

**Between the Lines**

*Liminality and the Post Pastoral in New Nature Writing*

**Cardiff University**

March 2021

Anna-Marie Young

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in  
Creative Writing*

## Summary

Between the Lines is a PhD thesis in two parts: a non-fiction memoir entitled *And I Miss You Like The Dead* and a critical commentary that explores the environmental themes that influence the landscape the memoir is set in, and the ethics within the wider Nature Writing genre.

*And I Miss You Like the Dead* follows the discoveries of family history that are unveiled after the inheritance of an old farm on the Carmarthenshire borders and entwines this with the narratives of the breakdown of a relationship and the protagonist's decision to stay in this landscape and continue on with the family business of organic growing.

The critical commentary consists of three main questions that discuss the genre with which the memoir could be included in, and looks at wider questions within environmentalism, nature writing and the practical differences between living and writing environmentally.

## Contents

### Part One: Critical Commentary

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1
Section 1: <i>What significance can the post-pastoral contribute to the New Nature Writing genre?</i>	7
Section 2: <i>To what extent have environmental novels, most notably key texts concerning rewilding, affected legislation, heightened public knowledge and encouraged action?</i>	28
Section 3: <i>How does the concept of liminality relate to the New Nature Writing and what can it do to help us move forward in a time of ecological collapse?</i>	43
Conclusion	61
A note on form and brevity	62
Acknowledgements	64
Bibliography	65

Part Two: *And I Miss You Like The Dead.*

	<i>Page</i>
Prologue	2
Chapter one	4
Chapter two	11
Chapter three- <i>Waunbwlch</i>	13
Chapter four- <i>Druidstone</i>	18
Chapter five	23
Chapter six- <i>Ninewells</i>	30
Chapter seven	35
Chapter eight	39
Chapter nine	45
Chapter ten- <i>Cwm Ivy</i>	55
Chapter eleven	60
Chapter twelve	71
Chapter thirteen- <i>Porthgain</i>	73
Chapter fourteen	77
Chapter fifteen- <i>Pen y Cwm</i>	87
Chapter sixteen	94
Chapter seventeen- <i>Brawdy</i>	98
Chapter eighteen	103
Chapter nineteen	109
Chapter twenty	116
Chapter twenty-one	120
Chapter twenty-two- <i>Bluestone</i>	126
Chapter twenty-three	129
Epilogue	142

## Introduction

This thesis is in two parts: a narrative non-fiction novel entitled *And I Miss You Like The Dead* and a critical essay in three parts, which seeks to provide context for the creative work in both literary and social traditions.

When referring to narrative non-fiction and non-fiction novels, both of which I use frequently within the critical text, I must clarify my use of terminology. It is my belief that 'narrative non-fiction' is too broad a term and has become a catch all phrase which can be too vague. Here the term 'novel' is used to demonstrate literature that has a familiar story structure with plot and character as central to the narrative whether it is fictitious or not. Later on in the critical thesis I go on to make a further distinction between literature that serves the environmental cause and that which does not.

In this introduction I will briefly discuss the creative text and its main themes, and give a short overview of the plot. I will also introduce the three main questions I have investigated in the critical dissertation and provide the reasoning behind choosing them.

*And I Miss You Like The Dead* weaves several narratives together; the two main stories swap chapters between each other until the end where they meet. The first narrative details the intimate story of a long-term relationship and its breakdown, and the second the uncovering of my grandparent's farm, and subsequently the story of their lives, after they have both passed away. In between these narratives there are short, descriptive pieces that detail both sets of grandparents and parents and their own seminal experiences with love and death. These pieces are told in third person to differentiate the time they were set in from modern day and as an acknowledgement that they haven't been experienced by the author. These short snapshots of life before I was born are based entirely on fact, but have been elaborated upon to fully introduce their characters and the significance of these moments.

The memoir moves in time between the present day, several years previously, and the snapshots of decades earlier. In order for the reader to differentiate clearly between these timelines the chapters are titled and the older snapshots are also dated. While the story of the renovation is told in chronological order, the love story is told partly in reverse, so that the questions of inheritance, both physical and emotional, run throughout the novel and are in the forefront of the readers mind from the very beginning. Inheritance is a key theme; do we learn what to expect or desire in a partner from our families, from our own patterns of existence, or can we break from tradition and have free choice? The emotional inheritance of living closely with one's family, alongside the physical inheritance of the farm and weight of responsibility this brings, are explored frequently throughout the text. In particular my own battle with the memory of my grandmother, and subsequently my own identity, is an important narrative thread and turning point.

The second narrative of the relationship takes place away from the family home, and is anchored in specific natural locations; for this reason, they are given place names to mark them as separate. The idea of a liminal physical and emotional space is explored in these pieces; they often span several different occasions in one geographical location, each one revealing something about the building, or breaking, of the relationship. It should be noted that these chapters are specifically rooted in place-based writing, the landscape becoming as much of a character as the people who traverse it. Interestingly, these places would often be considered liminal spaces themselves: beaches, tidelines, cliff edges and the margins of fields. This contributes to a feeling of timelessness, and emphasises the changeable nature of human relationships and the uncertainty echoed in the characters own lives.

A key theme which arose naturally from the text was that of self-discovery and exploration, which is a common trait in the work of the New Nature Writing movement. While I do not go looking for answers in the natural world, as some of those authors are prone to do, the sense of time and space that the landscape gives naturally provides room to ask questions of self. This is done very subtly and without imposing explicit conclusions. The actions taken

between one chapter and another are often left purposefully ambiguous for two reasons. Firstly, when writing non-fiction, the author has a responsibility to the subjects, to the lives involved in the story she is telling. I felt this keenly, and keeping certain details out of the narrative meant I was able to draw a line between what was shared and what was not. I was very aware that a large part of the story, although directly affecting me, also belongs to my siblings, parents and grandparents' lives, and carefully curating and interrogating what was shared was important in being able to defend and justify the text.

Secondly, I was very aware that writing a memoir of one's family is often more interesting to the author than to the reader, so keeping the reader engaged and the story one that an 'outsider' was able to appreciate was an important feature when writing. In *A View From Castle Rock* Alice Munro writes 'I was...exploring a life, my own life, but not in an austere or rigorously factual way. I put myself in the centre and wrote about that self as searchingly as I could.'<sup>1</sup> Writing about herself in this way requires the author to be honest and open about her flaws and shortcomings as well as her triumphs. Munro writes about herself as a child in a way that is very unsympathetic and the effect of this means the reader trusts the narrator not to be so biased in their portrayal of the self. It makes for more compelling reading, and develops an empathy with the reader.

Edmund DeWaal said of his excellent memoir *The Hare With Amber Eyes*: 'I'm working through private ideas in public, and a lot of these are quite odd, to do with language, survival, memory.'<sup>2</sup> This idea of investigating his history through words, and making them public, has stayed with me. In the novel, he uses a family collection of Netsuke – small, Japanese ornaments – as a device through which he can travel backwards in time and introduce the reader to various figures in his family history. This technique of using an anchor to tell a story was one I used

---

1 Munro, A. (2006) *The View from Castle Rock*. New York: Knopf.

2 Wullschlager, J. (2014). Lunch with the FT: Edmund de Waal. *Financial Times*. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/835ade90-b4f0-11e3-af92-00144feabdc0>. (Accessed on 5.8.2019)

throughout the novel, not least because my grandparents were artists and antique dealers so their house and buildings were crammed full of small, intricate and sometimes valuable objects, but also because examining their possessions gave much more insight into their characters than a sheer description of their attributes, for myself and for the reader.

While not strictly in the canon of New Nature Writing, *And I Miss You Like The Dead* is best categorised as such. Its focus is a narrative non-fiction exploration of landscape, with a particular emphasis on specific things; it seeks to go beyond the traditional idolatry of pastoral nature writing and is full of the details of a life working in a landscape rather than visiting or documenting it. Unlike many other works in the genre, it does not elevate the human above nature, and it engages with the transient, and fragile climate with a knowledge of the environmental crisis. As I progressed with my thesis, the need for environmental change became an increasingly important subject for the public and in the media; this in no small part impacted my decision to choose the first question for the critical part of my thesis: *1. What significance can the post-pastoral contribute to the New Nature Writing genre?*

In May 2019, the UN in association with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The report details the staggering loss to biodiversity with a million species now facing extinction, and the impact of this on all the ecosystems across earth. I live in a rural area, on the cusp of the Pembrokeshire National Park and a stone's throw from numerous Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and these changes that we as a species are facing are hard to ignore. From the basic erosion of soil quality and the steady decline in its performance unless repeatedly saturated with chemicals, through to the decline in crops, native wild plants, flowers and wildlife, my immediate landscape is changing extremely rapidly.

With these causes in mind the first question I sought to investigate in my critical thesis was to understand and distil the issues of environmentalism (and lack of it) in the New Nature Writing genre using Terry Gifford's post-pastoral theory and modes of reading. As a literary theory, the post-pastoral may offer a pathway forward, and be able to traverse the difficult



route between the written word and a responsibility towards conservation and environmental action.

The second question followed on naturally from this; it seeks to establish the effect that environmentally-minded nature writing, as opposed to nature writing intended simply to entertain, could have on legislation and public knowledge. *2. To what extent have the environmental novels Wilding (2018) and Feral (2013) affected legislation, heightened public knowledge and encouraged action?*

Although I wouldn't consider *And I Miss You Like The Dead* as a primarily environmental novel, my exploration of the possibility for nature writing novels to affect public perception, have an impact on policies, and cultivate change was nevertheless crucial to my own feeling of responsibility as an author. As the co-owner of a large organic farm, my own experience of attempting to live in symbiosis with nature also affected my research. Having lived in the landscape I am writing about since birth, I have noticed the gentle decline, or 'thinning', of species loss over the past decades, first hand. At the same time, I work in a business concerned with regenerative agriculture and have watched with delight the surge of interest in environmentalism over the last five to ten years, which seems lacking in the popular green literature. Although often implicit in my own work the context and history this research gives the memoir is significant.

In relation to the above my third and final question looked at liminality as a geographical and emotional construct used by authors in the New Nature Writing genre: *3. How does the concept of liminality relate to the New Nature Writing and what can it do to help us move forward in a time of ecological collapse?*

This is perhaps the question most directly related to my own prose and as such seeks to explore the literary tradition of the liminal as a device as well as a natural, geographical occurrence. Paul Farley describes these physical places in his book *Edgelands (2012)* when he writes, "The wilderness is much closer than you think. Passed through, negotiated, unnamed, unacknowledged: the edgelands – those familiar yet ignored spaces which are neither city nor

countryside – have become the great wild places on our doorsteps.’<sup>3</sup> The tradition of these forgotten landscapes has been well documented since the post-war era, which saw swathes of flowers blossom on the scarred lands left behind by the Blitz. However, in an environmental context, these nature corridors are becoming increasingly crucial for wildlife and marginalised species.

Living between the coast and the mountains as I do, the landscape I am most familiar with would be considered a liminal space, one that is constantly changing and often not there at all at certain times of the day (beaches and tidelines) or entirely unreachable for months of the year. The metaphor this naturally creates mimics the uncertainty of the relationship narrative in the text, and the choices that both characters face and ultimately make.

The concept of liminality extends beyond the geography that features prominently in the text, and the relationship of the main characters, we are also at an ‘in-between’ or liminal phase. Western Society and human civilisation are at the meeting of several crossroads with mass civil unrest about the climate and the government being debated daily. The Extinction Rebellion movement, school strikes for climate, the plastic free movement, Brexit and regenerative agriculture are all commanding headlines regularly to determine the course of action we take for the future health of society and the environment. We could say that this unique ‘tipping point’ or moment in time is also a liminal space– one in which decisions are being made but the results of which have not yet come into action.

With this in mind, the third question in my thesis is also the broadest and seeks to explain just how important it is for the New Nature Writing to engage with these issues, and how my own lived experience of these events impacts my own work not only in *And I Miss You Like The Dead*, but in the direction we take as a small, environmentally aware business.

As a whole, the thesis argues for greater levels of responsibility from the authors in this genre, and follows on from the work already being done to heighten this by writers and

---

<sup>3</sup> Farley, Paul & Symmonds Roberts, M, (2011) *Edgelands*. London: Jonathan Cape.

commentators such as Mark Cocker, Jim Perrin, Kathleen Jamie and the academic Terry Gifford.

Gifford's theory of the post-pastoral is what is discussed first, to clearly demonstrate the need for guidelines in this thread of literature and to distil and modernise his ideas into theories that are more relevant to the current environmental crisis and the literature that deals with it.

### Section One:

#### What significance can the post-pastoral contribute to the New Nature Writing genre?

*'What was clearly needed was a term for writing about nature that outflanked the closed circle of the pastoral and its opposite, the anti-pastoral.'*

(Gifford, 2012)

The world and its inhabitants are facing the greatest threat for thousands of years: climate change. There isn't an ecosystem that is unaffected by its rapid expansion and terrifying projection. So then, when our natural world is facing such disaster, why is it that our modern 'green' literature apparently deals so little with it?

The growth of the New Nature Writing genre has been traced back to the Friends of the Earth movement in 1971 in Britain<sup>4</sup> (1969 internationally), but takes its name from the Granta Issue of the same name edited by Jason Cowley in 2008<sup>5</sup>. The term has come under fire from a variety of sources, most notably mountaineer and author Jim Perrin ('One term that has been brandished around much over the last couple of years is that of "the New Nature Writing" – a self-serving formulation first popularized by the publicity department of the publishing

---

<sup>4</sup> Smith, J, (2017) *The New Nature Writing: Rethinking the Literature of Place*. London: Bloomsbury. p5-6  
<sup>5</sup> Various. (2008) *Granta 102: The New Nature Writing*. London: Granta.

company Granta.<sup>6</sup>) but seems to successfully and usefully differentiate between before and after public consciousness of climate change became widespread, and the surge in public demand for poetry, novels and non-fiction about nature.

The genre itself has obvious roots across continents, from Scottish and American godfathers of nature writing John Muir and Henry David Thoreau, back to the Greek and Roman philosophers and artists who chose to idealise the countryside in numerous pastoral depictions since Virgil's *Eclogues*. For the sake of brevity and clarity of intent, we will focus entirely on British nature writing post 1971 and take Jos Smith's explanation of dating this movement to that time period '...I make a case for dating the emergence of the New Nature Writing to the early 1970's when, following the founding of Friends of the Earth UK... a new popular environmental movement began to spread via a fresh counterculture of activism and campaigning hitherto unheard of among the traditional conservation bodies.'<sup>7</sup>

The New Nature Writing then is primarily born out of an environmental movement, and this is interesting to note, as the main criticism of the genre is aimed at its lack of environmental detail and action, whether in the prose itself or through the action of the authors. We must note here that if we date the beginning of the New Nature Writing as 1971 then the popular early novels that shaped the genre, namely those of Richard Mabey and Roger Deakin, are key texts as they managed to both mix the growing awareness of environmentalism with their personal experiences. *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973) and *The Common Ground* (1980) are both examples of widening general consciousness about the effect that man has on nature, and nature on man. What may have been considered a pastoral prose is soundly reinforced by Mabey's technical knowledge of botany and of his frequent examples of legislation, activism and awareness of life in the places he describes: 'It is a very similar set of conflicts and problems that is transforming the farming landscape today. The burdens of taxation, the rise in farm rents, the

---

6 Perrin, J. (2010) *The Condry Lecture*. Available: [http://www.thecondrylecture.co.uk/\\_/pdf/Condry-Lecture-2010.pdf](http://www.thecondrylecture.co.uk/_/pdf/Condry-Lecture-2010.pdf) (Accessed 4.6.2018)

<sup>7</sup>Smith, Jos. *The New Nature Writing – Rethinking the Literature of Our Place*. 2017. Bloomsbury Academic.p4

drift of workers away from the land, the control of food prices and the increasingly complex structure of international agriculture policies are making farmers take every opportunity to maximise productivity and profit from their land.’<sup>8</sup>

It is also important to note the popularity that these books enjoyed, which had to some extent not been seen before within the genre, because the issues and ideals detailed within them fed into the popular knowledge and culture of the time. Friends of the Earth UK was pulling in headlines from their large-scale protests, notably the ‘Bottle Dump’ at Cadbury Schweppes to promote reuse (1971), the ‘Save the Whale’ campaign that has run since 1971, and ‘Glow Home Nirex’ protesting the burial of nuclear waste (1987). The collective consciousness of environmental issues was growing and evolving and the accompanying literature fed into, heightened popular knowledge, and benefitted from this.

