlocutor between the dwelling as architecture and the land on which it rests, the natural world it inhabits. It is the garden that allows for the act of dwelling in a complete sense and forms a bridge between the natural world and the domestic space.

Gardening is an act of *place-work*. It contributes to the making of place. Going beyond the topographic, location-based conceptualization of place, the place-work of the garden requires the attention and care of an embodied participant who is present in the place itself. This is to say that physical presence in place, which extends beyond the fleeting, passing or momentary, and enters into the ritualized, such that it involves repeat

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[193] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 87.

visits; conscious observation from a multitude of perspectives, seasons and times; and movement about the place, are all intrinsic elements which make essential contributions to a creative product which we would understand to be an aesthetic chorography. Furthermore, *attention* also reminds us of the patience, care and devotion that are also requisite components of an aesthetic chorography. We might recall the reflections of aesthetic chorographer, Helen MacDonald:

> I don't own this land. I've only got permission to fly here. But in walking it over and over again and paying it the greatest attention I've made it mine. I know where its animals live, and how they move about it. Know that the larks sleep on the top of the hill, but on sunny mornings they move to warm themselves on eastward slopes…. I move toward the larks as if I could see them.[194]

In MacDonald's articulation of the connection she has formed with the place about which she writes, there is a sense of ownership that is articulated; however, it is not ownership in the socio-economic sense that she is reaching toward. Rather, it is the sense of belonging in or to a place afforded by the act of dwelling. The living knowledge of place articulated by MacDonald is the intimate knowledge of the local, of the child who knows all the best hiding places, and where to catch frogs. It is in this way that MacDonald makes her claim of "mine," not in the appropriative sense, but in the innocent, childish sense of ownership brought about through love and intimate knowledge: through the practice of dwelling. Where we dwell is where we know best, that place that surrounds us in love and provides a stable foundation from which we are able to explore a world that is not where we dwell, but could be, with sufficient time, devotion, care and attention.

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[194] Macdonald, *H is for Hawk*, 239-40.

This sentiment is also arrived at by Richard Long in his touching contribution to Tim Dee's edited volume *Ground Work*. Long's offering to this collection is unique and utterly distinct from the essays and poetic offerings of his fellow contributors. A word-image offering, it pairs a list of childhood places of the City of Bristol, the Downs and the Avon Gorge with an image printed full page. This simple offering marks place both in the world and in the volume. The full-page image sits as a shadow, a black line among the pages, marking out the exact halfway point in the volume. The place it marks in the world is Long's childhood home and the childhood harbours of wonder that have been passed down through generations of local children, most particularly "The slide", the place that is pictured in the black and white image provided on the facing page.[195] The image shows a slab of rock, the face of which has been worn smooth by generations of bums sliding down it in all weather. In words, Long records a more complete list of other dwelling places cherished by children: ledges and dens, caves and cliffs, woods and swamps. These sites of adventure provide places for children to learn and grow, the sites themselves remaining fresh in the minds of locals up and down the ages. It is this unique intergenerational quality that qualifies these parochial places as special.

Dwelling sites and parochial places are where place-work takes place and makes place. Those who care for place show us how to see the place anew, be it drawing our attention to a unique feature or function or finding ways of articulating, at one (or more) remove, the unique or special qualities of a place. These unique features (and their representations) can be anything, from a photograph or a painting to a flavour, smell or sound; they can draw upon the history of the place, or the particular biodiversity; they can

[195] Richard Long, "Childhood Ground Abiding Places," in *Ground Work: Writings on Places and People*, Tim Dee (ed.), (London: Vintage, 2018), 138-9.

have human connections, or it can be the lack of human intervention that sets a place apart from the rest of the world. The key is that those who care for place, consider place a living entity. It is not something to be consumed. Rather it is somewhere to engage symbiotically and, like Thoreau, to (at)tend magnanimously, acknowledging that the human offering is but one small gesture which can take many forms.

Protecting

The sustained aesthetic acts of (at)tending and dwelling are integral to the practice of aesthetic chorography. This has been shown in the work of the artists and writers explored both in this section and previously. It is through the practices of these aesthetic chorographers that their role as custodians and curators of place begins to take shape. This role lies somewhere between the roles of the *periegete* and the *therapeutae*, as defined by Walter,[196] for aesthetic chorographers are those who, through their paying of the closest attention to place, become the guides to their places. Chorographers, however, also move beyond the role of *periegete* and *therapeutae* because they will often intervene at the site in some form. We might consider the practice of gardening in this regard. As shown previously, the interventions of an aesthetic chorographer are not heavy handed, rather they are the consequence of their coexistence with a place, a kind of co-dwelling, which develops over time into a relationship that is symbiotic in nature.

Michael Balint, in his psychoanalytic exploration of the relationships that exist between the Doctor, their patients and the patient's illness, introduces the concept of the doctor's *apostolic function* or *mission* to articulate all the ways in which doctors prescribe

[196] Walter, *Placeways*, 215.

themselves to the patient as a kind of "drug" and are, as such, a factor to be taken into account when considering the effectiveness of any treatment. As Balint writes, "By far the greatest part of the phenomena which constitute the "apostolic function" are expressions of the doctor's individual ways of dealing with his patients, or, in other words, his personality."[197] Balint elsewhere likens the *apostolic function* to what the doctor considers to be common sense[198] or "his personality, his convictions, his knowledge, his habitual reaction patterns, etc."[199]. In doing so, Balint comes to articulate the ways in which the caring relationship that exists between the doctor and the patient and ultimately the prognosis is drastically impacted by the attending doctor and his way of being in the world.

