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Sam Kemp

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THESIS: THE POETICS OF THE DÉRIVE AND DÉTOURNEMENT WITH  
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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

*LUT LUT LUT*

**A COLLECTION OF POEMS ACCOMPANIED BY A CRITICAL THESIS:**

**THE POETICS OF THE DÉRIVE AND DÉTOURNEMENT WITH REFERENCE**

**TO THE SITUATIONISTS, SUSAN HOWE AND PETER RILEY**

By

**SAM KEMP**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

In partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Humanities and Performing Arts

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(or a fortuitous wrong direction).

### **Author's Declaration**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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# **Abstract**

**Samuel Marc Kemp**

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A collection of poems accompanied by a critical thesis:

the poetics of the *dérive* and *détournement* with reference

to the situationists, Susan Howe and Peter Riley

This project investigates the role of the artistic techniques of the *dérive* and *détournement* in the work of contemporary poets Susan Howe and Peter Riley, exploring the ways in which these poets adapt, develop and draw inspiration from Situationist avant-garde practices of the mid to late twentieth century.

The study consists of two chapters, preceded and followed by an introduction and conclusion. My introduction introduces the key features of the Situationist theory of psychogeography, a radical walking technique aimed at undermining the spectacle of urban commercialism in 1950s Paris, and demonstrates how the frameworks of the *dérive* and *détournement*, key psychogeographic practices, provide a fresh insight into Howe and Riley's poetics, an approach that is generally overlooked in contemporary radical poetry criticism. The first chapter focuses on the ways in which Peter Riley uses the Situationist *dérive* in order to negotiate the cultural landscape of the British

countryside, his collection *Alstonefield* (2003) forming a psychogeographic investigation into spaces of nostalgia, contradiction and pastoralism in British ruralism. This chapter will argue that Riley adapts the urban *dérive* for a contemporary rural landscape, exploring the radicalisms of pastoral tropes and exposing the spectacle in British rural perceptions.

The second chapter focuses on the role of *détournement* in Susan Howe's sequence *Frolic Architecture* (2011), arguing that Howe's visual fragmentation of appropriated sources adapts Situationist theory on language, power and architecture from the streets of Paris to the spaces of the archives. Howe's collection appropriates text from the archives of Seventeenth Century theologian Jonathan Edwards, fragmenting his sermons in order to challenge the restrictions of historical identity and archival confines.

The conclusion explores how my own practice as a poet has developed in relation to Mythogeography, a contemporary branch of psychogeography coined by walking artist Phil Smith, and my aim in this chapter is to contextualise my own drift through the archives of renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, and the physical landscape of one of his projects, Cockington, in South Devon.

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## **Introduction**

# **Contemporary Situationist Spaces: Riley's Rural Dérive and Howe's Archival Détournement**

## Introduction

### Contemporary Situationist Spaces: Riley's Rural Dérive

#### and Howe's Archival Détournement

...walking has always generated architecture and landscape, and... this practice, all but totally forgotten by architects themselves, has been reactivated by poets, philosophers and artists capable of seeing precisely what is not there, in order to make 'something' be there (Careri, [2002] 2017, p. 21).

...the Situationists provide a historical and conceptual analogue for the revolutionary impulses that have been generally less well articulated in the political discourse around... Anglo-American art and poetry (Dworkin, 2003, p. 5).

The relationship between walking and poetry is already well-established, but the theories of The Situationists, a twentieth-century group of avant-garde artists and activists who developed numerous radical walking practices, has been largely unmined in terms of poetic criticism<sup>1</sup>. Their theories and practices, both well-

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity and brevity, I've opted to refer to the Situationist International as the *Situationists*, rather than condensing the group to the initials SI which other publications often do.

documented and influential on today's radical literature, shed new light on the use of movement and a spatial landscape in the work of key contemporary poets, namely Peter Riley and Susan Howe. By approaching their poetry through the lens of a Situationist 'dérive' and 'détournement', I aim to expand on a largely untapped connection between radical walking and radical poetry, a connection that poses questions of these poets' relationship to the landscape, both geographical and figurative. A literal translation of *dérive* brings us 'drift', and *détournement*, 'deflect', a French verb defined by Craig Dworkin as describing 'illicit diversions: embezzlement, misappropriation, hijack' and used by the Situationists as an artistic form that aimed to be 'the antithesis of quotation', refusing an unmediated experience of original texts and visual elements. This artistic technique was also a political critique. Situationist Ivan Chtcheglov (1953) envisioned a future environment in which urban inhabitants would engage in 'CONTINUOUS DRIFTING', embracing the 'total disorientation' of changing landscapes in order to escape commercialism ([1953] 2006, 7). I'm interested in the ways in which these poets *dérive* and *détourne* in order to resist and parody a sense of place, Riley opting to drift through the cultural spaces of the British countryside, and Howe re-routing the narratives of archival texts and hierarchies. In a

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The exception to this 'unmined' Situationist poetics is acknowledged in the second introductory quotation. Craig Dworkin's *Reading the Illegible*, which approaches contemporary radical poetics from the politics of Situationist writings, but does not give as much focus to the performance of psychogeography and its contemporary manifestations.



wider sense, this project contributes to the growing literature exploring walking and writing, but aims to establish a well-contextualized use of the *dérive* and *détournement* as a vital part of understanding the role of walking in these works as a resistance to hegemonic narratives. This sense of radical walking, as I'll go on to explore, emphasizes that taking a walk is not an act of self-enlightenment, nor an escape from the politics of the world, but an intensification of those politics (Smith, 2014). A spatial engagement with place is key here, opening up place into multiples spaces where subjects such as nostalgia, identity and history are examined. In her much cited *For Space*, Doreen Massey (2005) begins by questioning...

What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories? What kinds of conceptualisation of time and space, and of their relation, might that give on to? (5).

Massey goes on to define space as a series of interrelations and interactions, a sphere of possibility where pluralities are free to pursue multiple trajectories in a way challenged by a physical terrain. For these two poets, drifting through the spaces of the page, the landscape, and the archives is a drift through these multiple narratives of place. They don't intend to recreate a place on the page, and their work also goes beyond responding to a place, rather their poetry forms new spaces held in tension with their geographical or historical anchors. The 'single narrative' that Massey warns

of haunts Riley's village and Howe's archive library, and their poetry works to unsettle place and time into fragments, provoking a glimpse of multiple possibilities.

The following chapters are disparate, Riley's pursuit more concretely married to its landscape and the spirit of drifting, and Howe's poetry occurring in a more abstract realm, a re-routing of a stability of original documents. Before delving into close readings of both texts, I'd like to give some wider context to the areas of research this project sits within, and introduce the key concepts and publications which have led to my understanding of radical walking, the landscape and a political or visual radical poetics.