Since then, the popularity of the genre has rocketed. However, the literature has seemingly suffered a decline from the original ideals of environmentalism. On this subject Mark Cocker is perhaps the most outspoken critic within the genre itself. His article (and the response to it from Robert Macfarlane) in the *New Statesman* goes into detail about the gap between the huge popularity and readership of the New Nature Writing and the environmental benefit, or lack thereof. ‘This, after all, is a nation in which Plantlife, the environmental organisation that seeks to safeguard our wild native vegetation, has a membership of 10,500, while the Royal Horticultural Society has 434,000 supporters.’<sup>9</sup>

Cocker refers frequently to the publishing phenomenon that is *H is For Hawk* by Helen Macdonald (2014), winner of both the Samuel Johnson and Costa Book of the Year Prizes. She has become synonymous with the genre alongside Macfarlane, Jonathan Lewis-Stempel, Kathleen Jamie, Mabey and Cocker himself. Of Macdonald’s work he is on the whole very positive, but his criticisms start and end with the bone of contention around its environmental

---

<sup>8</sup> Mabey, R. (1980) *The Common Ground*. London: Hutchinson & co. P100

<sup>9</sup> Cocker, M. (2015) Death of the Naturalist: Why is the “New Nature Writing” so tame? *New Statesman*. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

responsibility. 'The book's profound impact is not in any doubt but a legitimate question to pose about *H Is for Hawk* is its status as a nature book. The motif of a raptor as a symbol of grief and of the author's struggle with depression is indisputably powerful... Yet there are wild goshawks in Britain and these barely appear in the text. You would understand why if you have ever tried to look for this extraordinary bird. Wild goshawks are among Britain's most elusive and unpredictable large predators.'<sup>10</sup>

This symptomatic weakening of environmental morals within the genre is characterised not by what some authors depict, but in their omissions. How is it moral to write about a nature that is in serious and terrifying decline, as with goshawks, and gloss over or 'greenwash' the truth of their scarcity? Or is Cocker doing Macdonald a disservice? In *H is For Hawk* what is often not said is more telling than what is explicitly depicted in the prose. The depth of her grief, the echoing sadness of loss of her father is surely a prudent symbol of what we have also lost in the landscape, of what is sometimes unsurmountable and overwhelming. Were we just beginning to understand the link between species loss and climate change, an implicit message of loss within *H is for Hawk* would perhaps be acceptable, but as it is more than fifty years since the subject was introduced to the mainstream as crucially important, it is disappointing not to see a clear narrative of the environmental changes and losses she herself must have experienced as a falconer. It does seem to do a disservice to the novel's namesake, focusing as it does on a questionable history of hawking, instead of the future of birds of prey in this time of great change in their habitats and our natural landscapes.

Unfortunately, Macdonald's prose, while beautifully written, is bound by the pastoral conventions that encourage the reader to look backwards to a different time and reflect with idolatry and projected perfectionism. 'We walked in dark winter light over fields furred with new wheat. Vast flocks of fieldfares netted the sky, turning it to something strangely like a

---

10 Cocker, M. (2015) Death of the Naturalist: Why is the "New Nature Writing" so tame? *New Statesman*. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

sixteenth-century sleeve sewn with pearls.’<sup>11</sup> Incidentally the fieldfare is on the RSPB Red list ‘with species needing immediate action’<sup>12</sup> and there is no mention of the loss of habitat that these ‘fields of wheat’ of intense agriculture have on our native wildlife. In fact, conventionally grown ‘new wheat’ is decidedly boring to look at, the furrows from the plough still evident, the stark bare soil, and thousands of mechanical lines of small, green shoots. ‘Furred’ is a distinctly romantic view of such a scene. The criticisms of her work here are clear, as an author of non-fiction being able to read the landscape is not enough in this time, as we are, of environmental emergency, one must also represent it responsibly. We are not living in an idolised reality, but one in which terrifying consequences for our natural world are coming true and being brought to light on a daily basis. Where then will the nature writers go for inspiration when their landscapes are irretrievably damaged?

Macfarlane’s response to such criticism is to argue that engagement at any level, at a word-level as with his *Landmarks*, is sufficient in encouraging readers to become naturalists. His fight to keep the endangered natural lexicon from disappearing from children’s dictionaries is well documented. It has spurred a children’s novel, with wildlife artist Jackie Morris, and even a political movement that calls for each library in the UK to hold a copy of it. *The Lost Words*, a ‘spell book’, was written to re-interest a generation of children in the natural world, after the Oxford Junior Dictionary 2007 edition eliminated 40 of the lesser used countryside words in favour of ‘vandalism’, ‘celebrity’ and ‘interdependent’, among many others<sup>13</sup>.

However honourable the intent, the question remains; why are our younger generations losing these words anyway? And why isn’t the prominent nature writing author more engaged with the actual natural disasters of this age, as opposed to the effect of them?

---

11 Macdonald, H. (2014) *H is for Hawk*. London: Penguin Random House.

12 RSPB.org.uk. (2014) Birds of Conservation Concern. Available at: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/birds-and-wildlife/birds-of-conservation-concern-4--the-population-status-of-birds-in-the-united-kingdom-channel-islands-and-the-isle-of-man.pdf>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

13 Brown, A. (2018) Goodbye Herons, Hello Celebrity. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/dec/10/oxford-junior-dictionary>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

It is with this issue in mind that we approach the topic of post-pastoralism. Put forward by Terry Gifford in 1993<sup>14</sup> it details a reading strategy in which one would apply 6 categories to define the post-pastoral significance of the work. It is, in effect, beyond the notion of pastoral. An extension rather than a direct alternative of the traditional pastoral literature, or anti-pastoralism. We will discuss them in detail later, but in brief the six modes are:

*'(1) Can awe in the face of nature (e.g. landscapes) lead to humility in our species, reducing our hubris? (2) What are the implications of recognising that we are part of nature's creative-destructive processes? (3) If our inner nature echoes outer nature, how can the outer help us understand the former? (4) If nature is culture, is culture nature? (5) How can consciousness, through conscience, help us heal our alienation from our home? (6) Is the exploitation of our planet aligned with our exploitation of human minorities?'*

These questions seek to explain perhaps where the tradition of idolatry in nature writing comes from, and to find a place for that idolatry in the face of the environmental movement and the crisis going forward. In conversation, Gifford himself has said he is aware there are huge limitations to this 'first draft' of theory, but could the post-pastoral give us guidelines to apply to the New Nature Writing? Could it help to determine whether or not as a genre it promotes a pastoral narrative of nature in Britain that could be detrimental to public understanding of climate change and the continuing conversation around environmentalism? Could it traverse the area beyond the written word, to educate and activate the reader and ultimately conserve the subject the work is concerned with?

'Each of the six features of post-pastoral literature is a field of urgently needed exploration, raising key questions that are engaged by contemporary science, environmental ethics and cultural geography, for example. Post-pastoral writing provides a mode for integrating and questioning these enquiries in a holistic 'stretching of our notions of humanity.'

---

<sup>14</sup> Gifford, T. (2012) *Pastoral, Anti Pastoral and Post Pastoral as reading strategies*. Scott Slovic (ed.), *Critical Insights: Nature and Environment*, pp. 42-61, Ipswich: Salam Press.



Such writing might be able to nudge us into some ways of answering the most crucial question of our time: what is the right relationship by which people and planet can live together?’<sup>15</sup>

This last statement clearly gives us a beginning to address some of the issues previously detailed with the New Nature Writing Genre, it is my own belief that the ‘relationship’ Gifford speaks of here is of imperative importance going forward. A literature on a subject that is not responsible for its narrative, and subsequent actions, is almost certainly going to do harm. Whether the post-pastoral can give us a framework to begin devising a set of guidelines however has yet to be proven.

The obvious downfall of the theory is in the intent– Gifford’s own dedication to the natural world and environmentalism (and accompanying literature) is clear. However it is more difficult to determine whether or not he seeks to defend the significance and tradition of pastoralism in a modern world, or whether he is in fact expanding and improving it to include the modern changes in the natural world and how we can best preserve what is left. Whether we can help the many subjects of this movement in literature, and therefore encourage readers to do the same.

For his first mode of viewing, Gifford’s question seems to sit directly within the pastoral tradition of idolatry. 1. *Can awe in the face of nature (e.g. landscapes) lead to humility in our species, reducing our hubris?* He uses timeless examples from Wordsworth and Manley Hopkins, classic romantic poets, to illuminate his point on awe further reinforcing this pastoral image. However, Gifford’s examples aside, the idea of humility is an idea at the cutting edge of the environmental debate. Philosopher and eco-theorist Timothy Morton proposes in his 2018 novel *Being Ecological* that the key to changing societal views on climate change, is in how we see ourselves. He is expanding on Heidegger’s theory of ‘Dasein’ or ‘being there’, and Graham Harman’s Object Oriented Ontology or ‘OOO’ theory and applying it in terms of ecology. Among other principles, the philosophical theory of Object Oriented Ontology states that all non-human

---

15 Gifford, T. (2012) *Pastoral, Anti Pastoral and Post Pastoral as reading strategies*. Scott Slovic (ed.), *Critical Insights: Nature and Environment*, pp. 42–61, Ipswich: Salam Press.

objects must be given equal attention to humans. In this case the term 'object' refers to all non-human articles, living or otherwise.

Morton explains that viewing oneself as a member of the most intelligent species on Earth, results in a false sense of self-worth and responsibility which is often used as an explanation or justification for the continued destruction of the natural world and inevitably of man itself. Going forward however, Morton explains that if man saw itself as perfectly equal to all 'objects' and forms of life, that if we could in fact recognise all other living and non-living beings as important and comparable to ourselves, the age of 'mass-extinction' would slow. We would no longer be able to do harm without directly harming beings we recognise as self. Moreover, we would be more open to other possibilities, futures and perhaps solutions, to the environmental crisis.

While the 'OOO' theory is still in its relative infancy, when we apply the idea of humility in the face of nature to the New Nature Writing Genre, we can clearly see a lack of this idea of fundamental equality, and a pattern of human-led, self-congratulatory discovery of 'awe-inspiring' nature. Interestingly, this lack of humility in the New Nature Writing rings with echoes of colonialism, of 'discovering', conquering and selling landscapes as if they have never been inhabited, or worked before. How little we understood of the lands and people we disturbed in the Age of Discovery, and how much harm we brought to them, is well documented. Perhaps, nearly 500 years later, we should have learnt to be more considerate of what already exists in a place without our input.

In an excerpt from *The Wild Places* Macfarlane lists some of the places he has visited: 'Ennlli, Coruisk, Rannoch and The Black Wood...Each landscape had taken me by surprise, had behaved in ways I had not foreseen or sometimes even wanted.'<sup>16</sup> Macfarlane here almost appears to be chastising the landscapes in relation to himself, as if they should have considered his impression of themselves in their becoming. One wonders how should they have behaved to please him? This is a clear example of landscape and nature being moulded to fit the discoverer

---

<sup>16</sup> Macfarlane, R. (2007). *The Wild Places*. London: Granta. p115

or writer's will. Instead of elevating, protecting or witnessing, this type of pastoral idolatry simplifies landscape down into human terms. By describing it as something designed for human enjoyment, the prose reduces these giant, ancient landscapes into something explainable, attainable and human orientated. It is inherently Anthropocentric.

Anthropocentrism is important in understanding the place that humans now occupy, we are now in what is considered the 'Anthropocene', the age of man. Hotly debated, this epoch is set to have begun in 1945 with the emergence of the post-war Industrial Revolution and an understanding of the marked and irreversible effect that man-kind as a species has had on the Earth. In the age of the Anthropocene then- humility, as Gifford proposes, is key to both the literary evolution of New Nature Writing and how humankind moves forward with its relationship to nature.

*2. What are the implications of recognising that we are part of nature's creative-destructive processes?* Here, Gifford is following on from the idea of developing humility and encouraging the writer to consider the transient and cyclical patterns in nature as directly linked to our own. There is a distinction to be made here between natural cycles that appear in nature and those 'creative-destructive' processes which are manmade. The changing seasons of which death and rebirth is part of a natural cycle, and the untimely or unnatural demise of a species due to the interference of man.

Interestingly, the role of death in the novels of the New Nature Writers is a prominent feature. From Macdonald's harrowing journey with grief after the loss of her father to the more immediate discussion of mortality in Kathleen Jamie's *Sightlines* as she inspects a patients' cancerous tissue under a microscope, comparing it to the Tay river. 'I was looking down from a great height upon a pink countryside, a landscape. There was an estuary...It was astonishing, a map of the familiar; it was our local river, as seen by a hawk.'<sup>17</sup> Here Jamie is clearly linking

---

<sup>17</sup> Jamie, K. (2012) *Sightlines*. London: Sort of Books.

death and dying to the cycles within which we all live our lives, she is familiarising and normalising it and taking away the mystique and fear associated with death.

While Gifford's 'creative-destructive process' should be seen as an obvious truth to the nature writer, since the original publication of Gifford's work there is almost two decades worth of expanded knowledge of climate change science and ever-increasing global temperatures, and now there is little to no doubt that external nature is linked to the internal in any audience. Openly linking the fate of the human race with the fate of the natural world is commonplace, claiming its share of headlines. Recently the *Guardian* lead with 'Plummeting insect numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'<sup>18</sup> (February 2019), continuing 'The planet is at the start of a sixth mass extinction in its history, with huge losses already reported in larger animals that are easier to study. But insects are by far the most varied and abundant animals, outweighing humanity by 17 times. They are 'essential' for the proper functioning of all ecosystems, the researchers say, as food for other creatures, pollinators and recyclers of nutrients.' Articles of this type are now a weekly, if not daily, occurrence and play a significant role in societal awareness of the 'life cycle' we depend on and its seemingly inevitable demise.

However, Gifford isn't just asking us to recognise the 'creative-destructive cycle' in nature, but to look at the implications of recognising it. Here he is asking the reader (and author) to shoulder some of the responsibility, an acknowledgement, for the part they have played in that process. As an environmentalist, this makes his second point one of the most important, and a defining feature between the New Nature Writing that does responsibly report on nature, the environment and the human footprint, and that thread of literature within the genre that avoids, omits or glosses over it. In other words, the difference between the pastoral, and the post-pastoral.

There is some difference in whether 'death' as a concept explored by the New Nature authors is final and absolute or then followed with rebirth and another year turning (as

---

<sup>18</sup> Carrington, D. (2019) Plummeting insect numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature>. (Accessed 3.10.2020)

commonly referred to in the natural world). We see a trend for the latter in those novels that deal with a re-awakening or recovery after spending some time in nature (*Nature Cure* by Richard Mabey, *Wild* by Jay Griffiths), which does seem indicative of the pastoral ideals of returning and finding solace in nature as a wholly positive experience. However, we also see this idea of return and rebirth from a different angle in the environmentalist literature. George Monbiot's *Feral* deals directly with the idea of rewilding, returning a landscape to what it was before human agriculture. In his case it is not a romanticised natural scene, but a landscape in which we have restored significant parts of the countryside to pre-farming habitat that allows for greater abundance of wildlife, soil health and therefore profit, health and benefit for the human custodians.

Monbiot is however realistic about returning to a rewilded landscape and the (im)possibility of it being implemented in time to make a significant effect, but through evidence-based research and reviewing existing projects trying these regenerative agricultural techniques, he concludes it is worth trying: 'I pictured trees returning to the bare slopes, fish and whales returning to the bay. I thought of what my children and grandchildren might find here, and of how those who worked the land and sea might prosper if this wild vision were to be realised.'<sup>19</sup> His novel is certainly not pastoral in its view of landscape or nature, and instead reaffirms Gifford's second mode of viewing, that in acknowledging the life-death cycle in nature, and accepting the human impact on this cycle, perhaps we can move beyond it and make legislative changes and actions that positively effect it.