The word apostolic comes from the Greek *apostolos* meaning "person sent". In Balint's choice of referring the doctor's intrinsic contributions to a prognosis in this way, he invites one to consider the doctor's offering of care as being driven by external forces; it presents the provision of care as a kind of calling: a vocation — that which one is called on or sent to do, perhaps even by divine means. We could imagine the care of place in the same way and as the doctor brings with him "his personality, his convictions, his knowledge, his habitual reaction patterns, etc.", the aesthetic chorographer too brings the same things about themself to a place and these proclivities impact the way they engage with the place in their provision of care for it. Not unlike the doctor, the aesthetic chorographer prescribes themself to the place and their offerings comprise a part of the treatment. To put it another way, the chorographer and their interactions with the site are

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[197] Michael Balint, *The Doctor, the Patient, and his Illness*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), 215.
[198] Balint, *The Doctor, the Patient, and his Illness*, 229.
[199] Balint, *The Doctor, the Patient, and his Illness*, 307.

the framing influences that constitute somewhere as a place and without the chorographer, the place would take on a different shape, a lesser constitution.

By virtue of saying that the aesthetic chorographer has an *apostolic function* with respect to a place implies that there is something unique, perhaps even divinely ordained, which is offered by the chorographer and which has a direct impact on the place. There is a human intervention occurring. Human interventions into nature and the land require a consideration of the ethical responsibility of humans with respect to nature. The Bible positions nature as standing reserve under the dominion of humans. Nature exists for human use; however we see fit. Even though we see writers like Thoreau question this belief, this misapprehension has largely driven human relations to the land in the West at least since the 18th century.

We now know that this approach is not ethically responsible, nor is it sustainable. Inherent in the practice of the aesthetic chorographer is an ethics of renunciation. It is the desire of the chorographer to reduce their footprint, to merely be a part of the place they care for. To do this, they must be conscious of not only what they bring to a place but also how what they bring impacts the place. Just as Balint does not want to affect his patients through transference, which is to say he does not want what he brings of himself as doctor to a case to influence the work of medicine, he is aware that, on some level, he does. As such, the aesthetic chorographer seeks to intervene in place in ways that are ethical, sustainable, conservational, respectful, and symbiotic. Their aim is not to change the place, but rather to make obvious the things about the place that make it unique or special or to be present in place, an active participant in place, so as to allow place to be conspicuous. By making a place obvious or conspicuous, they make it a distinct entity in the world and, in their doing so, they protect it.

This, however, invites the consideration of what happens when a place loses its chorographer, that person for whom the place is special, and who provides care for the place? The successes of the Common Ground Trust would support the assertion that places require a chorographer and their place-work to persist as places. But, humans are not immortal and, over time, their stories get muddled and lost; in our modern, consumerist world sites change hands out of necessity or otherwise and even a seemingly permanent site like Stonehenge loses its meaning without someone to care for it and its stories. Places require a sentient being for whom the place exists to persist as places within the human consciousness because places require language to be places.[200]

Thus, the chorographer is at once a custodian, a curator and a caretaker of place. The words custodian and curator trace their roots to a common Proto-Indo European root: **(s)keu-* meaning "to conceal or cover." This root is also shared with the modern English verb "to cure". This connection with the verb "to cure" highlights the transformative qualities inherent in this work. This is seen most obviously in the curing of perishable food by drying it or using salt and sugar to ward off bad bacterial growth thereby protecting it through the act of coving it. Curing's usage in the medical sense can also be connected to words which mean to "make whole" or "to tend" and even "to conjure", thus implying that there is not only an element of attention, but also magic or the inexplicable present in the practice of curing.

The word caretaker, has at its core the verb "to care." Although closely allied in the modern sense, curing and caring are lexically quite different. Unlike 'to cure', which is a

[200] This is not to say that places require human language, but rather they require the language of a sentient being, be that the song of a bird, singing its territory, or a dog marking its turf with urine, these are all forms of communication intended to articulate this place as separate from other places.

practical word coming to English through French and Latin, ‘to care’ is an emotional word which comes to English from the Proto-Germanic **karo-*, meaning “lament”. Thus, the vocation of the aesthetic chorographer is both to cure and to care: to attend to and protect what is there and to lament and to remember what is no longer.

In the caring for and curing of place, one of the predominant roles of the chorographer is to find appropriate language for or an appropriate response to the place they tend for language carries the place. The word appropriate carries not only connotations of fitting to the situation, but it also suggests there are social or cultural expectations that outline what makes a response fitting. As an adjective, appropriate indicates “suitable or proper in the circumstances”, as a verb, it takes on a much more sinister meaning as “the taking (something) for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission”. It is the verbal form of appropriate which carries most prominently its connection to the Latin *appropriare* meaning to ‘make one's own’, from *ad-* ‘to’ + *proprius* ‘own, proper’.

While we accept, especially in the current cultural and political climate of post-colonial Canada, that the Latin origins of appropriate may be cause for pause — indeed the appropriation of place, nature and the land is far from an ethical response to place — if we are to imbue the adjectival sense of the word with the Latin root, however, we may come to appreciate ‘appropriate’ as not so much the suitability of something to the circumstances, but as the cultivation of one’s own response to a given situation. We might also begin to consider whether we can reorient our sense of the verbal form such that appropriation becomes less “the taking of something for one’s own use” and more, the caring for and protecting of (something) as one’s own.