Theories of place and cultural geographies are central to this study, particularly in the nostalgic ideals of nationality, and authenticity in Riley's case. Throughout *Alstonefield* (2003), a complex relationship with nostalgia and the authentic emerges, the village spurning numerous spaces of interpretation grounded by Riley's sense of movement through a tangible place. In contextualizing *Alstonefield's* use of nostalgia, I'll use cultural critic Svetlana Boym's (2001) two categories of the emotion; restorative and reflective, developed in her *Future of Nostalgia*. The conflict between the two is central to Riley's *dérive*, the rural landscape shifting between a coherent recreation of a pastoral past and a more fragmented series of reflections. The result is a radical space that plays with the product of a commodified rural image, exposing the spectacle of commercialism by yielding to its offering. Elizabeth Outka and Alistair Bonnet's theories of the nostalgic commodity as an act of resistance are also used to

reframe Riley's pastoral tropes as anti-capitalist visions, extending the *dérive's* negotiation with the flows of power into rural environments.

My focus on Susan Howe's poetry is in the use of psychogeography as a literary framing. Using recent criticism on her work, particularly the studies of Will Montgomery, Craig Dworkin, W. Scott Howard and Stephen Collis, I'll highlight the under-contextualised use of psychogeographic terms in framing her work. I'll then expand on the role of *détournement* in *Frolic Architecture* (2010), using Situationist texts to explore how Howe distorts the spaces of the archive to create a multiplicitious collaged future from the past. Howe's sense of movement in expanding the narrative spaces on the page adapts a psychogeography of the streets to a psychogeography of the archives, a resistance towards singular identities and historic flows of power.

Both these writers focus on the conflict caused by an uncontainable story rubbing up against its own contained space. Riley's village refuses to be pinned down and is more abound in pastoral contradictions than the pastoral convictions of a certain nationalized vision of the countryside. Howe's '*Frolic Architecture*' protests the confines of historic documents and cuts the voices free onto the horizons of the page. In this introduction I'll define and contextualise the two artistic practices of the *dérive* and *détournement*, contrasting Situationist theory with the adapted aims of Riley and Howe. The Situationist writing I'll be using spans from 1953 to the late sixties, translated and collected in Ken Knabb's *Situationist International Anthology* (2006),

first published in 1981<sup>2</sup>. In particular, I'll be contextualizing Howe and Riley's work with the theories of Situationists Guy Debord, Mustapha Khayati and Asgar Jorn, leading figures in the movement and key forerunners of contemporary adoptions of psychogeographic performances. Most Situationist publications came in the form of articles in the twelve French journal editions of *Internationale Situationiste* published between 1958 to 1969, and these are key to my understanding of psychogeography. Debord's *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography* [1955], *Theory of the Dérive* [1958], and *Détournement as Negation and Prelude* [1959] are very influential to my project, and I'll lean most on Debord's theorising in my approach to Riley and Howe's use of space. Similarly, Mustapha Khayati's *Captive Words, Preface to a Situationist Dictionary* [1966] is used to illuminate Howe's détournement of archival terms and labels, highlighting that her approach to the archives extends a geographical sense of psychogeography beyond that of Situationism. As well as the above, Ivan Chitchevlov's *Formulary for a new Urbanism* [1953] and Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman's *A User's Guide to Détournement* [1956], although predating the

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<sup>2</sup> As Knabb points out in his preface to the revised and expanded 2006 edition, this anthology's translations have been 'fine-tuned' over numerous versions, and can be considered as not only the most accurate French translations, but also the most 'clear and idiomatic'. This anthology also contains a greater range of texts, half of which are translated for the first time, and Knabb preserves the form of the original as much as possible, indicating omissions and his own commentaries.

founding of the Situationist International, closely resemble the burgeoning Situationist thought and have informed my critique of Riley's play with urban/rural divisions.

### **Writing the Landscape, Walking Prose and Place**

Landscape and walking are broad subjects and my focus has been on texts and artistic practices that in some way adopt or adapt Situationist walking. For example, the numerous creative non-fiction texts that use walking as an exploration of the ideas of home and identity, are influential but not essential. There is a recent trend in such books, and although they deal with issues of place, nostalgia and the British rural, they don't offer any radical insights into the role of walking. Their focus is more on the romantic and reflective; Benjamin Myers' *Under the Rock* (2018) and Philip Marsden's *Rising Ground* (2015), for example, document walking as central to their experience of place. More strictly lyrical writing about walking such as Simon Armitage's *Walking Home* (2012) and *Walking Away* (2015), as well as Robert Macfarlane's *The Old Ways* (2012) prompt worthy questions on the nature of pilgrimage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but their goals are more to describe, and then reflect on, the landscape and journeying in general, rather than a radical reframing of place. At the other end of the spectrum, Will Self's *Psychogeography* (2007) and Iain Sinclair's *Lights out for the Territory* (1997), *London Orbital* (2002), and *Edge of the Orison* (2006) put forward more political readings of place. Any discussion on contemporary psychogeography would

not be complete without encountering Sinclair's prose accounts. Sinclair's walking influences his style of writing, the reader stumbling across decontextualized graffiti and grimy images among the heavy prose accounts energized by an immediate sense of travel. Sinclair's writing is perhaps the closest to Situationist theory, and he is dedicated to a political exposing of place<sup>3</sup>. However, particularly in his early writing, this dedication does not open up the more literary potentials of the *dérive* that other writers have explored, and Sinclair's obsessive unpacking of London's streets, although informative, takes the form of a straightforward travelogue rather than a more unexpected response to the contradictions and politics of place. However, Sinclair's collection of poems *Lud Heat* (2012), and prose account *Edge of the Orison*, do make use of place as a springboard into more occult, personal and biographical narratives, often weaving a tangible sense of place with a fantastic one that plays tricks on the reader and questions truth, time and memory. *Edge of the Orison* follows poet John Clare's journey from London to Essex, ruminating on madness, poetry and love, and, unlike in his London-based prose, Sinclair opens up the *dérive* into more personal reflections, a sense of a drift through place becoming a more thorough drift through the spaces of memory and history contained there. Similarly, Nick Papadimitrou's

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<sup>3</sup> Although not based on walking, the novels of J.G Ballard are perhaps the greatest examples of contemporary Situationist resistance in fiction. Ballard's *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974) *High Rise* (1975), and *Millennium People* (2003) all unpack concepts of power, revolution and urban living, often violently resisting the confines of the urban environment.