The third mode of reading Gifford puts forward for the post-pastoral appears to be at odds with his earlier suggestions. 3. *If our inner nature echoes outer nature, how can the outer help us understand the former?* The idea that an external idea of nature could, or should, be used to help us understand ourselves appears to be somewhat self-serving, anthropocentric and

---

<sup>19</sup> Monbiot, George. (2013) *Feral*. London: Penguin. pp268

instead surely begs the opposite question– In the face of climate change, instead of asking what nature can do for us, surely, we should ask what can we do to help nature?

It appears on closer examination however that instead of showing *how* nature could help us understand ourselves, Gifford is putting forth the notion that nature *does* already do this, and that by openly acknowledging this fact, it will also open our understanding of self. He uses various examples to illustrate this, including a study which found that ‘hospital patients need less medication and are released earlier if they are opposite a window facing a tree rather than a brick wall.’<sup>20</sup> Understanding ourselves as being intrinsically linked to nature, and not separate from it, is key to recognising its importance. If we have true understanding of this, it will require re-evaluation of our current destructive tendencies and will, on a personal and social level, help us to directly link the fate of the natural world with the fate of our own species.

There is a clear trend for novels that depict the dependence of the protagonist or author on nature in detail. Already mentioned are Helen Macdonald’s struggle with grief and depression in *H is for Hawk*, but Jay Griffiths’ *Wild* and Richard Mabey’s *Nature Cure* are specific examples of the narrator searching for concrete help or recovery (from depression in both cases) in nature. Jonathan Bate, reviewing *Nature Cure* in *The Guardian*, succinctly demonstrates how the narrative is interwoven:

‘Nature Cure is several books in one: an honest memoir of the experience of mental illness, a gentle but firm manifesto for a greener way of life, a compendium of delicate observation and curious nature lore.’<sup>21</sup>

But these examples aren’t alone; almost all of the New Nature Writing contains an awareness of the positive affect that nature has on the self. It has become commonplace to seek solace in green spaces, especially since the Coronavirus pandemic has limited our daily movements. Indeed, as of October 2018 doctors in Scotland are now trialling prescriptions for

---

<sup>20</sup> Gifford, T. (1999) *Pastoral*. London: Routledge. p156

<sup>21</sup> Bate, J. (2005). Falling In Love Again. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/feb/05/featuresreviews.guardianreview2>. (Accessed 8.7.2019)

nature<sup>22</sup>. This is perhaps not the place to argue for or against the healing properties of green nature; however, it does prompt us to note the quickly-changing and escalating pace of environmentalism and the broadening societal awareness. The New Nature Writing, subject to publishing timescales, may already be 'out of touch' by the time it reaches an audience. In light of the Greta Thunberg instigated world-wide school strikes in protest of a governmental lack of movement on climate change, and the Extinction Rebellion protests, we can clearly see there is a public demand for action that is growing in urgency. Indeed, it can be seen from the references in this essay alone that the daily changing legislation, awareness and debate require me to use newspaper articles rather than peer-reviewed journals as my sources.

This also translates to the post-pastoral: as a 20-year-old theory that has been little evolved, there are some points that now seem implicit, such is the awareness around nature and its accompanying literature, as with this third mode.

A case could be made to argue that the reason the New Nature Writing genre has gained in popularity so dramatically is partly down to readers wanting to find solace in nature in the troubling social and economic climate, even if that is through their bookshelf. Mark Cocker quotes Jim Perrin's criticism of the genre in his essay *Death of a Naturalist; Why is the 'New Nature Writing' so tame?* Saying 'Perrin argues that New Nature Writing is quintessentially an urban literature with a primarily metropolitan audience. He suggests that for both author and reader, engagement with nature is an act of remembrance rather than a daily, lived experience.'<sup>23</sup> It would be prudent to respond that if (in a 2014–2015 survey) 83%<sup>24</sup> of the British population are now living in urban areas, how else do we communicate the importance

---

22 Briggs, H. (2015) Can you Prescribe Nature? *The BBC*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-33368691>. (Accessed 4.7.2019)

23 Perrin J, cited in Cocker, M (2015). *Death of the Naturalist: Why is the "New Nature Writing" so tame?* *New Statesman*. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

24 Gov.uk. (2020) Rural Population 2014/15. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-population-and-migration/rural-population-201415> (Accessed 4.2.2021)

and significance for the natural world to a 'primarily metropolitan audience'? This further confirms the notion that there is a burden of responsibility on the New Nature Writing to carry the message of the environment and climate change to an audience who may not have had the ability or access to experience those drastic and important 'lived experience' changes in nature for themselves.

4. *If nature is culture, is culture nature?* In Britain the concept that nature is culture is one of long tradition. Not only are we internationally renowned for our 'green and pleasant land', but our topography itself is revered. It is as much a part of the British psyche as any other social stereotype, from the Scottish Highlands to the green, green valleys of Wales via the dales of Yorkshire and the fens of East Anglia. We are familiar with the landscapes not only as geographical locations but interwoven with the stories, people, flora and fauna that go with them. In this fourth mode, Gifford puts forward the suggestion that in harmony with the societal acceptance of nature as culture, culture may therefore be nature. He continues: (the post-pastoral must) 'Convey an awareness of both nature as culture and of culture as nature. To see culture as nature is to shift from Thoreau's 'I wish to say a word for nature' (culture representing the voiceless nature), to Aldo Leopold's 'Thinking like a mountain' (culture emphasising nature), to Gary Snyder's *No Nature* (all culture is nature).'<sup>25</sup>

Here he is referencing Snyder's vision that everything has come from nature and as such must be seen as equal. He proposes that the processes of making a satellite are much the same as those of a bird making a nest. The notable distinction however is between those 'creations of human culture which bring us closer to nature...and those human creations which might separate us from nature forever such as nuclear warheads...'<sup>26</sup> This point links back to Gifford's previous mode of creative- destructive processes and those which are naturally occurring and those which are manmade and unnatural.

---

<sup>25</sup> Gifford, T. (1999) *Pastoral*. London: Routledge.p161-2

<sup>26</sup> Gifford, T. (1999) *Pastoral*. London: Routledge.p162



To represent the environment then it could be said that nature writing must move on from the idea of visiting nature, beyond inhabiting, to recognising that all human creations are also 'nature'. On one hand this 'holistic' approach echoes the earlier modes, and links back to Harman's 'OOO' theory, but the idea is still directly anthropocentric. As such the important distinction to conservation here is in acknowledging that human creations can and have forced us to separate from green nature. And that to truly do justice to the subject, the writer must acknowledge that all things come from, and return to, nature.

This mode acts as a separation point of sorts. Where the majority of New Nature Writers fall down is in their consideration of nature as an object or setting to be discovered or visited from a human point of view, rather than a pre-existing reality. If we were to view nature as all things then its imminent demise would be less able to be compartmentalised and ignored. Instead, we could find acceptance for what has come to pass, and subsequently discover new viewpoints that move beyond what we have and have previously had, towards what could be.

This then is clearly linked to Gifford's fifth mode of viewing literature:

*5. How can consciousness, through conscience, help us heal our alienation from our home?*

Gifford's use of 'home' here is a clear nod to his sympathetic environmentalist point of view, but it also acknowledges and cements this idea that we (as a species) have strayed far and need to return. This is a key pastoral trait, and one that is very idealistic. We cannot 'return' to what our 'home' once was- and this is where the post pastoral takes us beyond this simple ideal- instead we have to reach that place of 'home' by moving forward, being conscious of what has been done and choosing to consciously progress in a different way.

The age of his theory begins to reveal itself here, where once it would have been radical it now appears obvious. Naturally as the climate emergency has worsened, general consciousness about natural world and our relationship with it has become not only more mainstream but more active. In February 2019, the Extinction Rebellion<sup>27</sup> movement grew

---

27 Busby, M and Taylor, M. (2019) Extinction Rebellion activists arrested outside oil conference. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/27/extinction-rebellion-activists-arrested-outside-london-oil-conference>. (Accessed 4.10.2019)

world-wide with local and national communities demonstrating regularly on a previously unforeseen scale. Similarly, the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg's<sup>28</sup> UN address and continued school strikes for climate change have not only reached global audiences but inspired hundreds of thousands of school children to do the same. The weight of responsibility and a search for solutions seems to be coming from the younger generations, and it is to them that we, as writers, owe a debt of honesty as they become more and more ecologically conscious.

The question then is not *how* can consciousness help, for it is already helping (in May 2019 Wales and Scotland declared 'Climate Emergencies' with the then leader of the Labour party Jeremy Corbyn calling for England to join them<sup>29</sup>), but *where* are these radical ideas being expanded and illuminated in this accompanying literature? There are some strong examples towards positive action- Johnathan Lewis-Stempel's *The Running Hare* and *The Wild Life* detail a year lived entirely on home grown or foraged food and an experiment in organic biodiverse farming to encourage the return of native species as well as turn a profit. Mark Cocker released *Our Place – can we save Britain's wildlife before it is too late?* Which deals directly with issues of farming and biodiversity. He says 'The British love wildlife, and they appear to love it more than others. Yet in the last half-century we have failed it and we are still losing it day after day. How can this have happened? And why?'<sup>30</sup> Interestingly while the subject of these books directly engages with political issues, the style and idolisation of the natural world is prominent. Lewis-Stempel is particularly nostalgic in his prose: 'The miniscule black poppy seeds fall to earth like stone, but the cornflower seeds, those miniature shaving brushes for gentlemen, kite away. The rest do middling. Around and around I wander, as happy as a sunbeam, throwing seeds to the

---

28 Watts, J. (2019) Greta Thunberg, Schoolgirl Climate Change Warrior 'Some People Can Let Things Go, I can't'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/greta-thunberg-schoolgirl-climate-change-warrior-some-people-can-let-things-go-i-cant>. (Accessed 2.10.2019)

29 Walker, P. (2019) MPs endorse Corbyn's call to declare climate emergency. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/01/declare-formal-climate-emergency-before-its-too-late-corbyn-warns> (accessed 11.10.2019)

30 Preston, A. (2018) Our Place review – damning indictment of Britons' ecological complacency. *The Guardian*. (Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/17/our-place-review-mark-cocker-blistering-attack-britain-conservation-failures> (Accessed 29.2.2021)

wind.’<sup>31</sup> While regenerative agriculture is absolutely crucial to the future of farming, and an area in which I’ve grown up and continue to work within, the idea that the farmer can prance across fields sowing wildflowers (and when the seeds don’t take simply ‘reorder online’ as Lewis–Stempel does) is incredibly idealistic. To the ‘urban audience’ of Jim Perrin’s distinction, this might seem something all farmers could afford to do, when the reality is inherently more expensive (in an industry of abysmal margins) and complex.

As of 2020 Macfarlane has released *Underland*, a book he described in conversation with Andreas Rotzer as ‘significantly more political’ than his previous novels. It does seem like he is bowing to pressure, however, after enjoying an almost 20–year career as one of the most celebrated British nature writers, to have now come to the conclusion that he has some responsibility towards the subject of his fame and wealth seems a little lacking. Others are no less culpable. The sheer volume of novels in the genre which do not engage with or mention the environmental crisis and those which actively put forward a positive ecological view of British nature, are in direct contention with Gifford’s call to action.

Lastly, and significantly, the 6<sup>th</sup> mode, *Is the exploitation of our planet aligned with our exploitation of human minorities*, is the mode that seems concerned the most with events that have led up to our current environmental predicament, and seeks to find a cause to explain the distance the popular literature has with its subject.

Gifford goes on to explain ‘...concern for the exploitation of people (in terms of gender, class and race) must accompany concern for the environment (in terms of species, element and atmosphere) and vice versa.’<sup>32</sup> Here he is again emphasising the holistic, cyclical and humble view of nature and is foreshadowing of Morton’s theories of equality in *Being Ecological* to come. He goes on to reference notable ecofeminist critics of the day, but it may well be worth coming back to Kathleen Jamie’s criticism of the New Nature Writers.

---

<sup>31</sup> Lewis–Stempel, J. (2016) *The Running Hare*. London: Penguin. pp101

<sup>32</sup> Gifford, T. (1999) *Pastoral*. London: Routledge. p166

'When a bright, healthy and highly educated young man jumps on the sleeper train and heads this way, with the declared intention of seeking 'wild places', my first reaction is to groan. It brings out in me a horrible mix of class, gender and ethnic tension. What's that coming over the hill? A white, middle-class Englishman! A Lone Enraptured Male! From Cambridge! Here to boldly go, 'discovering', then quelling our harsh and lovely and sometimes difficult land with his civilised lyrical words.'<sup>33</sup>

Jamie's criticisms are multiple, firstly in the highly educated and fortunate window in which the author (Macfarlane in this case), sees a landscape that is already inhabited, already has a people farming, working, living within it, that he is not able to address or understand from their crucial and valued point of view. She raises the point that the majority of the nature writers are just that- highly educated, white men. Macfarlane, Deakin, Monbiot, Mabey, Lewis-Stempel, Cocker, Paul Farley, Rob Cowen, Simon Ingram: the list goes on. Of course, while there is nothing inherently bad about this observation it is shocking, and perhaps telling, in its lack of diversity, considering Britain is an incredibly diverse nation. It should also be noted that there are some excellent female writers whose work is also included in the New Nature Writing canon, Jamie herself at the forefront, but the numbers are in no way comparable to the sheer quantity of male writers.

Perhaps most interestingly, Jamie brings to the forefront the easily-forgotten detail of class that divides the country and no less so when it comes to engaging with nature and nature writing. She is reminding us that working rural Britain is often limited in its ability to access good education, or higher education at all, and has less access to higher earning jobs.<sup>34</sup> The very landscape which attracts these writers is home to many millions who are not fortunate enough to have been given the opportunities the authors have, and yet an awareness of their position

---

33 Jamie, K. (2008) A Lone Enraptured Male. *London Review Of Books*. Vol30(5). Available at: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n05/kathleen-jamie/a-lone-enraptured-male> . (Accessed 2.1.2019)

34 Gov.uk. (2013) Rural Skills Assessment. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/83059/Skills-Jan2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/83059/Skills-Jan2013.pdf) (Accessed 5.6.2019)

does not play out in their narratives. Indeed, it takes working-class writers such as James Rebanks in *The Shepherd's Life* to really take the reader on an inside journey of landscape and livelihood. In his first-hand account of his life as an upland farmer in the Lake District, Rebanks has what no other nature writer has grasped in the same way: personal history. 'We are a tiny part of an ancient farming system and way of life that somehow has survived in these mountains because of their historic poverty, relative isolation, and because it was protected from change by the early conservation movement.'<sup>35</sup>

His own decades of knowledge, compounded by that of his fathers and grandfathers, give a weight and understanding to his observations sorely lacking from most of the narratives of the New Nature Writing. Throughout his story, he is constantly educating the reader, explaining the history and repercussions of each decision made in the landscape he works and lives. And it is because of his endeavours that there is a clear understanding of the myriad arguments that are lain at the feet of farmers, and from both sides. This then, is a narrative that educates as well as entertains, which shows a deep respect and love for the natural world but not idolised one, and allows the reader the space and information to draw their own conclusions.

In this same way, my own work relies heavily on personal experience and history; of working a landscape with regenerative agricultural ideals, but also with the constraints of affluence, access and education. The landscapes within *And I Miss You Like The Dead* are informed by this knowledge and it shows in the technical understanding of colloquial flora and fauna, the weight of history and responsibility, and in the desperate search for a path to go forward in these times of great change.

The exclusion in the main of rural, female, black, Asian and minority ethnic voices and the promotion of the well-educated, white male voices has almost certainly influenced and changed the narrative with which the many readers of the genre are familiar. There is no scientific way to prove that the omission of other narratives has caused certain harm to the natural world, but it is certainly presumable that with their inclusion there would be much

---

<sup>35</sup> Rebanks, J. (2015) *The Shepherd's Life- A Tale of the Lake District*. London: Penguin. p11

more chance of a rounder, more balanced, more nuanced and comprehensive view. There is also the valuable addition of how nature is seen and represented in varying faiths, experiences and cultural histories that can only expand our understanding of nature and the environment as a whole.

The theory of the post-pastoral that Gifford puts forward clearly offers us a framework to distinguish between the pastoral phase of nature writing and what is now to come. There are areas that are outdated in the current fast-changing climate of environmental science and literature, and modes which do not go far enough to differentiate the positive and negative aspects of the pastoral vs the post-pastoral. He is clear however that the pastoral tradition should not be wholly seen as negative and this is where the blurring of intent seems to weaken his argument.