What constitutes an appropriate response to, and expression of, an aesthetic chorographer’s sustained engagement with place can vary vastly, from Fulton’s walks to

Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*. Some, like Andy Goldsworthy, have impeccable documentary practices which accompany their chorographic practices, indeed for some, like Autumn Richardson and her partner Richard Skelton, the lyric poetic document derived from their place-work is all that remains. For others, however, particularly those who have more vernacular aesthetic practices, it is often the case that they are interested solely in the tending of their place. What they are doing is primarily for themselves and, while they take pleasure in someone else showing interest in and appreciation for their labours, they tend because they like to tend and to create. They tend because they dwell and when they move on to dwell elsewhere, they leave their place behind, and because it is tied to private property, the place is left to take on a new form.

Brian Nichols' *Labyrinth*

The vernacular, as an extension of the parochial, arises as an important concept for the aesthetic chorographer, both in the particular attention that is directed toward the local, the place where one dwells, and in the sense that the work is native or natural to the place that it explores and celebrates. Linguistically, the vernacular, as both a noun and an adjective, imparts the sense of that which is the natural product of a particular place.[201] In aesthetics, the vernacular is most commonly used in reference to a form of architecture which describes a structure that is local to a particular region and uses traditional or local materials in construction.[202] Sitting inside the word vernacular and its usages, we find the intersection of language and place wherein they become enmeshed and inform each other

[201] "vernacular, adj. and n.", OED Online, September 2021, Oxford University Press.
[202] Camilla Ghisleni, "What is Vernacular Architecture," ArchDaily, accessed 5 Nov 2021, https://www.archdaily.com/951667/what-is-vernacular-architecture.

reciprocally: language takes the form it takes because of where it is spoken, and the place is perceived as distinct because of the language spoken there. This intersection is also where we can find the symbiotic conservation of place and language taking place: language conserves place through the act of attaching names to things and language is in turn conserved by having things to name. We might recall Hamilton Finlay's *Bring Back the Birch* (1984), in this regard, wherein the monument for the birch recalls the tree itself, the place it occupied, and the name of the tree.

An example of the vernacular garden can be found in Canadian aesthetic chorographer and art therapist Brian Nichols' *Labyrinth*, a garden and outdoor gallery site which seeks to celebrate the place it inhabits while offering a place where the care and healing of both nature and of people can take place. Nichols' garden is a product of his life and his experiences. His art takes the form that it does because of the things he has seen, the places he has lived, the people he has met, and his practice as an art therapist which extends into every element of his life.

As is the case with most vernacular aesthetic chorographers, Nichols' gardens are located on his property; the place where he dwells. It is an outdoor space, one that he invites others, friends and strangers alike, to enjoy freely. His garden, much like Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta*, is a liminal space, one which performs a transitional interlude between the public and the private. This is particularly apparent in the garden itself which one enters from a public walking trail, one that is paved for accessibility and marked with garbage cans, memorial benches and signage which make its status as a space for public use apparent. The transition from pavement to grass is stark and, while Nichols endeavours to overcome this by reaching out to the passersby through his use of signage and imagery, one quietly becomes aware that, in stepping off the paved path, one

has entered the realm of private property. Nichols has a sign posted at the entrance to his garden with a square abstract painting featuring a large blue circle with a dark centre on a dark background, a watchful eye over visitors and passersby. The longer rectangular sign displays the word “Labyrinth” painted in white on a light blue field (figure 29). The pathway by this signage, while grassed, is well trodden and the surrounding foliage is trimmed back such that there is a distinct entrance made apparent through the hedgerow which separates Nichols’ garden from the public pathway.

Figure 29 - The entrance to Brian Nichols’ Labyrinth. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

Nichols has strategically placed and hung objects on the trees which delimit his gardens from the public path. These objects are often in a state of flux and may change from one visit to the next. The most immediately apparent are those items that take on recognizable aesthetic forms such as paintings, mobiles and sculptures. One visit yielded a series of crosshatched screens made from reclaimed wood, painted in a variety of vibrant colours. These screens are approximately 2 feet wide by 2 feet tall and rotate slowly in the breeze, spinning on their strings. The colours are vibrant shades of red, yellow, orange, teal, green and blue. Another visit saw several of the trees bordering the property become gallery walls for abstract paintings and 'tree-texts' — small poetic meditations a few words long affixed to trees at eye level.

Figure 30 - The stone wall that marks the outermost boundary of the labyrinth and the sign which transforms the garden into a commons. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

While the invitation to visit the garden is clearly signposted, as one sign reads "you may wander in the garden", this is done so in a casual way (figure 30). The signs are not the glossy printed and designed ones erected by the city and other sponsoring entities of the paved pathway, rather they are roughhewn, impermanent, an invitation for now that may be revoked at any time. This makeshift invitation to enter onto Nichols' property leaves passersby unsure how to engage with the place he has crafted. It is a place which is clearly separate from the public path, the hedgerow clearly demarcates the property line, through which an entrance has been opened. Beyond this barrier, which is both physical and imagined, lies Nichols' gardens which are encountered in spaces or rooms, each which seem to be instinctively governed by its own set of rules, rules which are dictated in some sense by the aesthetic interactions Nichols has had with the space.

On my first visit to Nichols' *Labyrinth* my young son accompanied me. When we arrived, he was reluctant to leave the public pathway and step into the gardens. His resistance to cross over the threshold and enter Nichols' world was, I believe, an innate sense of propriety, particularly when it comes to respecting the territory of others. This was not where we were "allowed" to be, regardless of the invitation by signposting because the signposting was not that of the public. It bore no hallmarks of inclusivity, the semiotics were those of someone trying to overcome the sense of private property, without the means to do so. His signage, to which he affixes his signature, is a proxy personal invitation and a reassurance. The sign takes the place of the artist himself and, through his authenticating signature, reaffirms the invitation to enter his hybrid space. Society, however, struggles to understand the invitation because it does not communicate in a language they instinctively recognize.