*Scarp* (2012), Gareth E. Reese's *The Stone Tide* (2018) and Smith's *Mythogeography* engage a détournement of place and time to sustain their narratives, the narrator stuck between and within times and locations, elements overlapping and confusing a reader. These publications are closer to the original ethos of Situationist art, but adapted for a more contemporary environment and narrative. In *Scarp* in particular, a reader is struck by a drift between voice, place and spaces, the *dérive* a stylistic technique to disorientate and defamiliarize a landscape, yet capital anti-authoritarianism and urban planning are all stalwart trends. The overall pattern in these works is a shift away from the more predictable travelogue or report of a *dérive*, into a zone where the *dérive* is more of a creative writing technique. There is still a negotiation with power, both historic and current, but an inconsistent or unreliable narration is used to create more of a feeling of narrative drift. Whereas Self and much of Sinclair's travelogues put the reader in their shoes, Papadimitrou's and Smith's narratives create a more confusing and complicated sense of voice, the reader forced to negotiate the tricky landscape of the text. This trend is taken to the extreme in Smith's handbook of *Mythogeography*, in which a bewildering system of footnotes divide the narrative and send a reader through layers of disparate stories, statements and reports. This reflects the broad distinction between psychogeography and Smith's *Mythogeography*: *Mythogeography* is a performance, Smith's writing provoking and prompting a reader into a new journey, rather than Sinclair's prose narratives that often seek to reflect and re-create the journey, their focus being to reproduce the

thoughts and feelings of Sinclair's walk in an authentic narrative. Smith's literature forms more of a hub of the places it touches on. In *Mythogeography*, most pages host multiple footnotes, often footnotes to the footnotes, prompting a reader to skip to another section, which in turn sends the reader onward again, the result being a complete disorientation of narratives and a complex yet incoherent interweaving of Mythogeographical advice, demonstration and guidelines, yet woven, or rather unwoven, together, in a way that questions even what it stands for. A sense of place, namely Exeter and Plymouth in *Mythogeography*, is confused and fragmented, the reader invited to re-make this place in their reading journey. It's this same sense of a doubtful and deceptive voice rising from a contradictory environment that Howe and Riley take from the Situationist *détournement* of elements, new meaning being created by the relationships formed within and between disparate voices.

There are also numerous studies of the philosophy, heritage and culture of twenty-first and twentieth century walking that have influenced my wider understanding of walking and society, namely Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust* ([2001] 2014), Merlin Coverley's *The Art of Wandering* (2012), Frederic Gros's *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014) and Lauren Elkin's *Flaneuse* (2016), the latter of which seeks to assert the figure of the solo female walker in the urban environment. Issues of gender, politics and artistic processes of walking are well-covered in two more academic recent collections of essays; Tina Richardson's *Walking Inside Out* (2015) and Borthwick, Marland and Stenning's *Walking, Landscape and Environment* (2020). Both deal with



the legacy of the Situationists on contemporary walking practices, highlighting the contradiction that literary psychogeography, as a text-based practice, negates the Situationist aim of a practical revolution. With this in mind, many walking artists today have an uneasy relationship with Situationists theory, often basing their practices on the *dérive*, but emphasizing play and experiment as means to an end in themselves, not a means to revolution.

There is another of area of research that British rural psychogeography prompts, that of the cultural connotations of the pastoral landscape. This is not as relevant for Howe's *Frolic Architecture*, but an understanding of pastoral histories and rural tropes provide a deeper insight into the ways in which Riley negotiates the heritage of his environment. Discussions of nostalgia, community and politics abound in *Alstonefield*, and a close reading of the text would not be complete without a review of historic and current cultural geographies of the British countryside, hence the chapter on Riley is the longest of the two. There are numerous studies of cultural and literary ruralism that have influenced my understanding of Riley's village. As well as the nostalgia theorists, Alastair Bonnet, Svetlana Boym and Elizabeth Outka mentioned earlier, Barbara Cassin's *Nostalgia, When are we Ever at Home?* (2016) argues that a sense of journeying, of moving through, and of finding a home in language, may be the closest we get to the elusive feeling of being home, mirrored in the slippery sense of place that *Alstonefield* creates. There are also numerous studies involving nostalgia and the British rural, generally focusing on a commodified sense of

heritage. John Taylor's *A Dream of England* (1994) details how regional identities have been commercialized in order to sell locations and products to national and foreign tourists, the flexible sense of time that tourism fostering a place-based sense of time travel used to sell an experience or range of gifts. Similarly, Tim Edensor's *National Identity and Everyday Life* (2002), Roy Strong's *Visions of England* (2011), David Matless's *Landscape and Englishness* ([1998] 2016) and Paul Readman's *Storied Ground* (2018), all emphasize a special relationship to nostalgia that the British rural holds. However, apart from Strong's study, they all warn of a simplified condemnation of nostalgia, highlighting that the landscape has a complex relationship to the past and that the act of harking back, albeit sometimes misplaced, is a deeply ingrained personal and societal activity; visions of the past being innovative in how they emotionally connect to people, and often used as much to resist authority as to maintain it. Studies of literature and the environment have also been influential to this project, and there are numerous studies charting the relationship between the landscape and writing from ancient to contemporary literature, generally exploring pastoral to anti-pastoral transitions and historical contexts, namely Terry Gifford's *Green Voices* (2011) and *Pastoral* ([1999] 2020), Stephan Siddall's *Landscape and Literature* (2009) and Alyson Hallett's *Geographical Intimacy* (2016), these most recent publications building on the landmark studies of Jonathon Bate's *The Song of the Earth* (2001) and Raymond William's *The Country and the City* ((1973) which will be explored in Riley's chapter). In a more popular market, it's also worth noting the recent trend in

farming writing, with the publication of numerous creative non-fiction accounts of farming craft demonstrating an enduring appeal of a literary getting back to the soil; James Rebanks's *A Shepherd's Life* (2015), and Philip Walling's *Counting Sheep* (2014) and *Till the Cows Come Home* (2018). Walling's *Counting Sheep*'s tagline 'A Celebration of the Pastoral Heritage of Britain' provides a summary of this recent strand, often lamenting changes in the economic and social landscape of Britain's rural areas, and tapping into the loss of regional identities. These publications build on older, much cited accounts of rural change across the twentieth century, A. G. Street's *Farmer's Glory* (1932), Ronald Blythe's *Akenfield* (1969) and Michael Hawker's *Farmer's Boy* (2005) being particularly well-known. These publications emphasize an almost intense sense of place, of the rural landscape as abound in familial and cultural burdens in the form of economic and pastoral hardships. Many of these narratives emphasize the struggles to hold onto land handed down over the generations, the need for innovation often hampered by tradition. The writer-farmer often shatters a sense of pastoral ideals, expressing bewilderment or ignorance of the rural idyll that the aforementioned cultural geographers claim to be abound in urban-based commercial efforts.