As a literary canon the pastoral tradition, which the New Nature Writing in the main is clearly a part of, has served a purpose to engage, illustrate and at times cause debate about, rural landscapes, for hundreds of years. And while that tradition is not to be undervalued in its contributions to art and culture, its time of significance has now ended. With the clear history of omittance and ignorance leading up to the current environmental crisis, there is no place for a literature of nature that does not serve the natural world actively, purposefully, and most importantly truthfully and with responsibility. Moving forward, I believe distilling the modes of viewing Gifford puts forward as post-pastoral could leave us with a set of questions to ask of ourselves as writers in the genre. As a continuation of his work, I believe several of the initial modes of viewing can now in the modern day, with the increased societal awareness and pressure, be combined to provide an appropriate framework for the nature writer to fully understand the weight and responsibility of adding to this canon.

Firstly, does this work come from a place of absolute humility and acceptance that the human is no greater than, but equal to, all natural objects? Thereby eliminating exploitation of human minorities and the natural world and promoting an understanding of the privileges inherent to the author.

Secondly, does this work acknowledge the interdependence of humanity and the natural world and seek to improve, educate and positively note the effect of nature on humans? Does it understand that the creative–destructive cycles in nature are inherently different to some of the creative–destructive actions of humanity?

Thirdly, does this work elevate consciousness of the environmental cause, with an understanding of where the literary canon has come from, and where it now needs to move towards if the natural environment as a whole (and significantly not just the human species) is to be accurately represented in literature as something beyond man’s idea of an idyll, and subsequently, saved?

It is my hope that if the next generations of New Nature Writers, particularly non–fiction writers, can answer the above questions positively, or significantly engage with them in their texts, the post–pastoral then may offer us a genre of literature that has more intellectual weight than the current New Nature Writing and will positively affect ecological education, action and even legislation.

While there will always be an argument to write for literature’s own sake; for enjoyment, for a career, for recognition, when writing about a subject that is on the brink of disaster there has to be a moral responsibility asked of the author. We expect no less from authors on an array of other subjects– on history, race or religion and writing about nature must be no different. In this modern age, to write from a pastoral place is to ignore the cause, and subsequent effect, of that very writing, to do real harm to the subject, and to disrespect the thousands of scientists, activists and environmentalists fighting to save our natural world.

Section Two:

To what extent have environmental novels, most notably key texts concerning Rewilding, affected legislation, heightened public knowledge and encouraged action?

*'An ecologically focused criticism is a worthy enterprise primarily because it directs our attention to matters about which we need to be thinking. Consciousness raising is its most important task. For how can we solve environmental problems unless we start thinking about them?'*<sup>36</sup>

(Glotfelty 1996)

In her introduction *Literary Studies in the Age of Environmental Crisis*, Cheryll Glotfelty demonstrates the important link between literary criticism and the environmental crisis. She goes on to discuss how ecocriticism itself will evolve naturally to be 'interdisciplinary, multicultural and international' simply because those academics who are drawn to ecocriticism are inevitably faced with a great call to action, to do something positive in the face of environmental collapse.

---

<sup>36</sup> Glotfelty, C & Fromm, H. (1996) *The Ecocriticism Reader – Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press. xxvi



In the fifteen years since its publication *The Ecocriticism Reader* has become a near sacred text among ecocritics, one of the founding anthologies of a burgeoning movement in academia. But while ecocriticism has grown, what Glotfelty couldn't have foreseen (but clearly had some foresight of) was the rapidly worsening state of climate change and the lack of response from governmental bodies worldwide. The question then, during this interim when ecocriticism and the academics that practice it have flourished, is whether words are enough. What has ecocriticism done for the environment, and are there popular novels that have achieved more than the critics? Is it even possible to measure the social awareness and change these texts might have sparked?

This section will examine several conservation projects in action across Wales that concern themselves with the idea of rewilding (directly and indirectly) and asks whether the popular literature has had any effect on the directors of the scheme or the public that are engaging with them. Again, I am primarily focusing on British authors and the British conservation movement. This is partly due to this being the canon to which my own work is most applicable, and partly due to having first-hand knowledge and experience with conservation movements in Wales. As the co-owner of an organic farm, I have been a member of various conservation schemes for the last twenty years. The changing emphasis of each scheme, be it on woodland, hedgerows, habitat growth or rewilding, is obviously determined by many factors, but one is clearly public awareness and the pressure that has created to see programs advancing that are carrying out a specific action.

Increasingly we see different pressures on policy change, from NGO's conducting their own reports they then feed into government, to activists on the street championing the causes that alarm or affect them the most. In the age of social media where immediate coverage or 'live streaming' is king, often it seems that those who shout the loudest cause the most change. However how the effect of that pressure, those loud voices, are turned into legislation and action varies drastically depending on the conservation teams delivering them. Matt Sutton, formerly the Senior Conservation Officer with the Countryside Council for Wales in

Pembrokeshire, has had numerous experiences working with different government bodies and teams and makes the point that each individual in the chain has their own set of principles, and their own set of policies, that they want to see implemented.<sup>37</sup> Walking the tightrope between a private landowner's specification, public pressure and governmental policy is quite the balancing act.

An excellent example of public consciousness turning the tide on legislation, is that of the effect of single-use plastic and problems with recycling (or the lack of it), the awareness of which is at an all-time high. The public were shocked into action in large part by the last series of the popular BBC Documentary *Blue Planet* which aired in late 2017. David Attenborough's clear plea for change was seen by 14.1 million British viewers when it aired<sup>38</sup> and kickstarted a nationwide plastic-free movement, the effects of which are still being implemented.

In Wales, a landscape fringed by beaches and coastline on three sides, some notable campaigns sparked by the plastics movement have been put in to place by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS). Their 'Beach Clean' programmes engage communities to band together and clean up their tidal spaces on a regular basis, and they recently launched their 'Summit to Sea' project which aims to do a similar thing in urban areas, hoping to stop the plastic pollution at source before it makes its way to the coast. In their Summer 2019 Journal 'Pipeline' SAS saw an increase of 22% more volunteers and an 11% increase in cleans which equated to '71,737.92kg of marine plastic pollution being removed from our coastline.'<sup>39</sup> They attribute this to 'the Attenborough effect'<sup>40</sup>.

Interestingly not everyone sees the focus on single-use plastics as entirely advantageous: one of the regional SAS reps for Pembrokeshire, Jetske Germing clarified 'While it

---

<sup>37</sup> Sutton, M. In conversation, Oct 2019

<sup>38</sup> Ruddick, G. (2017). Blue Planet II is year's most watched British TV show. *The Guardian*(online). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/06/blue-planet-ii-years-most-watched-tv-show-david-attenborough>. (Accessed 7.4.2019)

<sup>39</sup> SAS.org.uk. (2019) *Pipeline*. *The Journal of Surfers Against Sewage*. Issue 109. pp28. Available at: <https://www.sas.org.uk/publication/pipeline-109-summer-2019/> (Accessed 9.11.2019)

<sup>40</sup> SAS.org.uk. (2019) *Pipeline*. *The Journal of Surfers Against Sewage*. Issue 109. pp28. Available at: <https://www.sas.org.uk/publication/pipeline-109-summer-2019/> (Accessed 9.11.2019)

makes absolute sense to take this opportunity to address the problem with marine plastics, the enforced spotlight on it means that other areas that we deal with at SAS are getting less attention. Polluting run-off from intensive agriculture being just one example which the public aren't as interested in and therefore SAS can't access as much funding or allocate the same effort towards it.'<sup>41</sup>

An example of marine conservation without as much public awareness is in full effect just along the coastline in Dale, the westernmost tip of Pembrokeshire. Here a small community is opposing the implementation of a seagrass bed proposed in conjunction with the University of Swansea, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum, The World Wildlife Fund and Sky Ocean Rescue. The project aims to restore 20,000 square meters of underwater 'forest', seagrass can trap up to half a tonne of carbon dioxide per hectare per year once established, which is up to 35 times faster than the equivalent tropical rainforest<sup>42</sup>. The opposition is in part due to the 'low-key' nature of the conservation project- it will be almost invisible; seagrass isn't grabbing many headlines so public knowledge of its capabilities is low and this has quite an effect on educating the local people to feel pride and a part of something progressive.

With large scale and well marketed campaigns making such a difference to public engagement, the question then is surely whether popular ecologically inspired literature can contribute a similar awareness, as Attenborough and his cohort have had, and encourage action. The issue with ecocriticism as a political movement, is that while it examines and highlights the importance of the natural world in vast quantities of texts, it is constantly looking backwards at already published literature. In order to effect change, ecocriticism must also look forward to what can, or should, be published, and what those manuscripts could achieve. It still exists in the literary tradition and while it may well showcase many good examples of interdisciplinary studies, the study of literature is not always a call to activism.

---

<sup>41</sup> Germing, J. In conversation. November 2019

<sup>42</sup> Pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk, (2019) One million seeds to be planted in UK's biggest seagrass restoration scheme. Available at: <https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/uk-seagrass-restoration-scheme/>. (Accessed 1.2.2021)

When the celebrated ecocritic Richard Kerridge published his novel *Cold Blood* (2014) it appeared no more political than any other novel in the New Nature Writing genre. However it was strongly underpinned with a clear message of conservation for the critically endangered amphibians he is so enchanted by. In an interview about his involvement setting up ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment) in the journal *Ecozona*, Kerridge goes some way to explaining why the divide between literature and activism exists. 'One of the things that concerned us...from the beginning was the split between the arts and sciences, a very strong feature in British education. Environmental crisis brings this split to our attention in very troubling ways; climate change especially does so. A threat like that, identifiable only by specialist scientists, demands of non-experts a special scrupulous exactness about the limits of our knowledge. We have to confess our own reliance on debates on which we cannot intervene, yet not allow our uncertainty to become vacillation or passivity.'<sup>43</sup>

It is clear here that there must be a separation between literature that concerns but does not serve the environment, and that which does. The 'passivity' that Kerridge is commenting on is highly detrimental to the continued separation of science and literature. Jos Smith scrutinizes this separation in the New Nature Writing genre: 'The title of 'The New Nature Writing' simply does not begin to describe the way its authors are concerned with how this cluster of islands and ecological niches is related in complex ways to human communities of the local, regional and even national and global ways of life that are lived out across and within them.'<sup>44</sup>

Here Smith is commenting on the lack of clarity and complexity to the phrase 'New Nature Writing' while referring to how the language used often falls short of talking about the natural world (he is referencing a fight between the locals and big business to keep a section of

---

<sup>43</sup> Perez Ramos, I. An interview with Richard Kerridge. *Ecozona*, (2012), Vol.3(2), pp.135-144. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2012.3.2.477>, (Accessed 3.4.2018)

<sup>44</sup> Smith, J. An archipelagic literature: re-framing 'The New Nature Writing'. *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, (2013) Vol. 17(1), p5-15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2012.750840>. (Accessed 1.4.2018)

the isle of Lewis free from development). One challenge of literature that is written about the environment is that ecocriticism can be highly academic and impersonal whereas, as I've referenced earlier in the first question, New Nature Writing can be overly personal, placing more importance on the pastoral vision of humans in landscape, on characters and story, and misrepresenting the delicate environmental ecosystems that are in urgent danger. And of course, the New Nature Writing is vastly more popular and reaches a much wider audience than most ecocriticism.

If a new type of writing were to emerge, one that links the narrative, story-telling, style of New Nature Writing and goes beyond the theories of ecocriticism that are somewhat limited by their very nature as 'academic' in their action, what then would we call it? Perhaps environmental literature.

There are already numerous texts which could sit within these boundaries; for example, Tony Jupiter's *What Nature Does for Britain (2015)*– a passionate plea for the public to reconsider and re-evaluate what resources are at hand in the natural environment. Mark Cocker's *Our Place–Can We Save Britain's Wildlife Before it's Too Late? (2019)* would surely also make an entry, Chris Packham's *Fingers in The Sparkle Jar (2016)* and perhaps most significantly because of their popularity, the two non-fiction texts primarily concerned with the topic of rewilding: Isabella Tree's *Wilding (2018)* and the acclaimed political journalist George Monbiot's *Feral (2009)*.

Both texts are becoming canonical in the nature writing genre, they are popularising theories that were once thought of as extreme but are now considered mainstream conservation techniques. Re-establishing wildflower meadows, land management without pesticides or fertilisers or without breaking up the sward by ploughing, hedge and field boundary restoration– these are all now commonplace– but importantly rewilding establishes this with as much of a 'hands-off approach' as possible which helps to monitor and encourage diversity, and demonstrates just how quickly nature recovers herself when man steps back.

However my inclusion and focus on these two texts is also personal– they directly speak to my own conservation theories, what we have seen work directly on our land, but perhaps most importantly, they are distinct in that they lay out a plan for a future with hope and practicality which emboldens and reassures the individual into action, rather than causing overwhelming alarm and laying responsibility firmly at a governmental, not personal, level (as many other environmentally critical texts do).

There is a point to be made here about the form of the text: it is different from eco-criticism in that it is not purely academic or factual and different from the New Nature Writing, which can be fictional and not underpinned by science. Environmental literature then, such as *Feral*, is narrative– it tells a personal story at the same time as carrying a political message, but because it is entirely non-fiction, and most importantly meticulously enforced by scientific research, it carries with it the rigour and reliability of reportage. This blurring of boundaries between the, often disarmingly scientific, discussion of conservation and relatable personal journey is crucial to public understanding and access. By making the text narrative rather than critical it is emotive, layered, personal and it has potential for a much wider readership and audience.

The term ‘rewilding’ is attributed to the North American environmentalist Dave Foreman in the early nineties, with the first large scale rewilding project being that of the grey wolf reintroduction to Yellowstone National park in 1995 after a seventy-year hiatus. The initial theory behind rewilding is that the disappearance of apex predators, or any keystone species (mainly from unsustainable hunting) from many ecosystems, has a ‘trophic cascade’<sup>45</sup> effect on the wildlife and flora. This has been expanded and distilled in the years following into three main theories of Rewilding: Pleistocene– attempting to restore the patterns of megafauna lost in the late Pleistocene extinctions: trophic– introducing or reintroducing keystone species to

---

45 Pettorelli, N. Durant, S. M. and du Toit, J. T. (2019) Rewilding: a captivating, controversial, twenty-first-century concept to address ecological degradation in a changing world,’ in *Rewilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Ecological Reviews), pp. 1–11. Doi:10.1017/0781108560962.001.

rebalance unstable populations; and passive– taking human input entirely out of the picture and letting nature choose the way it rewilds itself. <sup>46</sup>

In Yellowstone once the wolves were hunted to extinction in the 1920s the Elk population flourished and became unsustainable, as a result grasslands and young saplings were overgrazed, affecting the natural growth of the forests and meadowlands. Without scrubby shade at the edges of riverbanks certain types of fish struggled for a safe pool to spawn and were soon overexposed and over–hunted by birds. With the reintroduction of the wolves in Yellowstone new trophic systems are still emerging and the established ones are recovering at speed.

Understandably there are numerous challenges to these ideas, and Yellowstone is an exception rather than a rule for several reasons. Primarily it is on a very large scale– 2,219,791 protected acres of land (about half the size of Wales) that can sustain entire species without infringing unduly on human civilization. In Britain this is one of the key arguments against rewilding projects, that the population of humans is too dense, and too widely spread, to carve out space for apex predators to roam safely. The vast majority of our countryside is land that is used for livestock or arable farming which understandably benefits from a sense of safety, but with farms unable to survive without subsidies, and the heavy toll on wildlife, soil and the environment that comes from conventional pesticide and herbicide– centered farming, there is also understandable backlash against those concerns.

In 2019 *Rewilding Britain*, the charity concerned with the rewilding movement, released a report on the direct links between rewilding, climate breakdown and regeneration. In the report it clearly outlines just how important the concept is to the future of conservation. They quote a study from a team of climate change experts published in the journal PNAS in 2017 that detail 20 ‘natural climate solutions’. Importantly these solutions work to restore, repair or

---

46 Pettorelli, N. Durant, S. M. and du Toit, J. T. (2019) Rewilding: a captivating, controversial, twenty–first–century concept to address ecological degradation in a changing world,’ in *Rewilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Ecological Reviews), pp. 1–11. Doi:10.1017/0781108560962.001.

reintroduce ecosystems that work on multiple levels, for biodiversity, air quality, carbon sequestration, the production or capture of clean water and to rebuild healthy, fertile soils.<sup>47</sup> Natural climate solutions, such as rewilding, are in direct opposition to some of the more radical carbon reduction proposals, Bio-Energy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) for example looks to grow biomass on a gigantic scale to burn for electricity ‘capturing carbon dioxide from the exhaust gases and burying this liquified stream of waste gas underground in rock formations.