Unlike Nichols' informal signage, the bench and the winding strip of pavement are common signifiers of public space. Anyone may walk here or stop and sit a while. There is one such bench not 15 metres beyond the signposted entrance to Nichols' *Labyrinth* and, if one were to sit upon the bench and look back, one would find Nichols' gardens waiting behind them. The particular way in which Nichols engaged a tree, which overlooks this bench, in the Summer of 2020, questioned a passerby's decision not to engage his *Labyrinth* (figure 31).

Figure 31 - The tree overlooking the public bench in which Nichols has hung mobiles and affixed a "tree-text. Author photograph, by permission of the artist."

There were two primary components which reached out to the passerby: the mobiles and the tree-text. The brightly coloured mobile screens that hung from the tree were art objects unto themselves while also performing as structuring devices for the views beyond. Not unlike the work of minimalist artist Donald Judd, these screens were insertions into the environment which work to structure the experience of the observer. As these screens were quite densely woven, they were not windows through which to look, rather they veiled the world which lay beyond. Their serendipitous spinning, driven entirely by natural forces, structured and interrupted views of what lay beyond.

Nichols' tree-text "FE/AR/EA/TS/THE/SO/UL" further questions the observer. The raising of fear as a topic asks the observer to consider what it is, they are afraid of; why do they hesitate? Why have they not engaged the garden physically by crossing the threshold to see what truly lies beyond for themselves? The interruption of the "complete view" of what lies beyond by the screens together with the questioning posed by the tree-text encourages the exploration of the garden in a physical way.

The bench thus becomes a liminal space, a place of waiting. For what? Perhaps the invitation of the property owner, or the proxy permission offered by observing some other member of the public with a little more pluck cross the threshold first. The bench then becomes a site to consider the true nature of property and the appropriateness of the transgressions of the outsider. Is entering the garden an act of transgression? Which objects permit lawful entry in the mind of the passerby? Which objects arrest them at the gate?

Upon crossing the threshold, one becomes aware of the way that the gardens are divided into areas or spaces. Referring back to Gary Hicks' illustrative map of *Little*

Sparta, we can imagine Nichols' garden to be structured in a similar way. Plants, trees and whimsical insertions into the environment coalesce into solitudes and glooms, much like the rooms of a house, that one might mark on a map but in a much less structured way than one encounters at Finlay's *Little Sparta*. Once within Nichols' gardens, one immediately encounters two spaces and a choice. The division between the two is marked by a low-lying, picked stone wall. The space on the left is a collection of curiosities: balanced structures, latticed archways, a vegetable garden, fruit trees and a picked stone wall, and composting meander forms which form a series of low walls. Each feature constitutes its own site. The tree, which overlooks the public bench, can be found in this collection of sites. To the right lies Nichols' *Labyrinth*, a worn path subtly edged and marked by saplings, overgrowth, stones and curiosities that spirals the visitor outward and then inward, but always moving forward from entry to exit. Both of these spaces are presided over by a derelict chair, a seat for the spirits (but not for people) to observe the plants as they grow.

Figure 32 - Nichols' inner garden, featuring the invitational sign. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

Beyond these initial spaces there is another hedgerow with an opening which opens onto a third space. Immediately on the far side of this threshold is another sign. The word “YES” in large green letters is painted on a yellow wooden sign, staked into the ground, followed by the sentence “This garden too.” in smaller black writing (figure 32). The construction of the sentence suggests that it is a response or continuation of the previous sign which reads, “You may wander in the garden.” The need for this second sign made obvious by the fact that this third space is, at first blush, a more conventional North American backyard. While it continues to offer display opportunities for Nichols’ work, windvane-esque mobiles hang from the trees and a sundial installation appears on the fringes, its place dictated by the sun, there are also the more conventional markers of domestic life such as Muskoka chairs, a fireplace, wheelbarrows and a distinct change in the quality of the grass. This is a less trodden space. This zone also abuts the rear of Nichols’ house. In its proximity to the domestic space of the home it takes on an increasingly private feel. This space is less the chaos of the creative mind and more manicured domesticity.

Figure 33 – Weathered “tree-text” which reads “BE/GIN/BY/BE/ING/PA/TIENT”. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

Figure 34 - Picked stone cairn topped with weathered sphere. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

This picture of domesticity however is restricted to this immediate backyard space. Following along the hedgerow to the left of the entrance into the backyard space there is a path which leads into a collection of tree paintings and a couple of tree texts (figure 33), several picked stone cairns topped with spheres (figure 34), a screened in gazebo which Nichols uses as part of his therapy practice, some smaller gardens and a series of collected curiosities which are strung up between posts, hung from trees, placed on logs and which appear as one tries to follow the winding assortment of stone paved and worn dirt pathways that lead around and past, under and through the collection of sites in this fourth space. One of these paths also forks off to circle back to the space which lies to the left of the entrance off the public pathway.

There is a fifth topoi that exists, one that is inaccessible to the casual passerby. Nichols has a studio which overlooks the gardens. It is where he works, where he creates both for the garden and for himself. What becomes immediately apparent in this space is Nichols' pleasure in engaging in the making of art for the sheer pleasure of making

something. One is also made aware of Nichols' wide-ranging skills and techniques. The studio overflows with artmaking materials and Nichols moves effortlessly from printmaking to sculpture, drawing to painting. The garden is the gallery, a place to share the private creations when they are made public upon their completion. It is clear that, for Nichols, art making is a private exercise and a public one, but as is the case with most vernacular gardeners who practice aesthetic chorography, their production and their tending practice is not clouded by a need for external acknowledgement, it is, as described previously, created by the artist for the artist, it is the product of the pleasure they derive from their practice and not by the need for accolades or income.