Riley's *Alstonefield* picks up on many of these themes, contributing to the rich literary heritage of rural writing, but, unlike the above prose examples, Riley uses multiple voices to transition and juxtapose pastoral stances. The collection forms a multiplicity of Twentieth and Twenty-First Century ruralisms, bewildering the reader

with the rural spectacle of landscape spaces, Riley's *dérive* being a negotiation of this heritage.

### **Post-Situationism: The Contemporary *Dérive* and *Détournement***

Psychogeography, and the theories that underpin it, were rarely put into practice by the Situationists themselves. In his guide, *Psychogeography* (2010), Merlin Coverly declares that, as a 'scientific tool', the 'situationist psychogeography must be regarded as an abject failure' (24). The group spent more time defining and developing their theories with only the occasional report of an act of *dérive* or *détournement*.

However, they were master theorists, and published numerous theses, statements and instructional guides, a mass of over eighty texts, including Guy Debord's novel length statement *The Society of the Spectacle*. With this wealth of provoking material left seemingly without many tangible examples, contemporary radical walkers, artists and critics have sought to contribute their own practices, often taking up the mantle of psychogeography without engaging with the expanded definitions of the *dérive* or *détournement*. The result is that the term psychogeography is seemingly open to any act of walking that could be termed radical, extending to literature and pieces of art. This is psychogeography as an adjective, rather than verb, a process cemented by the

rise of literary psychogeography in the early twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most telling example of this opening up of the term is that Coverly's *Psychogeography* opens with a quote from Robert MacFarlane, a writer more associated with lyrical and romantic descriptions of rural pilgrimages than anything remotely revolutionary. Coverley's study itself highlights that the Situationist *dérive* was far from original, and his chapters focus on the psychogeography of William Blake and Robert Lewis Stevenson alongside that of Debord, arguing that the term 'has become so widely appropriated and has been used in support of such a bewildering array of ideas that is has lost much of its original significance' (10). My definition is more straightforward, leaning primarily on the Situationist theories and, in Riley's case, Smith's rural adaption of the *dérive* contained in his *Mythogeography*, a more theatrical and performance based off-shoot of the Situationist Psychogeography. The reason for this is stated at the beginning of this introduction, that tracing these acts back to Situationist theory enlighten present readings of Howe and Riley's work in a way that broader definitions risk missing. Both these poets engage with the politics of place and space in a way that takes up the mantle of Situationist thought, and it's the scope and detail of Situationist writing that allows a 'psychogeographical' literary analysis to be formed of their work.

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on the dangers and benefits of literary psychogeography, and how it differs from the Situationist's ethos, see Tina Richardson's Introduction to her edited collection of essays, *Walking Inside Out, Contemporary British Psychogeography* (2015)

Central to this study is the adaption of Situationist thought into rural contexts and archival spaces. Both Riley and Howe parallel the flows of power and commodification of place that the Situationists believed to be exclusive to the urban environment, exposing psychogeography's romanticisation of the countryside and the Spectacle's enduring grip on modern society.

## **Chapter 1**

### **‘Moving through Certainty’:**

**The Dérive, Nostalgia, and the Rural Spectacle in Peter**

**Riley’s *Alstonefield***

## **'Moving through Certainty': The Dérive, Nostalgia, and the Rural Spectacle in Peter Riley's *Alstonefield***

I began to think of the place as an arena, a theatre of outrageously manipulated light in which the soul puts on a show for the people... I could see that it would be necessary to enter this scene again and again in search of the plot, threading questions and trials into the labyrinth, the complex displays of rock and vegetation, sheep-pens and graveyards, set up by the masters of the challenge, the pluralities that devised this spectacle and left it there like an open book' (Peter Riley, 2003).

## **Approaching the Village of Alstonefield: The Dérive, Mythogeography and the Situationists**

The *dérive* is a popular, walking and artistic technique that resists the flows of its environment. The Situationists relied on the psychogeographic *dérive* to subvert, provoke and generally experiment with the parameters of place. Goldsmith (2011) neatly sums up the role of the drift as follows,

If we were to map out our daily movements, we'd find that we tend to stick to what we know with little deviation. We move from our house to our job to the gym to the supermarket, back to the house, and get up the next day and do it all again. Guy Debord, one of the key figures in situationism, proposed taking a holiday from those routines in the form of the *dérive* or *drift*, which was meant to renew the urban experience by intentionally moving through our urban spaces without *intention*, opening ourselves up to the spectacle and theatre that is the city (*italics in original*, 36).



This wandering without intention, a renewal or reframing of our relationship to place, has gone on to influence a particular strand of contemporary British poetry, the Radical Landscape Poetry genre, a term coined by poet Harriet Tarlo and the framework within which I have approached the text. In her introduction to the anthology of the movement, *The Ground Aslant* (2011), Tarlo explains that this poetry seeks to re-balance the perception of the urban as the rural's radical and progressive counter. In *The Ground Aslant*, poets such as Thomas A. Clark, Peter Riley and Tarlo herself reframe their chosen landscapes as linguistic spaces where pastoral nostalgia can be critically handled and even indulged in. Movement is key to this endeavor, and the phrase, moving *through*, is the crux of my argument on Riley's *dérive*, for which the village of Alstonefield provides an ever-shifting landscape of cultural perceptions that moves with and against the narrator's personal pastoralisms. As poet Ian Davidson (2010), also included in Tarlo's anthology, explains in *Radical Spaces of Poetry*, a sense of movement in this poetry fosters a political edge that amounts to a radical response to place, akin to the Situationist *dérive*. Travelling *through* emphasises the role of process rather than product, and moving becomes an act of resistance rather than a passive goal-orientated journey. Davidson remarks that travelling

represents something more profound about individuals linking into the global flows, about movement between places and towards something. Mimicking abstract flows of capital and the effects of foreign investment, people ending up somewhere as both observer and observed, only achieving any sense of fulfillment while in the process of travel (6).

Walking provides an opportunity to literally move against or through these 'global flows', a subtle subversion against the 'abstract' movement of capital made concrete by putting one foot in front of the other, a refocusing on the immediate environment in the face of a globalized commercial world<sup>5</sup>. Throughout the collection, Riley's journey seems to parody a sense of progress, a flow constantly backtracking and doubting itself, refusing any notion of a successful destination. The 'towards something' he aims for is an abstract sense of self-discovery rather than a prescriptive goal. He moves through the landscape, both its literal place and its cultural spaces, but the emphasis is on a constantly moving body that does not dwell long enough to commit to a pastoral stance. I'll contextualize the ghostly pastoral and its enduring presence in British identity later in the chapter. *Alstonefield* follows a narrator on a day and night long derive around the village of Alstonefield in the Peak District, a sequence that journeys to over a hundred pages. It demonstrates Tarlo's re-balancing in its constant play on an urban and rural dichotomy, and Riley exploits a long and complex relationship to a romanticized national ideal of the English village:

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<sup>5</sup> The accusation of nostalgia here is certainly warranted, and this is a subject I'll go on to explore. For an excellent essay on the avant-garde and romanticism, see Michael Lowry's (2020) chapter *Revolutionary Romanticism* (138).