According to scientific analysis, deployment of BECCS on even a moderate scale could take up over a billion hectares (three times the land area of India) of the world’s most productive agricultural land, or imply the removal of over half the world’s natural forests.’<sup>48 49</sup>

With these terrifying possibilities on the table natural climate solutions, such as rewilding, offer a much more desirable and diverse pathway to rebuilding environments and capturing and storing carbon that works *with* nature and ultimately benefits many ecosystems, including human life. How then do we highlight its importance to a wider audience?

In 2009 Monbiot published *Feral– searching for enchantment on the frontiers of rewilding*. As a well-known public figure, journalist and author, his journey into modern conservation, climate change and nature writing, reached a large audience. His book, indeed all his books, are purposefully extreme in their political stance and what they expose– in *Feral* he

---

<sup>47</sup> Griscom, B., Adams, J., Ellis, P., Houghton, R., Lomax, G., Miteva, D., Schlesinger, W., Shoch, D., Siikamäki, J., Smith, P., Woodbury, P., Zganjar, C., Blackman, A., Campari, J., Conant, R., Delgado, C., Elias, P., Gopalakrishna, T., Hamsik, M., Herrero, M., Kiesecker, J., Landis, E., Laestadius, L., Leavitt, S., Minnemeyer, S., Polasky, S., Potapov, P., Putz, F., Sanderman, J., Silvius, M., Wollenberg, E. and Fargione, J., (2017). Natural climate solutions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(44), pp.11645–11650. Available at: <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645> (Accessed 12.4.2020)

<sup>48</sup> Boysen, L. Lucht, Wolfgang, G. Gerten, D. Heck, V. Lenton, T and Schellnhuber, H. (2017) The limits to global-warming mitigation by terrestrial carbon removal, *Earths Future-AGU*, (Online) Volume 5 (5) p463–474. Available at: <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/2016EF000469> (Accessed 20.6.2020)

<sup>49</sup> Rewildingbritain.org.uk, (2018), *Rewilding And Climate Breakdown*, Available at: <https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/support-rewilding/our-campaigns-and-issues/rewilding-vs-climate-breakdown> (Accessed 29.2.2021)



notoriously proposes reintroducing wolves into the British ecosystem to re-establish a natural trophic cascade. Inevitably this caused outrage from some of the farming community and fear from others, but all the time that it was capturing headlines it was developing the argument against shifting baseline syndrome and introducing the public via the tabloids and his book, to the idea of Rewilding.

Shifting Baseline Syndrome is an important factor when considering conservation. It refers to the 'baseline' of each changing generation. For example, the frequency with which one hears birdsong when they are a child may decline as we age, but that doesn't mean the birdsong was at its peak frequency when we were children, although that tends to be how it is measured, in human generational terms. It is part of the 'within living memory' phenomenon of the environmental crisis- we may even need to look as far back as beyond human existence to establish a realistic baseline that is not in constant decline.

Measuring the public impact of his novel is difficult, apart from personal anecdotes about the increased debate on his work and its subject in literary and conservation circles, and use of the term itself- 'rewilding' is now a commonly used and understood phrase -it is difficult to quantify its popularity. However, in *Rewilding: a captivating, controversial, twenty-first-century concept to address ecological degradation in a changing world (2019)* ecologists Nathalie Pettorelli, Sarah M. Durant and Johan T. Du Toit attempt to determine the popularity of rewilding in ecological papers. They put together a graph plotting ecological articles listed in Web of Science that mention 'rewilding' or 're-wilding' over the 1999-2017 period<sup>50</sup>. There is a clear jump in 2009 which seems to speak of an increase perhaps due to *Feral*. It is moderate. However in the years afterwards there is a large increase with the highest sum of papers in the last year of plotting. We can draw some tentative conclusions then that the scientific interest is

---

<sup>50</sup> Griscom, B., Adams, J., Ellis, P., Houghton, R., Lomax, G., Miteva, D., Schlesinger, W., Shoch, D., Siikamäki, J., Smith, P., Woodbury, P., Zganjar, C., Blackman, A., Campari, J., Conant, R., Delgado, C., Elias, P., Gopalakrishna, T., Hamsik, M., Herrero, M., Kiesecker, J., Landis, E., Laestadius, L., Leavitt, S., Minnemeyer, S., Polasky, S., Potapov, P., Putz, F., Sanderman, J., Silvius, M., Wollenberg, E. and Fargione, J., (2017). Natural climate solutions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(44), pp.11645-11650. Available at: <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645> (Accessed 12.4.2020)

still growing, helped part of the way perhaps by Monbiot's contribution, but while these statistics are encouraging, they are focused on primarily scientific articles, accessed by academics and ecologists. They are in some ways already preaching to the choir, and the articles themselves are not easily accessible to, or shared by, the general public.

How then can we measure not just the success but the effect of the book and others like it? In modern terms this might equate to social media mentions or followers, to public appearances and interviews (of which there are many) but such assessment is speculation at best. Google 'trends' are by no means scientific, but they do give us an indication of the popularity of a search term over time. The term 'Rewilding' shows its peak usage was in 2010–11 after *Feral* was published, although it also shows steady but marked growth between 2015–19<sup>51</sup> indicating its popularity is still growing. The general public are still 'talking' about it.

Ten years on from *Feral*, another non-fiction novel about rewilding has also been capturing headlines. *Wilding: the return of nature to a British farm (2018)* by Isabella Tree is the detailed result of a twenty-year long British rewilding project on the Knepp estate in West Sussex. From intensive livestock and arable farming, the 3,500-acre site is now home to some of the rarest birds, insects and mammals still inhabiting, or migrating to, Britain. Alongside its obvious publishing successes, Tree can be seen on various television and radio programmes from *Countryfile* to the *New Scientist*<sup>52</sup>, she was a guest speaker at Hay festival this year and at various other book fairs. The Knepp 'Wildlife' Safaris are repeatedly sold out and the rediscovery of various rare species at Knepp are being documented as miraculous. *Wilding* was longlisted for the Wainwright Golden Beer Book prize for non-fiction, it won the 2019 Richard Jeffries Prize for non-fiction and it was chosen by the Smithsonian as one of its top 10 science books of 2018. Clearly, its impact has been widely felt. And while it isn't as extreme in its

---

51 Google.com (2004) *Trends*. Available at:

<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=rewilding> (Accessed 29.1.2021)

52 Knepp.co.uk, (2006) *Articles about Knepp*. Available at: <https://knepp.co.uk/articles-about-us> (Accessed 4.8.2019)

practical application of rewilding as Monbiot put forward, it has clearly benefitted from the public understanding of the term from his text.

The Knepp Wildland Project now has the backing of Natural England, the government's advisory body for the environment, although it took several years before they had enough funding to complete the project. Professor Sir John Lawton, author of the 2010 *Making Space for Nature* report has said: 'Knepp Estate is one of the most exciting wildlife conservation projects in the UK, and indeed in Europe. If we can bring back nature at this scale and pace just 16 miles from Gatwick airport, we can do it anywhere. I've seen it. It's truly wonderful, and it fills me with hope.'

*Wilding* then is clearly making waves in the public arena as well as at governmental level and this, alongside the activism supporting environmental campaigns shown by the *School Strikes for Climate* and *Extinction Rebellion* have led to rewilding becoming a part of the zeitgeist.

These movements in popular culture are reflected in conservation projects that are also looking at 'rewilding' or restoring lost ecosystems. One that has garnered a lot of attention within Wales is the Cwm Ivy project on the Gower Peninsula. In 2014 the National Trust was looking at how they could increase biodiversity on their site that was heavily farmed, traditionally grazed land that bordered the sea. Since the medieval times a sea wall had kept the saltwater away from the grassland, and although it increased grazing land for local farmers the knock-on effect on wildlife and invertebrates was huge. The sea wall had been showing signs of distress from rising sea levels for some time and in August of that year storms broke through the wall, flooding the land again and beginning the process of returning the area to its original salt marsh. Heading the project alongside Natural Resources Wales is National Trust regional manager Alan Kearsley-Evans, who had the difficult task of managing public expectations and their awareness of a 'hands-off' approach to conservation.

'It's incredibly difficult managing perceptions of what 'biodiverse' looks like. Even after the first few months when it was still just mud it was much more diverse than it had been.'<sup>53</sup> As of 2017 the Cwm Ivy site is now one of the rarest sites of pristine saltmarsh in Wales, the sheer biomass of invertebrates is huge, and alongside many other exciting species, lapwings and ospreys all now visit and breed at Cwm Ivy. But for the first season following the collapse of the wall most of the land underwent drastic changes where the grazing land was flooded and returned to mudflats, a rather unsightly process to some.

The success of the project on paper has been significant but losing access to part of the coastal path, and visitors to the area faced with mudflats instead of green fields, has meant that Kearsley–Evans has had a hard job convincing the public of its importance. Even five years after the publication of *Feral* the local community seemed to be actively against rewilding the site.

Having witnessed the trouble Kearsley–Evans has had facing the backlash, it has even meant some other rewilding conservation projects have been delayed. 'Environmental Literature speaks already to the well informed, to the policy makers, but I'm not sure *Wilding* or *Feral* has had any mass effect on the public.' Instead, he thinks the important work being done is by Chris Packham and his cohort, being on BBC Spring Watch, a primetime television programme watched by children and parents alike, and Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris' beautifully illustrated picture book *The Lost Words*, a copy of which is being installed into every library and primary school in the UK. These more mainstream access points are important because they are crossing the boundaries into the lives of people who perhaps were not previously concerned with nature conservation. 'If we're trying to get people outside through literature then we have to engage at a basic level.' This must also be in part why Tree chose to publish a children's book based on rewilding and the story of *Wilding*. Aimed at young children *When We Went Wild* (2021) discusses not only the story of going back to nature in a simplistic way, but talks about the effect on animals, the choice not to use chemicals and the adversity faced from their neighbours, in a gentle and approachable way. Here the focus is on the big

---

<sup>53</sup> Evans, K. In Conversation. August 2017.

picture, the long game, and the next generations to come who will understand that a beautiful green landscape doesn't always support the diversity and density of life that an unattractive muddy one can.

This however doesn't mean that *Wilding* or *Feral*, or indeed any of those texts previously categorized as 'environmental literature', only have a limited reach. It is works like these that inform the policy makers, they spark debate, grab headlines and the trickle-down effect is that the primetime television shows like *Countryfile* and *Springwatch* feature segments on rewilding, accessing millions of viewers that may never have picked up the texts themselves. Examples of this drip-feeding is clearly evident in the plethora of articles now available on how to 'rewild' yourself<sup>54</sup>, to the 2019 Glastonbury festival where over a main entrance a banner spanning the width of the gate read 'REWILD' in neon<sup>55</sup>. Rewilding is fully installed in the zeitgeist.

Literature affecting culture in this way is not a new concept. Consider how Gonzo and New Journalism popularized recreational drug use and the 'American dream' that is represented across film, literature, art and countless other mediums. Or perhaps more fitting for our purposes the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and his writing on nature that was a key influence for both John Muir and Henry David Thoreau: '...nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design. Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?'<sup>56</sup>

This great inspiration for these two men, the former going on to found National Parks in America, the latter considered a primary voice among modern nature writers, have shaped our perceptions of, and our actions within, the natural world for over a hundred years. Those millions of visitors to Yosemite and Yellowstone each year may not have heard of Muir or Emerson, but they help to fund some of the largest protected areas of environment in the world.

---

<sup>54</sup> Boyle, M. (2018) My advice after a year without tech. *The Guardian*, (online). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/19/a-year-without-tech-debt-gadgets-reconnect-nature> (Accessed 5.7.2019)

<sup>55</sup> Allcock, A. (2019) *Rewild*. Available at: <https://cdn.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/4-Glastofest19-AndrewAllcock-190626-6697.jpg> (Accessed 21.1.21)

<sup>56</sup> Emerson, R. W. (1849). *Nature*. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm> (Accessed 21.1.21)

Much as the visitors to Cwm Ivy will probably never know the work of Tree or of Kearsley-Evans, their engagement and subsequent education about habitat and biodiversity, and the conversations or actions that may spark, cannot be underestimated.

It should also be noted here that the concept of rewilding is still spreading, still seeping into popular culture. Much like the greenwashing adverts of the eighties and nineties where large companies used 'green credentials' to sell their products<sup>57</sup> post the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth activism that highlighted climate change of the same time, we are beginning to see the concept of rewilding being distilled into a saleable asset. Just a quick internet search will bring up multiple self-help videos on *Youtube*: 'Rewild Your Feet' (a new way of running), 'Rewild Your Body' (a fitness technique), 'Rewild Your Space' and 'Rewild University' to 'aid and inspire you on your personal rewilding journey'<sup>58</sup>. More than these specific instances, wild nature in general is becoming more frequent in branding and advertising, and has real selling power for these companies; 'For the specific case of green advertising claims promoting environmentally friendly products, there is evidence that positive feelings induced by exposure to pleasant nature advertising imagery lead to positive effects on attitude toward the ad and brand'<sup>59</sup>.

Linking these societal changes to a single root cause is a near impossible task, but I have demonstrated that these chain events are happening, and that they are accessible and recognisable to all levels of society, not only to those involved in conservation or literature, but to children learning about conservation or native species at school. And by appearing on television, newspaper, radio and billboards the concept of rewilding is becoming familiar, understood, supported and unfortunately at times, sold as a commodity. When we are faced with such a pressing environmental crisis, finding support for a radical and hopeful theory such

---

<sup>57</sup> Bowen, F. (2014). Introduction in *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society* (Organisations and the Natural Environment, pp.1-14). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>58</sup> Youtube, (2012). *ReWild University*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ReWildUniversity>. (Accessed 30.01.2021)

<sup>59</sup> Hartmann, P., Apaolaza, V. and Eisend, M. (2016) 'Nature Imagery in Non-Green Advertising: The Effects of Emotion, Autobiographical Memory, and Consumer's Green Traits', *Journal of Advertising*, 45(4).

as rewilding needs many layers of influence, and combined they may well become a powerful source for good.

### Section Three:

How does the concept of liminality relate to the New Nature Writing and what can it do to help us move forward in a time of ecological collapse?

*'Four thousand winters passed, for thousand solstices. Then a party of Vikings...broke into the tomb to take refuge from a storm...The Vikings went away...but Maes Howe was again half-forgotten, a fairy place, a strange mound on a heath...and now at solstice we come, as no one has done for 5000 years, to witness a little beam of sunlight creeping through the darkness onto a stone wall.'*<sup>60</sup>

In the passage above, Kathleen Jamie visits the ancient burial chamber at Maes Howe at the winter solstice to watch the ancient place align and hold the shortest beams of daylight on its walls as the sun sets. It is a moving passage, and it brilliantly places Jamie in many different spaces at once: she is the writer outside of the story regaling its history and also reliving it; she is at the turning point between two seasons; and she is somewhere between the ancient and modern, spanning the breach. She is changed by her being there and by her retelling of the story, and so is the reader. It is a perfect example then, of one of the many ways in which liminality plays such a strong role in nature writing.

---

<sup>60</sup> Jamie, K. (2005), *Findings*. London: Sort of Books. p15

In the following work I will examine several key texts in the Nature Writing genre where liminality plays an important role in the story, landscape and theme. These texts are fundamental to my thesis and were influential in the accompanying creative work *And I Miss You Like The Dead*. It is clear that the concept of liminality is profoundly linked to personal identity within these texts, but also bridges the gap between the human story and the landscape it unfolds within. Secondly, I will also examine the role of the liminal as a physical space in landscape, and its repercussions on conservation, again reinforcing the importance of the link between nature writing and the future prosperity of our green spaces. Thirdly, I will look at how the concept of the liminal may offer us some answers to, or a mode to see through, the social and political climate we are now facing. In this last exploration I link these broad concepts with my own specific experience and how they are affecting my work.