The outward expression of Nichols' art as a garden space which offers largely unrestricted access to the public, performs, in many instances, as public sculpture which encourages engagement with place and with nature while simultaneously effecting a conservation of place and nature. Gordon Young's *Bird Stones* (2014) perform a similar function, offering an aesthetic interjection into a place which both calls attention to the existent biodiversity and structures the human interaction by providing a directed way of moving through and listening to the place as a constructed whole.

Figure 35 - Tree which overlooks the public bench as seen from within the garden featuring balanced rock structures which are not visible from the public path. Author photograph, by permission of the artist.

The outdoor spaces which comprise Nichols' *Labyrinth* initially seem diverse. Found objects, both local and imported, figure prominently and beauty is sited in the ordinary. Coloured glass hangs from trees, broken bits of pottery rest on rocks, piles and piles of stones, aggregated from the site, abound and abut flowing patches of wildflowers and orderly vegetable patches, all of which are presided over by Nichols' assorted creations — paintings, mobiles, tree-texts and more (figure 35). Brought together, we might indeed imagine the garden as an outdoor gallery space.

While Nichols draws on a number of aesthetic influences, his garden is not that of high art because it is not directed by an overarching vision, philosophy or -ism. Rather his is that special kind of local, vernacular art which, in all its forms, is driven by his occupation as an art therapist and his belief in the healing power of art on the one hand, and his ongoing engagement with and interest in various forms and styles of art on the other. The purpose of his art is largely meditative, inviting the visitor to pause and to engage with the world around them in an experiential way: to hear, to see, to touch, to reflect. His tending practice invites in the wonders of the natural world and makes them conspicuous to the visitor. In Nichols' gardens, one is immediately aware of the change in the diversity of bird song, pollinator species are in abundance and small creatures appear from the fringes, a "you" who is equally invited to wander in the garden because they are tended to.

Nichols' practice is not one of curation, rather it is one of tending. His garden articulates this distinction, for they are distinct practices. Curation involves judgments of value and a careful selection of what belongs and what does not – what goes together and what does not. A curator culls the 'weeds' so that the flowers may flourish. The aesthetic chorographer, as a tender of place, does no such thing, they do not make value

judgements, they do not impose their vision or will, or at least not in a drastic way, rather they are in symbiotic conversation with the place that they tend, excerpting it from the world, marking it out as special not through curatorial practices, but through quiet and consistent attention. The influx of aesthetic interventions or expressions of place merely assist in drawing attention to the special qualities of the place and what exists there naturally. We might recall Peter Randall Page's *Wayside Carvings* in Dorset, UK in this regard.

When we describe Nichols' garden and his aesthetic practices as vernacular, we identify them as that which is common to and therefore unique about a particular place. The concept of the vernacular draws together not only language and place but also the everyday and the special. Within the context of the vernacular, the common is unique; the everyday is special. Aesthetic chorography celebrates the specialness of the natural, the everyday and the pedestrian and Nichols' garden in addition to his associated aesthetic and healing practices highlight this.

Nichol's garden offers a paradigm for the place of the vernacular and the parochial within the context of aesthetic chorographic gardening practices, while presenting us with the challenges these particular practices face. As a site tied to private property, its continuance as a place which performs the aesthetic chorographic work of Nichols is connected to it being tended to by Nichols himself, or one who tends in his stead. We might recall the work of the Common Ground Trust who, as one of their primary tenets, advocate for the purchase of private property as one of the five ways that conservation can be practiced. The purchase of sites is but one step however, because places are living entities which, as has been shown, require tending and care to persist as places. For this reason, there needs to also be some way preserving the tending practice applied to the

place. It is to the exploration of how these tending practices might be preserved and handed down as heritage objects unto themselves that we now turn.

Keeping Place

The connection between aesthetic chorographers and their places is, in many ways, extraordinarily tentative because it is tied to the chorographer's continuance: the fragility of human life. Without the chorographer to dwell and to tend to the culture of a place, a culture they contribute to in real and material ways, the culture can wither unless appropriate previsions are made for the tending practices of the aesthetic chorographer and for the place itself. As such, it is arguable that the place-work of aesthetic chorography does not necessarily begin and end at the site. In order to persist, it requires a proxy site, what Bordo might refer to as a keeping place, so that the vision, practice, work and place of the aesthetic chorographer can be preserved as a living entity: recalled, recounted, and shared with the next generation by one who experienced the place and its tending directly or by someone who received detailed knowledge of the place, complete with a complement of evidentiary documents and/or testimony from the aesthetic chorographer, from someone who had experienced the place in its tended state.

Bordo defines the keeping place as "a site of memory that in principle gives dominance to living witnesses."[203] He writes:

> We have come to isolate the keeping place as a special kind of *lieu de mémoire*. Not every site of memory is a keeping place. Keeping places are episodic, ephemeral, and unstable; they are subject to relapses and rebirths just as they might not appear to be specially marked or institutionally framed. They may

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[203] Jonathan Bordo, "The Keeping Place," *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 174.