...a completed memory  
compassed by care makes a globe of love. Very  
little I can do with it, alone. But it is like  
a repair dépôt that continues through governments  
and wars at the end of a small back road where  
carefree labourers stroll around dark and competent (11).

The pages of the poem form this 'completed memory', a consciously unreliable space in which nostalgia is both readily indulged in and rejected. The village, in Riley's text, is a construct of personal and cultural hopes and stereotypes of country living, and its Riley's moving *through* that reframes the British countryside as a site of resistance. As the poem develops, it delves into more and more fantastic and surreal rural tropes, forever mixing real and imaginary geographies in a bewildering blend on the page. Within the context of the *dérive*, this is where the radicalism enters Riley's journey. His subversion of pastoralisms, both those of romanticized perceptions of the countryside and the more political and social critiques of Britain's rural, challenge literary and cultural perceptions of the rural as either an untouched idyll or a commodified façade of a place, *Alstonefield* forming an almost monstrous elegy to the dream of a lost rural Arcadia which is also tainted by urban commercialism. As explored briefly in the introduction, this is in line with the original Situationist goals, but crucially adapted for a rural environment. Guy Debord, writing in the much quoted *Theory of the Dérive*,

defined the drift in as equally broad terms as 'psychogeography', the umbrella term for the group's walking activities:

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there ([1958] 2006: 62).

It's the *dérive* that is psychogeography's strongest legacy, influencing numerous walking artists and poets today. However, although the Situationist definition above is commonly cited, it doesn't quite do justice to their overall political aims, and it's worth further contextualising the term before reading deeper into *Alstonefield*. The *dérive* was a means to fight the urban spectacle of commercialism, but Riley extends this negotiation of place into the rural environment, places and spaces, that, as Riley explores, are as steeped in spectacle as any city street. Riley's stance is paralleled by walking artist and writer Phil Smith. Smith's *Mythogeography*, a method of walking that extends the *dérive* into heritage locations, highlights that the multiplicity and contradictions in rural locations are as ripe for psychogeographic investigation as any urban landscapes. Unlike the Situationists, who guarded their theories and definitions, Smith invites walkers to stretch his concept by creating their own 'Mythogeographies' of place, artistic projects that challenge a capitalist sense of place in favour of a more personal and creative interpretation of a location's history. A large part of his artistic

output are guidebooks encouraging others to engage with heritage locations in unexpected ways. For example, the *Handbook of Counter Tourism* (2012) suggests a series of activities that subvert the usually well-signed pathways of a heritage location. Ultimately, Smith's practice reconceptualises the past and questions our relationship to a hegemonic sense of a singular or grand narrative of place. Mythogeography is about acting against the dominant narratives of a place and playing with the past in a more subjective manner that makes you, as a tourist, a maker of that past. Smith has also published a pocketbook version, *Counter-Tourism A Pocketbook* (2012), which lists '50 odd things to do in a heritage site'. Tactics include seeking out the offensive parts of a site; consciously indulging in the nostalgia of unachieved ideals, and visiting the gift shop as if it were the museum<sup>6</sup>. We can see a version of this scattered and abstract approach to place in *Alstonefield*, and I'll be using Smith's practice of Mythogeography to contextualise how Riley has expanded on Debord's theorising. Smith has written a wide range of critical and creative books, as well as more academic chapters and articles, all of which have informed my approach to walking in Riley's poetry. Smith's guide, *Mythogeography* (2012), a 'Guide to Walking Sideways', and his two recent collections of essays and statements on the contemporary radical walking movement:

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<sup>6</sup> The Pocketbook is unpaginated, but these particular tactics are no. 50, no. 40, and no. 31. Smith, who often published under the sydenoum Crab Man, has also published two guides on creating your own 'mis-guide' of a place, *A Sardine Street Box of Tricks* (2012), and *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006).

*On Walking* (2014), and *Walking's New Movements* (2015), have provided a framework by which to unpack and expand on Riley's *dérive*. All of these publications provide a complex and wide-ranging critical background into the terminologies and practices of modern adaptations of psychogeography. Smith has also written two semi-fictional books that put his practice into narrative form: *Alice's Dérives in Devonshire* (2014), and *Anywhere* (2017), the latter providing a concrete travelogue of numerous rural *dérives* from the point of view of Cecile, the narrator. *Anywhere's* negotiation of the heritage landscape in South Devon, exposing the commercialism of pastoral desires, will be compared to Riley's approach to Alstonefield, highlighting Riley's adaptation of psychogeography in regards to a British cultural landscape, and extending the Situationist practice into new territories.

Riley's *dérive* highlights and engages with the politics of the rural landscape, at one point proposing and struggling with a gift economy, then declaring that 'pennies are good shit' (25) and slipping back into a more cynical and realistic arguments over land ownership and a commodified authenticity. The *dérive* is here used as an ideological, as well as spatial, tactic. Riley journeys through personal and collective spectrums of counter and pro-pastoralisms. The 'radical' here is subtle. Riley's focus on multiplicity and historical fantasy creates a slippery sense of place, the village always between dream and reality that plays into wider debates on the politics of the British rural. Riley ultimately yields to the Spectacle, overwhelmed by the commercialism that

creeps up on the sublime scenes and reflections of community. At one point, when contemplating what completes a life, a 'Little Sphinx' murmurs

Go away. I don't care. I want to programme quicker trains.  
I want to draft us all in bigger and bigger units (79).

### **The Radical Rural?**

As Tarlo explains, the landscape has long caused this questioning sense of the radical, the serene views of open country juxtaposed with the society they support. The term Radical Landscape Poetry is sufficiently broad to incorporate numerous interpretations, most notably in visual form, and the movement plays on a historical sense of the landscape and non-mainstream poetry:

...landscape poetry often challenges the divide between experimental or innovative and traditional or mainstream which has haunted British Poetry, in all its many guises, since the nineteen-thirties (2011, 7).