The term 'liminal' has become widely used in the last decade, and indeed has been growing in popularity since Arnold Van Gennep's distinction in *Les Rites de Passage* was published in 1909. Initially concerned with the myriad social rites of passage that have developed in various societies and civilisations, his work was then expanded upon extensively by Victor Turner who studied the rites of passage in African tribes. His work *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti Structure* (1969) is considered a seminal text on the subject of liminality. While Van Gennep kept his definitions broad, Turner further expanded upon this, so that in current academia these theories have become universalised, and apply to many different areas of social research. Liminality crosses disciplines from Bjorn Thomassen's work in anthropology to Timothy Morton's in philosophy, and is now a common term in architecture and spatial theory.

Van Gennep specifically wrote about the three stages of a rite of passage: 'I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world preliminal rites, those executed during the



transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world postliminal rites.’<sup>61</sup>

In entering into a rite of passage one must first; lose who they were before in order to be changed, secondly; step into this unknown in between who they were and not yet who they will become, and thirdly; progress through the ritual to be changed.

Be it a physical threshold, such as that of an entrance to a home or building, or an emotional threshold, such as the change between child to adult, these rites of passage are sown into the tapestry of our society. This could be in the form of religious celebrations, like a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, cultural ceremonies such as graduations or baby showers, or personal acts such as taking the decision to join a group with an initiation. In this essay however, we are concerned with the second stage of his ritual distinction, the in-between, neither outside or inside the house, not a child but not yet an adult; this is the place where the change lies, or the liminal space.

Naturally the place where a transition or change occurs presents the opportunity to link these turning points together, a spiritual or emotional transformation and the physical location they occur in. Perhaps they are interchangeable. If one undergoes a transformation in a place, that place will also forever be changed by the experience for that person, even if just by association in their mind. Similarly, in a place where many reside in a liminal space, where rituals are prevalent, such as a religious building, a hospital or even a school, the emotional charge of the place can be felt by many who enter it.

This is similar to what occurs when we revisit a landscape we have previously occupied. The land itself sometimes appears to be ‘holding on’ to memories from the last time we visited it, that we may not have recollected otherwise. The particular feel of the stones of a brook under our feet, the smell of the water, remind us strongly of what we experienced or even thought about the last time we were here. Though not our focus here, it’s worth noting this linking of

---

<sup>61</sup> Van Gennep, A. (1960) *Rites of Passage (translated)* Oxfordshire: Routledge. p.21 Available online at VLE Books: Accessed on 11.11.20.

memory and place is a major trope in the work of the Romantics. Wordsworth in particular references previous explorations, and thoughts that come back to him when revisiting certain places. This is the case, for example, with the river Wye in *Tintern Abbey*:

'...With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts...'<sup>62</sup>

Similar techniques are used by modern nature writers; Jean Sprackland talks about this eloquently in the opening of her book *Strands*, in which she explains her relationship with the stretch of coastline that is her subject. 'It has become, as places can, an inner as well as an outer landscape, one I carry around in my head and explore in my imagination even when I'm far from home. It's been the setting for dreams, and it has seeped into my poems...as soon as I sit down to write, this place is there, waiting.'<sup>63</sup>

This idea of a landscape or place being the catalyst or chrysalis for change, is something we see in many modern books concerned with how nature can 'fix' or 'heal' a person. Prime examples would include *The Outrun*, where Amy Liptrot returns home to Orkney to recover from addiction with the help of the wild, and Helen Macdonald's *H is for Hawk* where her return to falconry, and the landscape this involves, helps her come to terms with the loss of her father. Similarly, in almost all of Roger Deakin's writing there is an emphasis on the sense of restoration the natural world and swimming give to his mental health. By experiencing these places alone, these people are changed, not just because of the physical attributes of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Wordsworth, W. (1798) *Tintern Abbey*. Available at: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/poems/tintern\\_abbey.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/poems/tintern_abbey.shtml). Accessed 1.3.2021

<sup>63</sup> Sprackland, J. (2013) *Strands*, London: Jonathan Cape, pp xi

landscape, but because of the mindset of change, of movement, of growth and retrospection that the natural world can promote inside the individual.

Perhaps it is also something else, something primal that pulls us to the edges, pushes boundaries, something akin to what has made us explorers and discoverers; here in these edge lands are some of the last wildnesses, the last unknowns. And like Van Gennep specified, we are changed by being in these spaces of in between. On a large scale, such liminal places could be a mountain range, forged between two tectonic plates that are still moving, millimetre by millimetre, or islands that have broken from the mainland but remain close to the coast and not quite alone at sea either. On a small scale, that is the land at the edge of a developing town, the strips of green between the train tracks and the roads above where weeds flourish. Perhaps it is an abandoned place, where nature is reclaiming slowly what it was once forced out of.

A well-documented example of this is in the abandoned suburbs of modern Detroit; the photos of vines dismantling houses and trees and grasses encroaching on yards and dumpsites, roots breaking up tarmac, are common images of both something that was and something that is becoming. They represent the post-recession recovery and reclaiming of what was once an urban landscape. Of this strange and changing landscape documentarian Bill McGraw notes, 'A new two-story pile of dirt on the west side is just starting to turn green. Older ones are resplendent with Queen Anne's Lace, thistle, goldenrod, grass, and weeds. The oldest are sprouting cottonwoods, silver maples, and other trees.'<sup>64</sup> <sup>65</sup> The images of Detroit that artist Scott Hocking has taken are what Bill McGraw is commenting on here, and they are both haunting and hopeful as a new vision for his city comes to the fore.

These liminal spaces, and their significance, are of huge importance to both literature and the environment. While nature often flourishes in these places, artists and writers are also

---

<sup>64</sup> McGraw, B. (2014) In Bankrupt Detroit, Nature Reclaims Debris Mounds on Vacant Land. *National Geographic*. Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/9/1409010-detroit-mounds-debris-dumping-vacant-lots/>. (Accessed on 11.10.2020)

<sup>65</sup> Hocking, S. (2007-present) *Detroit Wildlife*. (Photography.) Available at: <http://scotthocking.com/wildlife.html>. (Accessed 11.10.2020)

drawn to the transient nature of these places that have great value and appeal. Writers have long been known to exist in two places at once, in the physical world and in the story, and perhaps this self-identification with place is what they are responding to. Or perhaps it is the changeable nature of these places that make them ripe for metaphor, a perfect setting for transformation. Of course, these physical in-between spaces also encourage or provoke us to consider the thresholds that we are most commonly aware of. The line between being and unbeing, birth and death, and delivering us to the brink of choice, going down one road or another, choosing good or evil.

There are few novels in the area of New Nature Writing that explore the idea of liminality as thoroughly as Sprackland does in *Strands*, and she does so without question as to its legitimacy. It is a space she occupies often and easily. *Strands* charts her yearly walking along the estuarial beaches between Blackpool and Liverpool, close to her home, and the seasonal and personal changes this landscape is witness to. At various points her work is scientific in its discovery of what the tideline or the water turns up, and at others revelatory as the quickly changing sands unveil buried shipwrecks and once, a car. And while her subject is often extraordinary, it is its ordinariness of many days spent walking the beach in repeat which gives the reader a sense of familiarity and approachability even in an unfamiliar landscape, and in that way is very resonant.

Joe Moran's explanation of why nature writers are often drawn to the beach in *The Guardian* clearly demonstrates the liminal at work.

'The resurgent interest in 'wildness' among contemporary nature writers, such as Deakin, Robert Macfarlane and Kathleen Jamie, has often gravitated towards the beach. This is partly because many of our beaches, on the Jurassic coast of Devon and Dorset or the great shingle peninsulas in the south-east, are such strange, otherworldly places. But it's also because the beach is a point of accommodation between humans and nature.'<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Moran, J (2008). We Do Like to Be Beside. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/19/1>. (Accessed on 5.9.2020)

Of course, the idea of 'wildness' is also one which exists in a liminal space, a wildness we have lost that we are trying to regain, or a new discovery of a wild place that becomes tamed by our discovering it. Although Moran's example is of the Jurassic coast, these observations of beaches, be they shingle or sand, is fairly universal. Beaches, and proximity to the sea, are indeed otherworldly, not simply because they often present so clearly the dangers of a nature larger than ourselves, but because they are so storied and fabled that our own experience with them overlaps with their existence in culture. How many of us see a boat offshore and do not think of Captain Hook, of Treasure Island, of Moby Dick or Swallows and Amazons? To those of us with a melancholy leaning who has not looked at the pebbles at a beaches edge and thought of filling our pockets like Virginia Woolf, quietly disappearing into the cool water.

This is particularly the case in Wales, surrounded as it is on three sides by water, with several large peninsulas and countless tiny islands home only to the birds; our beaches and waterways are full of our own history and folklore, from the giants walking across the sea from Ireland in the Mabinogion, to the battles fought for our castles (often situated near large expanses of water). Our own experiences then, are inextricably linked with the history and stories of these places, the layers of which often create a feeling of being outside reality.

Since the UK is an island nation, one could argue that the first experience many Britons have with wild nature in their childhoods is that of a large expanse of water, be it on the traditional seaside holiday or the lakes or reservoirs found in popular tourist destinations. Coming face to face with a huge expanse of water that is uncontrollable and at times dangerous is often scarred into our minds as something enthralling, something that has changed us. The quickly moving and dissolving sand, the tide as it makes its way up and down the shore revealing in one moment and dissolving in the next, and the flotsam and jetsam of objects from unknown places, often dazzlingly foreign, all contribute to build the ritual of beach going, and beach-combing, in a place that is not always there. The coastline itself, a fragmented edge on a map, is also not quite tangible, something we can't get to grips with and tame, and which always remains a place of otherness. Perhaps some of its character comes from our lack of ability to

fully see everything that is at work and to bend it to our human will: creatures existing in layers beneath the sand; air bubbles marking the breathing and hunting tubes of molluscs that appear and disappear as we notice them; the sea full of tiny invisible creatures which sustain huge ecosystems and yet remain beyond our sight, untouchable and remote.

In *Sightlines* Kathleen Jamie recalls her desire to escape to the sea, to the Isle of St Kilda, to recover some sense of herself again while bringing up her young children. '...What was the closest place one could go that was remote? Where an adventure could unfold—just enough to keep one's wits sharp?'<sup>67</sup> There is something so moving, and also familiar, in this passage about looking for oneself at 'the edge of the world' as the skipper who sails her puts it, the juxtaposition of the safe place at home where she has become invisible and the wildness restoring her to herself. Isn't that why we go to these places and cross these thresholds? We seek to learn something new about ourselves, or to uncover what was forgotten.

Water is also the main subject in Roger Deakin's *Waterlog*, and that transition between worlds as the swimmer immerses themselves. He writes, 'Swimming is a rite of passage, a crossing of boundaries: the line of the shore, the bank of the river, the edge of the pool, the surface itself. When you enter the water, something like metamorphosis happens.'<sup>68</sup> Deakin finds these liminal spaces reminiscent of many rituals in human life. He likens water to amniotic fluid, at once life giving and yet able to take the life it sustains too, in that immediate reversal of a safe space turning fatal. Swimming is memorable and joyful but also frightening when out of one's depth. It welcomes us into a new world, but we cannot quite cross the boundary fully, we can't quite belong to its depths forever. Deakin favours wild stretches of water, canals, lakes, rivers and the sea but also manages to explain the appeal of a swimming pool and how it too, although tamed, is a space of in-between. 'There is too an affinity between pools and lawns. Both are simulations of nature, with one essential ingredient—wildness—carefully filtered out. They resemble life, but they are not alive.'<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Jamie, K. (2012), *Sightlines*. London: Sort of Books. pp131

<sup>68</sup> Deakin, R. (1999) *Waterlog*, London: Chatto & Windus pp3

<sup>69</sup> Deakin, R. (1999) *Waterlog*, London: Chatto & Windus pp307

The way he describes looking down through, and experiencing water is a perfect example of how the liminal space is crucial to Deakin's work. he is constantly moving through landscape and yet remains not quite in one world and not quite in the other. And by remaining in a state of flux, he is able to discuss topics of both places, of land or water, of physical events or emotional reactions, of dreams or reality, and weave them together in the narrative.

Many of the themes, motifs and techniques discussed above are relevant to my own creative work. In *And I Miss You Like The Dead* these liminal spaces along the coast are where the primary relationship progresses, and where ultimately the flaws and cracks in it first become noticeable. As non-fiction, initially it appeared coincidental that these places became metaphors for the relationship, but perhaps it was that places so adept with changing encourage that in their inhabitants also. It is certainly where I began to notice, at times almost imperceptibly, the differences in our relationship each time we revisited the same sites.

The couple's storyline is set mainly on the Pembrokeshire peninsular, and as such the access to beaches, to tide lines and cliffs is immediate and frequent. This link to the outdoors, absolutely crucial to both the characters in their relationship, is why the chapters are laid out with specific geographical place names rather than in chronological order. In Chapter 14, *Pen y Cwm*, for example, the characters revisit the place four times throughout their relationship in the one chapter. Each 'time-skip' is delineated by a page break, and each section shows a progression, a change in their thinking and actions. This was particularly challenging to make effective: it is difficult to portray the importance and weight in a relationship from the inside without being graphic and overt, something I wanted to avoid, not only to maintain some subtlety and nuance but also to encourage a reader to build their own interpretations. The physical places hold so many memories and so much meaning, that choosing and accurately representing just a few of them was a challenging task. These spaces are not only liminal because of their geographical location; they are places that facilitated great transformation in this relationship and the characters, like the people they represent, were forever changed.

In the second storyline, that of the house renovations at Waunbwelch, I employed a similar device of using place to uncover experiences and memories. Although not near the coast, water still plays a strong part in the dank and decaying image of the buildings. I used it not only to illustrate the wildness of the house itself, but the constantly changing nature of the place, of what treasures the floods or rains turn up seeping through the flagstones. Existing in many liminal spaces at once, these buildings are filled with utility but are also in ruin, brimming with memories and also with current experience. They too seem to time-skip, becoming portals to the past stories of inhabitants, and at times, projections to the future. Ultimately in discovering and researching them the protagonist and the place are both changed irrevocably.

Writing a very personal history I became acutely aware that what may be interesting in my personal development might not make engaging reading for an audience. To help me in this endeavour I closely studied Edmund De Waal's *A Hare with Amber Eyes*, in which he rediscovers his family history through a series of Japanese netsuke. His skilled retelling of his family history through different societies and international events across Europe keeps the narrative very relevant, but more importantly, his discovering of these events through a personal lens makes his experiences more universal and relevant to the reader. On a much smaller scale, the objects and buildings at Waunbwelch are all used to tell parts of the story of my own history, and the immediate emotional responses they instil go some way towards making these experiences more universal.

In many ways the layout of the text itself is in response to the liminal themes of the subject, and non-linear nature of the narrative. I aimed to differentiate various places, times or voices using page breaks and headings. The excerpts in the manuscript that are dated are all separated from the main body of the text and set in italics to distinguish them as memories that cannot solely belong to the author. These are either memories collected from witnesses, stories told by family who have since died, or are partial recollections of my own, fortified with the memories of others. I was keen to write them in the third person to clearly distinguish their separateness and link them with fiction. Although as close in detail to what I had been told as is



possible, they, for the most part, were not my direct experiences– they belong to others, and so will never be ‘true’ to me as such. These sections are some of the most liminal in feeling, written from an outsider’s perspective, looking in at the effect they have on the protagonist.

The pathways I have traversed in *And I Miss You Like The Dead* between these worlds of past, present and future are also common themes in many of the works that belong to the genre of New Nature Writing, both physically and metaphorically. Understandably, in liminal terms, a pathway can mark a border, a journey, or present two (or more) possible directions, but in nature writing, pathways are also something shared by animal and human alike, and often mark the beginning of a journey away from civilisation and into a wilder nature. This is evident in the way Anna Pavord describes the beginning of one of her many walks in the time old English tradition: ‘At the top of all three of the hills, the land flattened out and wide grass paths, kept open by the endless nibbling of sheep, led forward to the smooth cone of the mountain that was with us all our time out there on the hills.’<sup>70</sup>

When discussing the natural world and physical places that are liminal, we are often talking about what is commonly known in conservation as wildlife corridors. The above example by Pavord is typical, but wildlife corridors often occur on a much smaller scale, made by much smaller animals than sheep, and referring not only to pathways but also importantly to stretches of habitat. These are sometimes forgotten places, strips of land without specific use, abandoned areas, marshy, wild or inhospitable land that isn’t easy for humans to access, or land that changes frequently and constantly like a beach or pebble bank. These places are of extreme conservational importance and often present space for interweaving habitats to thrive.