> contain nothing "valuable" at all — valuable in the sense that museums and safety deposit boxes carry valuables. Keeping places can suddenly flare up. For those who are untrained or uninitiated, they may be without prospect. At their most fragile (and powerful) they are held together neither by institutional structures nor by writing as a "descriptive binder." They might be passed on by word of mouth over generations. Since the role of the keeping place is to keep the invisible invisible, keeping places may contrast with modern practices of memory where exhibition is an easy condition for securing the artifactual deposition.[204]

In this we see Bordo building upon archaeologist D.J. Mulvaney's *keeping place*, a distinct site of memory which Mulvaney imagined could allow for "preservation [to] coexist alongside and in support of ritual curatorship by local indigenous people."[205] Mulvaney initially proposed the keeping place in the 1980s as an alternative to the Kow Swamp Pleistocene burials being returned to the Echucha people of Victoria, Australia outright based on models he saw elsewhere in Australia.[206] While Mulvaney's attempts to preserve the material through the creation of a keeping place was not acted upon at the time, and, in the end, the remains were returned to the Echucha people who returned the remains of their ancestors to the land by depositing them in the river, Mulvaney's postulation of keeping place, like Nora's *lieu de mémoire*, offers an alternative to the institutionalized memory and historiographical practices undertaken by museums, libraries and archives. Such sites of institutionalized memory, "where preservation takes precedence over recollection,"[207] absorb into themselves representative artefacts of the past while severing those artefacts' connections to the larger narratives of their places and the living, recollective memories of those who claim connection to the site of memory

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[204] Bordo, "The Keeping Place," 176.
[205] Ibid, 174.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.

and its material culture.[208] Institutionalized memory, in its preferencing of preservation over recollection, not only embalms the artefact but also the narrative attached to the artefact (including any colouring of the narrative as a result of biases of the institution or state), thereby directing subsequent understandings of past and of place in a way that can want for context.

Bordo's articulation of the keeping place as a particular kind of *lieu de mémoire* shows how the keeping place relies on the active participation of the human as the custodian of memory to perpetuate the existence of the site and the goings on at the site, while the site itself simultaneously collects inside of itself memory traces which might be referred to as artefacts if they were collected by and exhibited in an institutionalized setting. "Interested, engaged, and culturally specific custodian-witnesses"[209] play an important role in the constitution of somewhere as a keeping place for it is the oral narrative of a living witness or someone who has been initiated through the reception of knowledge from a living witness and bolstered by material memory traces which allow for the past to speak in the present, recollecting the place through time.

Thus, as Bordo writes, "the keeping place is both material and fixed, immaterial and indefinite. The *event* is the site of memory."[210] The site coalesces as a material, spatial and temporal entity which looks to the happenings, the events, which take place there to perform in some sense its *raison d'être*. Nichols' gardens, as a tended site, are a collection of material objects and structures in a locale which are in conversation with the locale's natural state of being and its context. They preserve the natural and the place

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[208] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," in *Representations*, No. 26, 1989, 7-24.
[209] Bordo, "Keeping Place," 174.
[210] Ibid, 175.

because allow for both the daily micro events of (at)tending as well as the accumulative events of self-reflection, healing, and growth to take place. In many respects, a garden is an ideal keeping place for keeping places are inherently alive, dedicated not only to the recollection and conservation of place but also to the culture and events of a place particularly if those events are directed by heritage. Nichols' gardens are at once a keeping place unto themselves and in need of a keeping place because, while they are a multilayered site of memory, they are also tied to private property and, as such, face challenges of continuity, particularly insofar as it relates to its tending practices and its continuance as a site of healing. Keeping place as a designation or the creation of a keeping place which is not tied to private property could allow for this.

Cottage at Dundevon II

Figure 36 - Ferguson's cottage c. 2018, no longer tended by Ferguson or family. Author photograph.

I've since returned to Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon*, and it is not the idyllic place it once was (figure 36). Without it's aesthetic chorographer to care for and cure it, the structure has lost its charm, the apple tree and the "orderly green patch at the back" are no longer, replaced by a swimming pool surrounded by high walls of netting, presumably in an attempt to keep nature out. The sumac patch is gone, the birds are no longer invited to stay. The place is a spectre of its former self; it is no longer of nature as it once was. The only place Ferguson's cottage lives is in the lichen on the boulders he and Mary so devotedly selected, moved and placed (figure 37), and in the memories of those who were privileged enough to witness and partake in it. The memories and mementos are dispersed. There is, presently, no keeping place that draws them together and accounts for them.

Figure 37 - The steps to the cottage as they exist in their present form. Author photograph.

Ferguson's undertaking was not Finlay's and nor was it Nichols'. *Little Sparta* was designed, curated and crafted by an artist-poet whose primary focus was language.

Language and Finlay's quiet search for a lost home drove his place making practices. Nichols' practice too is more intentional in his desire to create a commons where he could share his art and where art can be used in the service of healing. Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon*, by contrast, was the product of a frugal, vernacular architect who always strove to create the most with the least; retooling, repurposing, repairing, and reimagining cast off finds, breathing new life into items destined for the landfill, long before sustainable practices were in vogue. His goal was to create a gathering place for his family where they could escape the city and be closer to nature, nothing more. His architect's training merely furnished him with the knowledge to get the necessary permits and to get the job done. Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* was not Frank Gehry's *Galleria Italia* at the Art Gallery of Ontario or Ron Thom's *Bata Library* at Trent University. It is not influenced by an architectural movement or -ism. It was simply an economical and sustainable response to a place. A way of co-dwelling with a place and with those who dwelt there. I needed Finlay's *Little Sparta* however, to understand the Sisyphean undertaking that was Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* and to articulate it as something both pedestrian and special: something vernacular. I equally needed Ferguson to develop my articulation of the métier of the aesthetic chorographer.