Tarlo cites Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* (1966) and Barry MacSweeney's sequence *Pearl* (1995) as influential to modern Radical Landscape Poets, as well as Charles Olson and the Olsonian challenge of a work to be 'Equal, That is, to the Real Itself' (7). This is the

crucial tension between these poets' use of space and place, the real place being questioned by the spaces it provokes. Expanding on the role of inhabiting multiple spaces, Davidson remarks

...poets often seem simultaneously to produce and inhabit different worlds in their search for a place for themselves, or a search to escape from the place in which they find themselves. In so doing they construct new places and open up new spatial relationships (10).

The spatial relationships in *Alstonefield* stem from the complex overlapping of real and imaginary spaces in Riley's journey, the boundaries between both in a bewildering flux. Riley plays with this concept by drifting through the real and fantasy village simultaneously, innovating traditional sentimentalities of England's rolling fields. Ultimately, this stretches the sense of space and place in the British village, Riley's poem shifting between a tangible travelogue of that 'Real itself' and a cultural space that haunts the narrator with its slipperiness. Walking as discovering a rich and varied landscape is nothing new in Riley's work, as Neal Alexander explains in his chapter '*where lives converge*': *Peter Riley and the Poetics of Place*', which leans heavily on *Alstonefield*:

Peter Riley is a poet deeply engaged with the poetics of place, producing representations of landscape that are at once learned, reflexive and rich with the details of sensuous experience. Walking frequently serves his narrators as a means



of phenomenological immersion and performative enactment (2013, Kindle Loc. 3105).

This chapter will argue that, in the case of *Alstonefield* these poetics of place are imbued with a Situationist spectacle. Riley's intention is not just to create a 'sensuous' experience by immersing a reader in the village, but to combat the rural spectacle of pastoral imagery and conduct a psychogeographic investigation in this overlooked environment. Mainstream psychogeographic writing tends to focus on the spectacle of the city landscape, reflecting the Situationist call for artists and writers to re-frame their urban environments in an effort to combat the capitalist commodification of the town and city. However, a contemporary movement in radical landscape writing, championed by poets such as Peter Riley, Harriet Tarlo and Thomas A. Clark, seeks to respond to the spectacle of British pastoralism, re-asserting the rural as a space of radical writing and post-pastoral thought. In this chapter, I address one of the key works in this movement, *Alstonefield* (2003) by Peter Riley, a collection that uses the radical walking technique of the 'dérive' or drift, in order to negotiate rural nostalgia and expose the presence of the urban spectacle in a commodified British rural. Using the radical walking theory of Mythogeography, a practice developed by Phil Smith that aims to engage with the politics of place in a more theatrical way, I wish to contextualise *Alstonefield's* negotiation of rural nostalgia with Smith's Mythogeographical engagement with Cockington, a village in South Devon. Smith's practice, like many radical walking artists, stems back to the theories and politics of the

Situationists. For them the *dérive* was a vital technique by which to negotiate what they saw as the homogenization and banalization of modern society, symbolized by the sense of spatial and emotional control the city environment wielded (Coverley, 2011; Smith 2014, 2015). Guy Debord, a leading voice in the movement, defined the *dérive* as follows:

In a *Dérive* one or more persons ... let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there... From the *dérive* point of view cities have a psychological relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones (Knabb, [1957] 2005, 35).

According to the Situationists, this unintentional sense of walking could only be done in the 'vortexes' of the city. Debord believed that drifting in the country was 'naturally depressing' (*Theory of the Dérive*, [1958] 2005, 63) as the 'interventions of chance are poorer there than anywhere else', yet both Smith and Riley highlight the same Situationist senses of resistance in their chosen rural environments, encountering and trampling over numerous prescribed flows of movement between 'fixed points and vortexes'. My aim in bringing the two texts together, one from a declared radical walker, and the other a poet associated with a more elegiac approach to place, is to assert Riley's text as a novel psychogeographic investigation in a rural setting, and expand on the cultural and personal tensions that arise from that investigation. In a

broader sense, this chapter aims to contextualise the *dérive* as a contemporary creative writing technique, one particularly called for in the pastoral environments which Tarlo's Radical Landscape Poets engage with, places often haunted by a heritage of romanticised nature.

*Alstonefield* follows a narrator on a day and night-long expedition through and around the village, getting lost in the sublime views, pastoral, and personal fantasies and reflections on rural/urban divisions. There are frequent mentions of walking and a near-constant sense of movement as we transition between topographical, cultural and more fantastic spaces of dancing rabbits and utopian economies. This sense of movement is key to comprehending the village's pastoral complexities and Riley's collection forms a 'Mythogeography' of Alstonefield, valuing multiplicity and rural fantasy in order to subvert pastoral tropes. The urban spectacle has leaked into the countryside, confusing a sense of place and rural authenticity and a sinister sense of landscape trickery pervades the village, which is both tangible and impossible. Detailed topographical and local landmarks guide a reader through, what seems like, an instructional series of journeys, giving a constant sense of a tangible and ever-shifting geography. Yet this is a place that we cannot grip. Throughout the collection, Riley moves between naivety and cynicism, the village at times a rare idyll, and at others, a disappointing shell of its rural promises:

the politics of this  
carries hope like a feather on the palm:  
my country tracks are crossed in oil and  
its inhering slaughter (21).

Nostalgia is at the heart of this shift, an inner-conflict between a restoration of rural ideals, and a more realistic reflection on the past. The result is an intense sense of layering, a landscape where shades of pastoralism are in constant flux, lapping and overlapping one another and constantly disorientating the narrator. This idea of drift is both geographical and spatial. Riley meanders seemingly without intention, allowing the landscape to guide his next move, and this is reflected in his drift through pastoral stances. Yet Riley is not the only one there, and the collection frequently shifts between voices and characters that haunt the night. It's the sense of multiplicity these different voices create that sustain the sense of an ideological drift. The drift as inherently a collaborative practice, where ideas and themes are traded between group members, is at the core of Smith's Mythogeography. He elaborates on this in *On Walking* (2014), explaining that this sense of multiple voices guiding the drift is what supports its opportunities for multiplicity:

In drifting the group composes the drift together, sharing, assembling, collating and collaging it. There are power issues in any group, but the constant to and fro of a good drift, in which the focus is switching all the time and the initiative moving from one person to another, together with the prioritising of 'and and

and’ over ‘either/or’ seems as likely as any other behaviour to diffuse and disperse the problem of ‘leaders’ and ‘experts’ (Kindle Location 1379).<sup>7</sup>

A Mythogeographical ‘collage’ of an ‘and and and’ is exactly what bewilders a reader of *Alstonefield*. As the walk progresses the village builds into an intense spectacle of itself, the constant ‘to and fro’ of the voices and the narrator’s own multiple stances falling in and out of nostalgic visions of the countryside.