In environmental terms, paths and walkways through the country can mean certain areas are protected from development, thus creating these wildlife corridors and areas of undisturbed habitat. Hedgerows are often cited as crucial habitat for nesting birds and small mammals, themselves a border between fields and roadsides, both places of heavy traffic of different kinds. In *Edgelands* Paul Farley and Michael Symmonds Roberts liken desire line

---

<sup>70</sup> Pavord, A. (2016) *Landskipping*. London: Bloomsbury. p3

pathways across fields (made by humans or animals) to that of the dreaming tracks of the ancient Australian Aborigines: ‘...this slow erosion is how many of our roads began, navigating the easiest or best-disposed route between origin and destination on foot.’<sup>71</sup>

There is a point to be made here about how the act of walking itself brings with it the act of remembrance, and of rediscovery, adding another liminal dimension to the experience. When we walk these paths not only are we moving through a liminal part of the landscape, but also stepping back into a ritual completed perhaps many thousands of times before, adding our own experience, layer upon layer, footstep upon footstep, onto the landscape. This awareness of a connection to the history of place can be key to a liminal experience.

In *Sightlines* these marks upon the landscape linking us from present to past appear in a variety of ways; here Kathleen Jamie is discussing the discovery of a henge on a farm: ‘On the black and white photograph this henge had shown up as a thick dark circle, which the field wore like a tattoo...it’s true of human traces, too – the small, lost and intimate are also revealed.’<sup>72</sup> Her discovery and exploration of these places clearly links her current narrative of experience with a myriad of others, now lost to time. But by focussing on the place they existed in, she is able to transport the reader and herself into a place outside of time.

It is discoveries like the above that reawaken the way we look at landscape, especially farmland, which is often seen as static, and reminds us of the lives that have been lived previously. It’s an important thing to remember in conservation when linking the human experience to landscape and can connect a visitor to the idea of a varied historical past, especially in the face of shifting baseline syndrome, where we become attached to the idea that landscape should be restored to what we, or our parents, remember it as being. This remembered baseline is often not nearly ambitious enough in terms of conservation. Looking further back to an ancient history and connecting with the layers of ancestry in a landscape can

---

<sup>71</sup> Farley, P & Symmonds Roberts, M. (2011) *Edgelands*. London: Jonathan Cape. p24

<sup>72</sup> Jamie, K. (2012), *Sightlines*. London: Sort of Books p49

be crucial to protecting it in conservation terms, and returning it to a former glory of diversification, or finding a new purpose for it.

In *Sightlines* Jamie is excavating a Neolithic henge as a teenage volunteer, and her prose flits between the ancient and modern, demonstrating the liminal state of her mind during such an activity. Perhaps emphasised by her age, having left school but not yet quite adult, the blurring of worlds for her is distinct, powerful and familiar: 'In that ditch it was possible to tell where, one day four thousand years ago, one labourer had finished...when he climbed out he would have seen the same range of hills we did, the same long valleys...'.<sup>73</sup> The prose has added weight to it because of this liminal mindset; not only is the reader following in the footsteps of a teenager adrift on a dig site, but also discovering the ancient first hand, learning and growing as the character is.

This idea of learning from what has come before and using it to move forward is something currently very prevalent in modern farming. The regenerative agriculture movement has sprung up as a direct result of the climate emergency combined with a backlash against the 'old' subsidy-dependent model of traditional farming, which makes a limited profit using unsustainable techniques. Championing and explaining regenerative agriculture in the mainstream, James Rebanks recently released *English Pastoral*, which follows his inheritance of an upland hill farm in The Lake District that was struggling financially and ecologically. Within it he weaves his history as a boy learning how to farm traditionally from his grandfather, not just for profit, but hand in hand with the wildlife that found habitat on his land, and juxtaposes it with his father's (and his own) struggle to follow convention and modernise, bulldoze traditional small paddocks in favour of large open fields, and use artificial pesticides and fertilisers to increase yields.

Rebanks' form of 'Pastoral' does, in gentle ways, idolise his life in the Lake District, but instead of a glossy untruthfulness to his writing, he endeavours to be utterly transparent, and find beauty in the landscape anyway. His descriptions of the awful flooding of recent winters

---

<sup>73</sup> Jamie, K. (2012), *Sightlines*. London: Sort of Books p56

past aren't muted or made picturesque. Instead, he picks out the farmers' concern over losing their stock, the sense of community, and the responsibility of farming the uplands in a more sustainable way that these disasters highlight. It doesn't take away from the beauty of the landscape. His writing is saturated with natural similes and metaphors, and at times is often poetic, but underlying it all is a solid knowledge of the harshness of farming life, of the way the hand of man has sculpted the fields and swept away the biodiversity of the landscape.

As the narrative progresses his return to a more natural rhythm of farming, restoring hedges, copses and wetland areas, also restores his pride in farming, in doing things well. The themes he addresses not only connected to this specific landscape, but are part of a much larger liminal picture; they link into a wider worldview of a way of life we have left behind and a future we are still working towards changing. We have moved beyond the point of return and yet there is still time, while in this liminal space, to determine the future we choose and will ultimately leave behind for generations to come.

What Rebanks is witnessing first hand are options to solving what could be considered a state of permanent liminality. And while permanent liminality is something that can be applied to natural landscapes, it is also relevant to many man-made landscapes and their inhabitants. In simple terms these would be places in permanent transience: hospitals, airfields or hotels, and on a larger scale a permanent liminal space could be applied to warzones, to the borders of countries and to the thousands of people displaced and migrating across the globe, fleeing persecution and war, or as climate refugees whose homelands have become inhospitable due to freak weather patterns and global warming.

Arpad Szakolczai has expanded on the different states of permanent liminality in relation to large scale cultural and political movements, in the case below he is writing in reference to communism but the concept is clearly applicable to many different circumstances. 'Liminality becomes a permanent condition when any of its phases in this sequence (of separation, liminality and reaggregation) becomes frozen, as if a film stopped at a particular

frame'<sup>74</sup> If identity and landscape are inextricably linked, and even more so when that physical place itself is in a constant state of flux, as with war or the fall of a political regime, how then does one settle on an identity? How does one connect with a natural world that doesn't resonate with them?

Perhaps liminality offers us a unique way to view the predicaments that as a world-wide society we are currently facing, including these increases in displaced migrants and climate refugees, natural landscapes disappearing and ecosystems collapsing. This in-between time, in which damage has been done but has not yet destroyed all, may well be the moment to consider our choices, before we make permanent change and progress through into a different future.

In 2020 the worldwide pandemic created chaos, with consumerism failing to provide for the needs of the society, banks and businesses suffering drastic economic downturns and mass fear, misinformation and isolation. Public commentators clearly and repeatedly looked at this as the dissolving of an 'old' world to make way for new one. This new world could potentially be one where we ask how to occupy the earth in an ecologically diverse way, that provides support and meets the basic needs of a population, and doesn't leave the world in a worse situation for the following generations. These ideas are no longer seen as particularly far-fetched, as the much-celebrated article by Arundhati Roy in the *Financial Times* demonstrates: 'Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.'<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Szokolczai, A. cited in Hovath, A, Thomassen, B, Wydra, H (2015), *Breaking Boundaries*. Oxford: Berghahn Books. p54-55

<sup>75</sup> Roy, A. (2020) *The Pandemic is a Portal*. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>. Accessed 1.3.21

This cultural experience of liminality that we are currently living through can bring with it the belief or feeling that large-scale change is possible, and even change that is revolutionary. Expert on social liminality Bjorn Thomassen has said, 'We are evidently living through yet another epoch marked by the revolutionary appeal...Revolutions evidently present clear-cut instances within political history of liminal figurations: drastic moments in which previously existing structures crumble and collapse, where norms and hierarchies are turned upside down.'<sup>76</sup> The space that the liminal can create may then also offer us a way of finding solutions to the problems that have brought us into climate and societal chaos.

Directly related to this, in regards to climate change and the sharp decline in biodiversity a growing awareness of the impact and potential dangers has led us back to the idea of radical conservation, of active repopulation of wild plant and animal species, rewilding and small-scale, diverse farms with regenerative and organic principles. This liminal time is now. We may still have time to invest in these practices while we can, in the hope that when we move through to the next threshold our futures look brighter than they currently do.

On a personal level, my own experience as the owner of an organic farm in a progressive, liberal area of the country has shown a sharp increase in demand for transparency, locality and regenerative techniques. A prime example is the 'One Planet Development' (OPD) planning process pioneered by Pembrokeshire County Council. Begun in 2011, it now has more than 40 small holdings held to account for their ecological footprint in Wales. This means that 70% of their living costs and resources are required to come from their land with sustainability and accountability key anchors in the acceptance of their proposals<sup>77</sup>. Although on a modest scale, these small, progressive movements have massive impact, with the OPD community attracting more than 6000 people to its Facebook Page and a huge number to each 'open day' hosted by members.

---

<sup>76</sup> Thomassen, B. (2014) *Liminality and the Modern*. Oxfordshire: Ashgate publishing. p191

<sup>77</sup> Oneplanetcouncil.org.uk. (2010) Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities. Available online: <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/One-Planet-Development-TAN6.pdf>. (Accessed 5.9.2020)

Although this is a Welsh initiative, schemes similar to this, and other small-scale agriculturally based movements, are gaining in popularity throughout the globe. In *Who Really Feeds the World?* Environmental activist Vandana Shiva speculates that 70% of the world's food resources come from small scale farmers<sup>78</sup>, with 75% of the ecological destruction of soil coming from industrialised globalized agriculture.<sup>79</sup> Shiva argues that to decrease the destruction of soil, and to increase the sustainable processes to facilitate 100% of the world's food coming from small-scale agriculture, we must go through a *transitional stage*. Although Shiva doesn't expressly use the term, she is clearly talking about a liminal period.

Although Shiva argues there should be 9 steps of transition to fully achieve the above ideals, her main arguments are similarly based on the time it would take for humans to recognise certain truths about the food and agriculture business, come to terms with them and subsequently make changes for good. This could be seen as a liminal time, before we step through into a more ecologically evolved world. When discussing this transitory phase, she believes 'We stand at the watershed in terms of the interconnected future of food, people and planet.'<sup>80</sup>

In 2020 the Gaia Foundation, an organisation that works with indigenous peoples to enhance and protect their knowledge and regenerate healthy ecosystems, published *We Feed the World*. It documents the working lives of smallholders across the globe and took three years to compile, but within its covers the stories of small holders and rural agricultural communities shine with perseverance and hope. The experiences of these workers are littered with change, of new regenerative techniques and practices and could quite easily be used as proof for Shiva's theory of transition. 'They are part of a new movement of family farmers that are helping to shift...away from a dependency on cash crops like tobacco to find new agricultural economies that are healthier and regenerative for both people and the land.'<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Shiva, Vandana (2016) *Who Really Feeds the World?* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books. xix

<sup>79</sup> Shiva, Vandana (2016) *Who Really Feeds the World?* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books p126

<sup>80</sup> Shiva, Vandana (2016) *Who Really Feeds the World?* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books p125

<sup>81</sup> Various. (2020) *We Feed the World*. Dorset: Little Toller P224

It is deeply gratifying to feel that small works in the nature writing genre are channelling the mindset we need to move forward, but it is much more important that we see actions being taken that are influenced and inspired by these works, that will hopefully carry us through the 'portal' that this time of permanent liminality has brought.

The theory of liminality clearly encompasses the personal link with nature and the wild that is fundamentally prevalent in the New Nature Writing. It also encapsulates the movements in conservation that the literature depicts, highlighting the wildlife corridors, abandoned spaces and wild areas that are in sore need of protection and celebration. It allows us a channel to connect with what has come before and to learn from our personal and natural history. But most importantly, liminality may also present us with the opportunity to move from the brink of ecological collapse to a brighter, more biodiverse future.

In *And I Miss You Like The Dead* the echoes of liminal spaces, such as those discussed above, create corridors in time with which to revisit the people and places that came before, and allows the reader insight into who we are and why we are here. It offers the characters a sympathetic physical space to occupy when they are transitioning, as if the landscape around them understands their pain, and crucially it links the storylines, those of the people and of the place, with a way forward.



## Conclusion

This critical thesis has sought to find a balance between the literary aspirations and the practical applications. In researching environmentalist literature and action, I have come to find so many examples of authors, scientists, activists and philosophers, all fighting to demonstrate the same thing; a way forward.

I believe the knowledge and sense of responsibility this has given me has truly impacted not only my creative work, but my sense of self as an author. And while at times the weight of climate change and political indecision has felt a heavy burden, ultimately, I feel the thesis promotes a sense of hope and respect for the individual experience, as well as a thorough argument for the promotion of environmentalism in writing about nature.

*And I Miss You Like The Dead* is not as overtly political as it could have been, but it has clear and thorough understanding of the landscape it is set in, without pastoral ideals and without omittance. Its strongest trait is perhaps that of linking person and place and demonstrating that destruction of one also destroys the other.

In the first section of the critical thesis, I looked at Gifford's theory of the post pastoral in relation to the New Nature Writing. I examined how his modes of viewing move from the pastoral tradition and beyond, and expanded on his ideas to bring them into a modern academic setting, to distinguish between writing that is pastoral and not serving the environmental crisis, and post-pastoral literature that could go some way towards educating and encouraging readers into positive action.

In the second section I looked at environmental literature that is still within the New Nature Writing canon. Within the boundaries of Wales, I looked at the repercussions of this literature and how it has affected legislation and heightened public knowledge of conservation techniques. With specific emphasis on rewilding, I spoke to conservationists and mapped the footprint of this theory, with the hope of proving that environmental literature truly does have an impact on popular opinion. During this research I began to look at my own writing and really question its morality and purpose. It was from this point that I began including the sections that map my own progress on our organic farm, and the choices we make for its future, in the accompanying manuscript.

Lastly, I examined the impact of liminality in the New Nature Writing and further, into conservation and then as a political and societal movement that offers us answers and hope in the face of climate change and widespread fear. It was with this last question that I sought to find a positive path forward, not just in the literature that is documenting the state of our natural world, but also in action, with changes to our farming and consuming practices and the impact this could have if spread to the wider world. Crucially I looked at how small-scale, personal liminal experiences can link us to a wider liminal society, and how actions taken personally can have an effect on the wider world, as with Rebanks' experience in *English Pastoral*.

I hope the critical thesis fights for a positive way forward, not only as a work of academia but as a roadmap of where to find knowledge, support and positive encouragement when writing, and living in, challenging ecological times.

#### A note on form and brevity

*And I Miss You Like The Dead* is a short novel at 50,000 words, the precedent for which is now commonly seen in popular publishing. Novels such as Max Porter's *Grief is a Thing with Feathers* (2015), contemporary Welsh author Cynan Jones' *The Dig* (2014) and *Cove* (2016), and the

resurgence of interest in chapbooks is evidence of the changing nature of the publishing industry. Recently rural publishing house Little Toller went as far as to release an entire series of short nature novels and non-fiction from established and new authors in their 'monograph' series.

The style of prose within the text is also significant to the text's brevity; it is dense, sparse and seeks space to allow the reader to fill in the blanks. I chose to remove grammar from any dialogue so the text feels more fluid and dreamlike, the internal and external voices of the narrator mixing to demonstrate the liminal space they inhabit.

It should also be noted that several passages are strongly influenced by rhythm, occasionally by the features of the landscape in which they occur (for example waves, or the wind moving through the wheat) but often by a heart-beat or breathing pattern to detail the intimacy or weight of the situation of the protagonists. As such, grammar, commas in particular, are sometimes used in atypical ways to communicate this changing pace or the occasional internal rhyme. In this style I am more influenced by fiction writers, Porter's *Grief is a Thing with Feathers* (2015), Daisy Johnson's *Fen* (2017) and landscape poets Kathleen Jamie, Alice Oswald, Seamus Heaney and Jean Sprackland, than by contemporary nature writers who often aren't experimental with the format or style of their prose. The style I use requires something of the reader, and as such, the condensed length of the novel is perhaps not as noticeable in this format as a traditional fictional novel may be.