Ferguson brushes aside his aesthetic practice as one of function and frugality, insisting he has "a formal, pragmatic, inquiring mind," and to be sure, this is true. But pragmatism and aesthetics need not be mutually exclusive, indeed it is out of the unusual blend of pragmatism and inquiry that Ferguson's aesthetics spill forth. He cultivated a watercolour practice because oil paint was too expensive, he converted an old school portable into a cottage because it would be far less expensive and more practical than building new, he collected stones and boulders from farmers' fields and ditches because it

was more economical than purchasing them. Indeed, his chief complaint about the suburban garden he tends now is that he had to "buy the bloody boulders."[211] True to form, however, he and Mary collected all of the smaller stones from their morning walks on the beach of Lake Ontario. All the stones were transported in shopping bags. Ferguson's pragmatism drives his aesthetic choices, but it is where pragmatism abuts renunciation that we find the ethical impulses which direct the practice of aesthetic chorography.

Perhaps it is time to consider developing a keeping place for Ferguson's *Cottage at Dundevon* and the aesthetic chorographic practices that brought it into being.

Figure 38 - A view from the driveway looking off into the trees where countless walks took place. A view that looks familiar, like home. Author photograph.

[211] Ferguson, email, January 8, 2021.

Conclusion

"what will you do,

now that you sense the path unraveling

beneath you?"[212]

Jan Zwicky

Tending and Taking Care

This dissertation has endeavoured to develop an approach to the conservation of place through the exploration and celebration of the natural and the treatment of place as a parochial phenomenon that exists at the intersection of the mental, the cultural and the material. Place, as a primarily mental construct, is plagued by challenges of continuity and it is for this reason that this dissertation has striven to arrive at ways of overcoming these challenges. It is all the things that humans bring with them to a locale that makes it a place and it is the confluence between sites and events that constitutes somewhere as a site of memory. Language is presented as the interlocutor and the vessel of memory for place which can be deployed aesthetically to both draw attention to and conserve place.

The métier of the aesthetic chorographer, as someone who attends to place in a deep and embodied way for conservational ends, is developed by looking at the practices of British and Canadian environmental artists whose work is sited, place-focussed, and invested in attending to the natural. Through their work we arrive at ways of caring for

[212] Jan Zwicky, "Courage," *The Long Walk*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2016), 7.

and curing place. I came to identify aesthetic chorography, in part, through my discovery of a small press located in the North of England called Corbel Stone Press. Independently funded and locally focussed, artist-poet-musicians Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton create multimedia works inspired by the places they inhabit. Their creations are musical, poetic and visual, deriving from their attentive experiences of place and the land, inhabiting the grey area between poetry, visual art, and "ecomusicology". Their work is performative of the depth of memory that exists in a place; the memory that makes a place, this place and not somewhere else.

When I discovered Corbel Stone Press, Skelton's *Limnology* had recently been published. It enchanted me in its drawing together of the natural world, poetry, visual art, and the dead and dying languages of the British Isles. Equally, Richardson and Skelton's *Reliquiae* journal was suggestive of an academic rigour which underpinned their aesthetic endeavours. My research has since followed the work of Corbel Stone Press closely, drawing inspiration and insight from Richardson and Skelton's aesthetic chorographic practices, practices which offer a way of being in relation to a place which results in creative responses that draw together heritage and art for conservational ends.

A large part of my engagement with the press is supporting the press by purchasing some of their work so that I may engage it academically. Their publications, like most artist book/exhibition catalogues published by members of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography, are numbered print runs and, because they are not published by a major publishing house, their work seldom finds its way into a research library. My most

recent Corbel Stone Press acquisition is a small unbound volume printed on heavy card titled *Wolf Notes* which I purchased during their archive sale. It is an edition of one.[213]

One of Richardson and Skelton's earliest collaborations, *Wolf Notes*, is a multi-media project that seeks to capture their experience of dwelling in the small town of Ulpha, located within Lake District National Park in Cumbria in the Northwest of England. Geologically distinct, Ulpha is nestled in the Duddon Valley, an area surrounded by fells, tarns, and forests, carved out by advancing and retreating glaciers. This is, in many respects, the heart of the wilderness of England.

Wolf Notes is both a place-poem and a hauntingly beautiful musical arrangement in 5 parts. The parts, taken together, are reminiscent of a journey, titled: *Inception*, *Rise*, *Decline*, *Rest*, and *Return*. Together, Skelton and Richardson find the words and the sounds to recall and re-enchant Ulpha and the natural world that surrounded them there. They also offer their work as a symbol of their dedication to the place. The dedication to the printed text reads "For the landscape, flora and fauna of Ulpha."

In the printed text, the words are small on the page, each one holding its place. The poem is at once a journey and an intensely insular meditation on a particular place which is collected within its toponym: in short, a critical topography. The text can be divided into two parts. The first half of the volume is a poetic offering to the place which recalls and recounts the natural world of the place now and throughout time drawing upon both the sensory experience of the place and the lore of the place gleaned from both print sources and conversations with the locals. The second half of the volume remembers the

[213] Corbel Stone Press, "Wolf Notes," CSP Archive, accessed December 16, 2021, https://www.corbelstonepress.com/csp-archive/special-loose-leaf-edition-of-wolf-notes.

place name of Devoke Water through time, recording 12 variations of the name which has been used since c. 1205.[214] Devoke Water is the largest tarn[215] in the Lake District.

In the initiating place poem, the carefully selected language, which is cured in the process of its printing, remembers the land and its inhabitants to us through the intermediary of language. A section reads:

> Grasses, sedge and bracken
> recover the rootless
> felled expanses.
>
> They break ground
> for birch, for oak –
>
> finding tenure in a
> skin of soil.
>
> Stone packed into stone. Rough
> cradle for heather, for bracken
>
> Black craigs insinuated with
> stone-crop and rock-rose.
>
> A region for crows, for storm,
> tenanted by meadow and quaking and blue;
>
> a waste of blades forged in
> sunlight and wind.