### **The Rural Dérive: Drifting Utopias**

My aim in drawing comparisons between Riley’s and Smith’s practices is to expand on the role of the *dérive* in a rural context. Both Riley’s *Alstonefield* and Smith’s *Anywhere* (2017) are rooted in their sense of place, but often extend their tangible descriptions of real locations into the space of a regional, national, or personal

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<sup>7</sup> Smith’s references here to an ‘and and and’ rather than an ‘either/or’ are, as highlighted in the introduction, resonant of Robert Venturi’s (1967) use of this same terminology in an *Architecture of Complexity and Contradiction*. Although unacknowledged, the reference is striking, Smith’s interest in combatting a stifling and purely functionalist new ‘architecture’ of commodified heritage locations responds to Venturi’s call for architects to embrace a more multiplicitous engagement with the landscape.

ideal. For Riley, Alstonefield is still a vision of country tropes. It's a haven of rural serenity and pastoral traditions, a place where you can watch the long valleys shift through hours of daylight and dusk, and walking the many paths through the village provide reflections of a bygone era of an agricultural community. However, the other participants in his drift, including previous, future and alternative selves, and personified objects of scenery, burst notions of pastoral arcadias in an almost manic 'and and and' of competing voices, any singular narration of a 'leader' drowned out by a 'to and fro' of the journey. Similarly, Smith's depiction of Cockington plays on the same images of rural simplicity. His village is nestled in a deep valley a mile from Torquay sea front in South Devon, providing a refuge of shady woodland and quietude amidst the sprawling roads and suburbia of Torbay. Both places, although routed in regionality, hark back to a national ideal of the village as refuge from the urban spectacle, a notion that although the Situationists upheld, Smith and Riley's investigations actively challenge. Both texts grapple with the perception that the country abounds with rose-tinted scenes of twentieth century pastoral literature: H.W Freeman's 'sublimely arcadian' Lindmer Vale where the protagonists' love interest is as full of 'fruitfulness and bounty' as the local farmland in *Up in the Valley* (1936, p. 257); George McKay Brown's Orkney of his childhood in which the farmers' resilience in their craft outperforms any poetry, 'Against such radiance in the clay/Our lanterns were black./We have lost the

farmer-poet, I think' (1996)<sup>8</sup> (also see Gifford, 1999). A utopian fecundity surveyed by a wise elder 'farmer-poet' can only ever be an ideal, and both Riley and Smith slip through narratives of both indulgence and disgust at this romanticized pastoral, ultimately relying on the practice and ethos of a radical sense of walking in order to negotiate a sense of place. Both play with cultural constructs and confuse the landscape with personal and collective flights, a shift reminiscent of what radical walker Nick Papadimitrou (2012) terms Proximity Flight:

...that's what I call this using of environment to trigger mental journeys to another place and time in which the same stimuli can be found. I find it lifts my sense of the environment out of its codified framework and into fresh possibilities of interpretation, my eyes wiped clean by the resultant defamiliarization (44).

In the cultural resonances with the British rural, we find a ground ripe for this flight, and both journeys take a playful approach to landscape, a near-constant 'defamiliarisation' that stems from a sense of movement. Papadimitrou's practice, termed Deep Topography, stems from Situationist ideals, but represents the more modern trends in psychogeographical writing; less political rhetoric and more focus on narratives of multiplicities, trends also taken up by Riley and Smith. In *Anywhere*, Smith revels in the 'carnival' (Loc. 1353) nature of the modern village, an eerie and

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<sup>8</sup> From the poem *The Lords of Hell and the Word*, contained in *Following a Lark* (1996).

contradictory land where ‘time has stood still’ (1311) and visitors gather to hear the café’s piano player plays the Jurassic Park theme tune. For Riley, the rural is bound up with its opposite; the city, and his village is framed by its own role as extreme antithesis to ‘urban despair’ (17). He isn’t afraid of delving in to an idealized retreat, one that he learns is as full of despair as any city. *Alstonefield* is a village in which ‘the maidens dance on the darkening green’ (17) and ‘carefree labourers stroll around dark and competent’, a ‘globe of love’ (11) that fits into Raymond Williams’ ([1973] 1993) famous dichotomy between the city as a place of ‘possibility, of meeting and movement’ (7) and the rural as part of an idealism of a stable and holistic relationship with the soil whose literature stems from an ancient lineage of Hesiod and Theocritus, Virgil and Sidney, Goldsmith and Clare, Hardy and Elliot.<sup>9</sup>

Contemporary landscape poets and artists face a negotiation of this heritage. Any discussion of the British rural would not be complete without encountering the thorny issue of a generally unjust perception of the ‘pastoral’. The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse (1982) introduces its landmark collection, the most recent and expanded anthology under the banner of the ‘Pastoral’, with the following warning, before, somewhat bizarrely, declaring that the pastoral is dead:

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<sup>9</sup> See also Gifford ([1999] 2020), Siddall (2009) and Hallett (2016) for more recent studies of this heritage.



...the pastoral vision is, at base, a false vision, positing a simplistic, unhistorical relationship between the ruling, landowning class... and the workers on the land; as such its function is to mystify and to obscure the harshness of actual social and economic organization (Barrel and Bull, 4).

Barrel and Bull, in attempting to put the pastoral to bed, attempted to override this socially unjust perception of the environment. Yet, as critics such as Gifford (2020), whose *Pastoral, A New Critical Idiom* has recently been reworked into a second expanded edition, have argued, the pastoral continues to challenge, seduce and confuse contemporary poets, and the term's socially unjust traditions don't alter its ghostly presence in the British landscape. Riley delves in to the 'obscuring' qualities of pastoral romanticisation, both indulging in and exposing them. In the introduction to Tarlo's anthology, *The Ground Aslant* (2011), she describes how radical landscape poetry such as Riley's often creates a parody of the 'morally and socially-inflected contrast between the cultural/urban and the natural' (12). Crucially, this poetry forms a critique of the pastoral while also acknowledging the heritage and legacy of sentimentalizing the landscape. As Tarlo points out, perceptions of modernity may have finally ruptured the 'retreat and return' (12) of the pastoral, but the desire for country simplicity is still part of the make-up of ruralism.

Similarly, *Alstonefield*, as well as Smith's *Anywhere*, are far more than a naïve indulgence or a heavy-handed critique of rural perceptions<sup>10</sup>. Both texts do not stop at highlighting the politics of place, but encourage a yielding to those elements, a drift in the name of narrative multiplicity. This is a key element of the embodied research a radical walker conducts, as Smith's narrator Cecile Oak explains:

I wonder if I have ever properly understood what research is. That only if I put myself at the mercy of my subject, only when I am caught up and becoming part of my subject and only when that subject is caught up and disrupted and diffracted by me – leaving a footprint, climbing a fence to trespass – am I really researching (2012, Loc. 1718).