The style is my own, natural to me. Ultimately my aims are to do my own voice justice, but also to set this work within landscapes that have inspired poetry and rhythm for hundreds of years. At this point I am unsure still as to whether there would be any merit in writing the stories laid down in *And I Miss You Like The Dead* without this specific style. The sentence structure isn't common, but it is by no means unique. Daisy Johnson, for example, skilfully promotes a feeling of unease, of an inability to catch one's breath when using excessive commas to break up a sentence, almost into thought patterns or splinters.

In my own work the use of the comma splice is fairly prevalent, as I find it works beautifully for the type of cadence I try to achieve. A mix of jarring musicality that seeks to destabilise the reader, to set their nerves slightly on edge, to ask of them to read a passage again and search out its layered meanings. I believe it has the ability in places to make the work haunting and unclear, which serves the multiple narratives, heavy as they are with grief, fear and melancholy. In this way it suits my purpose and my voice. I feel strongly it is to the story that I have a duty of responsibility and this form and style serves my prose.

### Acknowledgments

This critical thesis and its accompanying creative work is due in no small part to the community from which I am from. I have no doubt that the generations of visionary and environmentally-minded people that I have been fortunate enough to live alongside and be raised by have impacted and influenced my research and self.

It is to them that I dedicate any credit, for their selflessness, bravery, hard work and willingness to live life a 'different' way. With my unending thanks.

## Bibliography

### Books

- Berry, W. (2018) *The World-Ending Fire*. London: Penguin.
- Buell, L. (2005) *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Crook, M. Forsyth, I. Harris, A. Keighren, I. Norcup, J & Tandy, A. (2020) *Landscapes of Detectorists*. Devon: Uniform books.
- Deakin, R. (1999) *Waterlog*, London: Chatto & Windus pp3
- Deakin, R. (1999) *Waterlog – A Swimmers Journey Through Britain*. London: Vintage.
- Deakin, R. (2008) *Notes from Walnut Tree Farm*. London: Penguin.
- Deakin, R. (2008) *Wildwood– A Journey Through Trees*. London: Penguin.
- Dee, T. (2018) *Landfill*. Dorset: Little Toller.
- Emerson, R. W. (1849). *Nature*. Available at:  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm> (Accessed 21.1.21)
- Evans, P. (2014) *Herbaceous*. Dorset: Little Toller.
- Evans, P. (2015) *Field Notes from The Edge*. London: Ebury
- Farley, P & Symmonds Roberts, M, (2011) *Edgelands*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Fermor, P. L. (1986) *Between the Woods and Water*. London: John Murray.
- Garrard, G. (2012) *Ecocriticism*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ghosh, A. (2016) *The Great Derangement*. London: Chicago Press.
- Gifford, T. (1999) *Pastoral*. London: Routledge.
- Gifford, T. (2014) *Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post Pastoral*. The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Environment, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glotfelty, C & Fromm, H. (1996) *The Ecocriticism Reader – Landmarks in Literary Ecology*.

Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Griffiths, J. (2006) *Wild*. London: Penguin.

Groom, N. (2013) *The Seasons– An Elegy for the Passing of the Year*. London: Atlantic Books.

Harrison, M. (2015) *At Hawthorn Time*. London: Bloomsbury.

Heaney, S. (1966) *Death of a Naturalist*. London: Faber & Faber.

Hoffman, J. (2019) *Irreplaceable– The Fight to Save Our Wild Places*. London: Penguin.

Holmes, R. (2013) 3rd Ed. *The Romantic Poets and Their Circle*. London: National Portrait Gallery.

Hughes, T. (1995) *A March Calf*. London: Faber & Faber.

Humphreys, E. (1989) *A Toy Epic*. Bridgend: Seren.

Jamie, K. (2005) *Findings*. London: Sort of Books.

Jamie, K. (2012) *Sightlines*. London: Sort of Books.

Jamie, K. (2012) *The Overhaul*. London: Picador

Johnson, D. (2016) *Fen*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Johnson, D. (2018) *Everything Under*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Jones, C. (2006) *The Long Dry*. Cardiff: Parthian.

Jones, C. (2014) *The Dig*. London: Granta.

Jones, C. (2016) *Cove*. London: Granta.

Jupiter, T. (2015) *What Nature Does for Britain*. London: Profile Books.

Lewis–Stempel, J. (2016) *The Running Hare*. London: Penguin.

Lewis–Stempel, J. (2019) *Still Water*. London: Penguin.

Liptrot, A. (2016) *The Outrun*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Mabey, R (1990) *Home Country*. London: Century.

Mabey, R, (2010) *Weeds*. London: Profile Books.

Mabey, R. (1973) *The Unofficial Countryside*. Dorset: Little Toller.

Mabey, R. (1980) *The Common Ground*. London: Hutchinson & co.

Mabey, R. (2007) 3rd Ed. *Food for Free*. London: Harper Collins

Macdonald, H. (2014) *H is for Hawk*. London: Penguin Random House.

Macfarlane, R. (2007) *The Wild Places*. London: Granta.

Macfarlane, R. (2012) *Holloway*. London: Faber&Faber.

Macfarlane, R. (2012) *The Old Ways*. London: Penguin.

Macfarlane, R. (2015) *Landmarks*. London: Penguin

Macfarlane, R. (2019) *Underland*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

McKusick, J, C. (2000) *Green Writing– Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

McKusick, J. (2010) *Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

- Monbiot, George. (2013) *Feral*. London: Penguin.
- Morton, T. (2018) *Being Ecological*. London: Penguin
- Munro, A. (2006) *The View from Castle Rock*. New York: Knopf.
- Oswald, A. (2009) *Weeds and Wild Flowers*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Pavord, A (2016) *Landskipping*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Perrin, J. (2012) *Snowdon*. Llandysul: Gomer.
- Porter, M. (2015) *Grief Is the Thing with Feathers*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Rebanks, J. (2015) *The Shepherd's Life– A Tale of the Lake District*. London: Penguin.
- Rebanks, J. (2020) *English Pastoral*. London: Allen Lane.
- Schama, S. (2004) *Landscape & Memory*. London: HarperCollins.
- Sebald, W. G. (2002) *The Rings of Saturn*. London: Vintage.
- Shepherd, N. (1977) *The Living Mountain*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- Shepherd, N. (1988) *The Weatherhouse*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books
- Shiva, V. (1999) *Staying Alive. Women, Ecology and Development*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Shiva, V. (2016) *Who Really Feeds the World?* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Siddal, S (2019) *Landscape and Literature– Contexts in Literature* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Smith, J, (2017) *The New Nature Writing: Rethinking the Literature of Place*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Solnit, R. (2006) *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- Sprackland, J. (2013) *Strands– A Year of Discoveries on the Beach*. London: Vintage
- Swift, G. (1985) *Waterland*. London: Macmillan
- Szokolczai, A, cited in Hovath, A. Thomassen, B. and Wydra, H. (2015), *Breaking Boundaries*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Thomassen, B. (2014) *Liminality and the Modern*. Oxfordshire: Ashgate publishing.
- Thoreau, H. D. (2010) *Walden*. New York: Pacific Publishing Studio.
- Various. (2020) *We Feed the World*. Dorset: Little Toller
- Various (2015) *The Map is not the Territory– Granta Magazine of New Writing*. London: Granta.
- Various (2015) *What Have We Done – Granta Magazine of New Writing*. London: Granta.
- Various. (2008) *Granta 102: The New Nature Writing*. London: Granta.
- Various. (2016) *No Man's Land– Granta Magazine of New Writing*. London: Granta.
- Williams, Raymond. (1973) *The Country and The City*. London: Chatto & Windus
- Wilson, E. (2016) *Half-Earth, Our Planet's Fight for Life*. New York: Liveright Publishing.

## Newspaper Articles:

- Bate, J. (2005). Falling in Love Again. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/feb/05/featuresreviews.guardianreview2>. (Accessed 8.7.2019)
- Boyle, M. (2018) My advice after a year without tech. *The Guardian*, (online). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/19/a-year-without-tech-debt-gadgets-reconnect-nature> (Accessed 5.7.2019)
- Briggs, H. (2015) Can you Prescribe Nature? *The BBC*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-33368691>. (Accessed 4.7.2019)
- Brown, A. (2018) Goodbye Herons, Hello Celebrity. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/dec/10/oxford-junior-dictionary>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)
- Busby, M and Taylor, M. (2019) Extinction Rebellion activists arrested outside oil conference. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/27/extinction-rebellion-activists-arrested-outside-london-oil-conference>. (Accessed 4.10.2019)
- Carrington, D. (2019) Plummeting insect numbers 'threaten collapse of nature'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature>. (Accessed 3.10.2020)
- Cocker, M. (2015) Death of the Naturalist: Why is the "New Nature Writing" so tame? *New Statesman*. Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)
- Jamie, K. (2008) A Lone Enraptured Male. *London Review of Books*. Vol30(5). Available at: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n05/kathleen-jamie/a-lone-enraptured-male> . (Accessed 2.1.2019)
- Mcgraw, B. (2014) In Bankrupt Detroit, Nature Reclaims Debris Mounds on Vacant Land. *National Geographic*. Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/9/1409010-detroit-mounds-debris-dumping-vacant-lots/>. (Accessed on 11.10.2020)
- Moran, J (2008). We Do Like to Be Beside. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/19/1>. (Accessed on 5.9.2020)



Perrin J, cited in Cocker, M (2015). Death of the Naturalist: Why is the “New Nature Writing” so tame? *New Statesman*. Available at:  
<https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

Preston, A. (2018) Our Place review – damning indictment of Britons’ ecological complacency. *The Guardian*. (Available at:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/17/our-place-review-mark-cocker-blistering-attack-britain-conservation-failures> (Accessed 29.2.2021)

Roy, A. (2020) *The Pandemic is a Portal*. Available at:  
<https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>. Accessed 1.3.21

Ruddick, G. (2017). Blue Planet II is year's most watched British TV show. *The Guardian*(online). Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/06/blue-planet-ii-years-most-watched-tv-show-david-attenborough>. (Accessed 7.4.2019)

Walker, P. (2019) MPs endorse Corbyn’s call to declare climate emergency. *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/01/declare-formal-climate-emergency-before-its-too-late-corbyn-warns> (accessed 11.10.2019)

Watts, J. (2019) Greta Thunberg, Schoolgirl Climate Change Warrior ‘Some People Can Let Things Go, I can’t’. *The Guardian*. Available at:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/greta-thunberg-schoolgirl-climate-change-warrior-some-people-can-let-things-go-i-cant>. (Accessed 2.10.2019)

Wullschlager, J. (2014). Lunch with the FT: Edmund de Waal. *Financial Times*. Available at:  
<https://www.ft.com/content/835ade90-b4f0-11e3-af92-00144feabdc0>. (Accessed on 5.8.2019)

## Journal Articles

Bowen, F. (2014). Introduction in *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society* (Organisations and the Natural Environment, pp.1–14). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boysen, L. Lucht, Wolfgang, G. Gerten, D. Heck, V. Lenton, T and Schellnhuber, H. (2017) The limits to global-warming mitigation by terrestrial carbon removal, *Earths Future-AGU*, (Online) Volume 5 (5) p463–474. Available at:

<https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/2016EF000469> (Accessed 20.6.2020)

Gifford, T. (2012) *Pastoral, Anti Pastoral and Post Pastoral as reading strategies*. Scott Slovic (ed.), *Critical Insights: Nature and Environment*, pp. 42–61, Ipswich: Salam Press.

Griscom, B. Adams, J., Ellis, P., Houghton, R., Lomax, G., Miteva, D., Schlesinger, W., Shoch, D., Siikamäki, J., Smith, P., Woodbury, P., Zganjar, C., Blackman, A., Campari, J., Conant, R., Delgado, C., Elias, P., Gopalakrishna, T., Hamsik, M., Herrero, M., Kiesecker, J., Landis, E., Laestadius, L., Leavitt, S., Minnemeyer, S., Polasky, S., Potapov, P., Putz, F., Sanderman, J., Silvius, M., Wollenberg, E. and Fargione, J., (2017). Natural climate solutions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(44), pp.11645–11650. Available at:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645> (Accessed 12.4.2020)

Hartmann, P. Apaolaza, V. and Eisend, M. (2016) 'Nature Imagery in Non-Green Advertising: The Effects of Emotion, Autobiographical Memory, and Consumer's Green Traits', *Journal of Advertising*, 45(4).

Smith, J. An archipelagic literature: re-framing 'The New Nature Writing'. *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, (2013) Vol. 17(1), p5–15. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2012.750840>. (Accessed 1.4.2018)

Perez Ramos, I. An interview with Richard Kerridge. *Ecozona*, (2012), Vol.3(2), pp.135–144. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2012.3.2.477>, (Accessed 3.4.2018)

Pettorelli, N. Durant, S. M. and du Toit, J. T. (2019) Rewilding: a captivating, controversial, twenty-first-century concept to address ecological degradation in a changing world,' in *Rewilding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Ecological Reviews), pp. 1–11.

Doi:10.1017/0781108560962.001.

Van Gennep, Arnold. (1977) *Rites of Passage (translated)* Oxfordshire: Routledge. p.21.

Accessed at <https://www.vlebooks.com/Vleweb/Product/Index/2011531?page=0>

(Accessed on 11.11.20.)

## Websites

Google.com (2004) *Trends*. Available at:

<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=rewilding> (Accessed 29.1.2021)

Gov.uk. (2013) Rural Skills Assessment. Available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/83059/Skills-Jan2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/83059/Skills-Jan2013.pdf) (Accessed 5.6.2019)

Gov.uk. (2020) Rural Population 2014/15. Available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-population-and-migration/rural-population-201415> (Accessed 4.2.2021)

Knepp.co.uk, (2006) *Articles about Knepp*. Available at: <https://knepp.co.uk/articles-about-us> (Accessed 4.8.2019)

Knepp.co.uk, (2006) *Background*. Available at: <https://knepp.co.uk/background> (Accessed 03.01.2020)

Oneplanetcouncil.org.uk. (2010) Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities. Available online: <http://www.oneplanetcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/One-Planet-Development-TAN6.pdf>. (Accessed 5.9.2020)

Pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk, (2019) One million seeds to be planted in UK's biggest seagrass restoration scheme. Available at:  
<https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/uk-seagrass-restoration-scheme/>. (Accessed 1.2.2021)

Pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk, (2019) One million seeds to be planted in UK's biggest seagrass restoration scheme. Available at:  
<https://www.pembrokeshirecoastalforum.org.uk/uk-seagrass-restoration-scheme/>. (Accessed 1.2.2021)

Perrin, J. (2010) The Condry Lecture. Available:  
[http://www.thecondrylecture.co.uk/\\_/pdf/Condry-Lecture-2010.pdf](http://www.thecondrylecture.co.uk/_/pdf/Condry-Lecture-2010.pdf) (Accessed 4.6.2018)

Rewildingbritain.org.uk, (2018), *Rewilding And Climate Breakdown*, Available at:  
<https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/support-rewilding/our-campaigns-and-issues/rewilding-vs-climate-breakdown> (Accessed 29.2.2021)

RSPB.org.uk. (2014) Birds of Conservation Concern. Available at:  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/birds-and-wildlife/birds-of-conservation-concern-4--the-population-status-of-birds-in-the-united-kingdom-channel-islands-and-the-isle-of-man.pdf>. (Accessed 6.7.2019)

SAS.org.uk. (2019) *Pipeline. The Journal of Surfers Against Sewage*. Issue 109. pp28. Available at: <https://www.sas.org.uk/publication/pipeline-109-summer-2019/> (Accessed 9.11.2019)

Wordsworth, W. (1798) *Tintern Abbey*. Available at:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/poems/tintern\\_abbey.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/poems/tintern_abbey.shtml). Accessed 1.3.2021

Youtube.com, (2012). *ReWild University*. Available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ReWildUniversity>. (Accessed 30.01.2021)

#### Artwork/ Photography

Allcock, A. (2019) *Rewild*. Available at: <https://cdn.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/4-Glastofest19-AndrewAllcock-190626-6697.jpg> (Accessed 21.1.21)

Hocking, S. (2007–present) *Detroit Wildlife*. (Photography.) Available at:  
<http://scotthocking.com/wildlife.html>. (Accessed 11.10.2020)