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[214] Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton, *Wolf Notes* (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2012) unnumbered.
[215] A tarn, also known as a corrie loch, is a mountain lake formed by glacial erosion. We see echoes of the tarn and glacial geomorphology in much of Skelton's subsequent works.

Alone –
the woven isle.

A clutch for roots and spires within
Ever-changing waters.
A last arboreal hold before barren slopes.

The last stand of all that's fallen.[216]

Here, we find a litany of species is woven together and intermingled: an ecosystem. The poem remembers the land and the natural world in this place, as it was, as it is and suggests what it could be again in time. The poem also calls attention to the local toponyms and reminds us of the meaning and memory held inside the words. A second passage reads:

Harter Fell, a memory;
the hill bereft of deer

Birker Fell, an echo;
the hill absented by birch.

Ulpha Fell, a reproach;
the hill silenced of wolves.[217]

The final couplet, "The hill silenced of wolves", is echoed in the recording made by Richardson and Skelton for the area. In the musical arrangement by the same name, Richardson's ethereal vocalizations accompany Skelton's undulating violin and howl mournfully through large sections of the composition, a lament for the wolf who was

[216] Richardson and Skelton, *Wolf Notes*, unnumbered.
[217] Ibid.

hunted to extinction, but which the toponym remembers and, in speaking its name, the ghost of the wolf is sung back into existence.[218]

The text collects the place inside of itself as a deep entity, exploring through the intermediary of language and toponymy both the visible and the invisible landscape. It is not a coincidence that toponyms comprise over half the text. These toponyms recall an ecosystem that is no longer, one that used to include the deer, the wolf and the birch, but now does not, however in recalling them, they allow for this once landscape to haunt the present, palimpsest to the present day. The toponyms memorialize the land, calling for the return of the deer, the wolf, the birch in the same way that Ian Hamilton Finlay's concrete poetic object *Bring Back the Birch* (1984) does, but without the physical intrusion into the world to mark its absence. The work of Skelton and Richardson collect this knowledge in one place, making it both attractive and obvious while allowing it to remain invisible in the world. We might further think of *Wolf Notes* as a keeping place for the landscape, flora and fauna of Ulpha.

Richardson and Skelton's text and music are the product of their sustained attention to a place that is local to them, a place where they have dwelt on soils that they have tended to in both thought and action through acts of walking, gardening, listening and exploring. This piece highlights the multitude of ways that place can be constituted while displaying pointedly the conservation potential of language. To put it simply, what is found in *Wolf Notes*, is an aestheticized microcosm of this dissertation.

Wolf Notes is the first in a series of recordings and print-works made by Richardson & Skelton for Ulpha. *Wolf Notes* and their subsequent engagements with the

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[218] *AR, *Wolf Notes*, Aeolian Editions, Bandcamp, accessed December 16, 2021, https://aeolian.bandcamp.com/album/wolf-notes

area were ultimately collected in a volume titled *Memorious Earth: A Longitudinal Study* in 2015. Its publication was accompanied by a multimedia exhibition of the same name at the Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Cumbria. This exhibition was displayed in conjunction with a showing of the Boyle Family's *Contemporary Archaeology* exhibition.[219] This collaborative showing of the Boyle Family alongside Richardson and Skelton is extraordinarily illustrative of the establishment of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography as distinct from American Land Art. The Boyle Family are a family of Scottish artists who have been creating multimedia land and place-oriented work since the 1960s. Their work has previously been shown alongside the work of Hamish Fulton, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy and other artists, under the typology of Land Art, which this dissertation claims as part of the British School of Aesthetic Chorography.[220]

The British School of Aesthetic Chorography is an ecosystem of artists but the approaches they offer are not merely a British approach to nature and to place, these approaches are not insular. Rather they present us with a means of reframing how we view art and other aesthetic engagements with place, particularly when, on the surface the offerings would not be considered "high art". It allows us to reconsider nature and place as heritage objects and my dissertation works to break down the distinction between heritage and art, ultimately suggesting that there are ways to use art in the service of heritage and conservation, particularly with respect to place.

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[219] Corbel Stone Press, "Memorious Earth Exhibition Invitation," CSP Archive, accessed December 16, 2021, https://www.corbelstonepress.com/csp-archive/exhibition-invite-to-the-exhibition-of-'memorious-earth'.-.

[220] Ben Tufnell (ed), *Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britain 1966-1979*, (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013).

This dissertation began with a photograph of a watercolour painting and five words: "*ceci n'est pas un paysage*." We began by questioning the nature of the relationship between words and images, and indeed words and places. This dissertation has sought to show why assuming the initiating image is a landscape, based strictly upon its visual practices, is problematic. While the image visually conforms to many of the established traditions of landscape painting, to view it as a cultivation of the natural for human consumption would be a mistake. Instead, we are encouraged to look beyond the image, to consider the language attached to the image and to explore this image as an emanation of an embodied experience of place. In doing so we allow ourselves to find ways of expressing connection to and experiences of place which works to conserve place and the natural world in an era of dispossession with particular attention paid to the power of the local, the parochial and the vernacular in devising appropriate and lasting responses to place as an entity whose continuity requires (at)tending to. For places to persist they must be recalled, recounted and tended to and, in doing so, they are shared with others, a requisite step in the conservation of place. This is the métier of the aesthetic chorographer; a role made all the more poignant in an era of environmental and existential crisis.

What will we do now that we sense the path unraveling beneath us?[221] We will commence by (at)tending, curing and taking care.

[221] Jan Zwicky, "Courage," *The Long Walk*, (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2016), 7.

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