This 'caught up and disrupt[ing] and diffract[ing]' of the subject and the self is a practice embedded in Riley's multiplicitious journeying. Radical walking, a loosely defined movement of artists and activists, values a hypersensitivity to our surroundings, often with an anti-capitalist edge. Building on the Situationist's *dérive*, yet moved significantly away from its revolutionary rhetoric, the contemporary movement deserves a re-brand, either redefining psychogeography away from politics

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<sup>10</sup> Although certainly not naïve, Williams' study sets a precedent for a political condemnation of rural nostalgia that's built on by Lowenthal (1991) and Edensor (2002). For a recent defense, or more nostalgically indulgent take on the rural, see Kingsnorth's *Real England* (2008) and Roy Strong's *Visions of England* (2011), which both hold sentimental values of rural living as national ideals.

and urban architecture, or rejecting it for new terms of practice, most notable Papadimitriou's Deep Topography. For the purpose of my research, I have come to define radical walking as the act of moving through an environment in such a way that highlights the hidden agendas, patterns and narratives of place. As mentioned in the introduction, my approach to Riley and, later on, Howe's texts is informed by a stricter Situationist sense of the *dérive* and *détournement*. However, as also mentioned, there are some firmer contemporary movements which can illuminate the Situationist politics for modern rural environments, Smith's Mythogeography being a prime example. Mythogeography, which developed within the wider movement, goes one step further and encourages us to embody and perform with these narratives, involving more theatre, subjectivity and fiction in our understanding of place – a 'myth'-o-geography. His publications, aimed at contextualising, encouraging and demonstrating the practice of Mythogeography, range from fiction, journal articles and guide-books, and generally equip a reader to create their own Mythogeography of place. Unlike much literary psychogeography, Smith focuses on rural landscapes, adapting the Situationist *dérive* for the villages, estates and pathways of the British countryside. Riley's *Alstonefield* mirrors this, going beyond simply highlighting local histories and multiplicities to embodying them in a variety of voices and narratives that fulfil a pastoral spectrum.

Smith states that Mythogeography, as opposed to psychogeography, aims to engage people with 'theatre rather than politics' (2012, Kindle Loc. 2230). In Riley's

case, this 'theatre' of the landscape is used to great effect, allowing a critique of both the pastoral and anti-pastoral to take the form of surprising narratives and voices. Whereas Riley's mission is more strictly psychogeographical in parts, a more straightforward focusing on the emotions and behaviors that his environment prompts (with a focus on capitalism), his frequent delving into fantasies, the spaces rather than the places of his journey, signal a more *mythogeographical* stance, and *Alstonefield* reads as a combination of psycho- and mytho- geography. He is as concerned with the fictions of the rural as its tangible reality around him. This not only encourages, but emphasizes the contradictions and narrative tensions in the landscape, and walking becomes a way of encouraging multiplicities, as Smith explains in the development of the term:

In place of Utopia arose the idea of 'anywheres'... the very unevenness of what has been explored, the bittiness, the unsatisfying half-interwoven, the tangle, the dissipation, these all began to seem hopeful, even utopian in an unutopian way, when subjected to wandering (2012, Loc. 2267).

Both Smith and Riley focus on these details and contradictions of place, bursting any sense of a coherent whole. This 'anywhere' is created by the fragments of place, the 'dissipation' of geography that allows a more subjective experience of place to emerge. Reading *Alstonefield* with a framework of Smith's Mythogeography highlights the role of walking as negotiating what Paul Readman terms 'storied ground'

(2018). If walking is a performance of disparate narratives of landscape, *Alstonefield* provides the perfect setting. As the poem develops, the 'proximity flights' become more complex and sustained, and Riley is thrown into the landscape as much as it throws itself at him. The repeated line 'where lives converge' signals not just the amalgamation of human voices, but those of the land as well. The poem grows increasingly into a Mythogeographical Anywhere, a place held together by a tangle of disparate rural elements: 'We solve into bits and pieces' (58). By increasingly relinquishing a sense of a coherent place, Riley's drifting enables him to become part of his subject:

letting the questions pass. I intend no lessons,  
I figure policy by the cramp of my toes (59).

This sense of wandering and opportunity in the countryside builds on a Situationist politics, in which the urban is exclusively spectacle-ridden and thus more suitable for drifting through. Smith and Riley's *dérives* provide rural arenas ripe for psychogeographical investigations, performing a *détournement* of the urban walk. Their adaptations of the Situationist derive, in a broad sense, reflect a determination to uncover the spectacle's grip of British pastoral landscapes. Shifting the Situationist mission into this green and pleasant land is an ambitious task, requiring a bold challenge to the role of the derive, and an even bolder challenge to an understanding

of the wider contemporary radical walking project. Writing in the influential essay *Basic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism*, Situationists Atilla Kotyányi and Raoul Vaneigem declare a ten point manifesto damning the urban's deep entanglement with capital:

### 1) Nothingness of urbanism and nothingness of the Spectacle

Modern capitalism, which organizes the reduction of all social life to a spectacle, is incapable of presenting any spectacle other than that of our own alienation. Its urbanist dream is its masterpiece ([1961] 2006, 86).

This 'urbanist dream' is what attracts contemporary literary psychogeographers to the historical and political layers of London, the implication being that the city is where capital, and thus Situationism, is concentrated, a claim unraveled by Smith and Riley. Writers such as Iain Sinclair and Will Self have dedicated much of their books to exposing the modern day spectacle of city life, as explored in the introduction. Smith (2014) highlights that there's another 'masterpiece' of the nothingness of the Spectacle that is often overlooked:

The underchalk is a notion that circulates among some psychogeographers; that the English rural landscape is a fabrication, a thin surface held up on stilts and braces, though which one might tumble into a void.' ([Loc 1417] 2014)

The rural as a fabrication is exactly what attracts Smith and Riley to it, the void underneath being as rich and promising as any dense city streets. The spectacle of pastoral perceptions and commodification is as alive as the more clear-cut spectacle of commercially-busy urban environments, and this recent psychogeographical expansion into the countryside is epitomised in Tarlo's Radical Landscape Poetry, spearheading a more unexpected and novel use of rural walking. I'll now go on to further contextualise and detail the British rural tropes which have attracted this expansion, revealing that, far from containing a void, the countryside is armed with the complications and challenges of a national and historical cultural ideal.

### **The British Village**

The British rural can be a divisive symbol, a hotbed of issues around nationalism, pastoralism and commodification. On the one side, Raymond Williams' warnings on rural nostalgia still hold an enduring presence in environmental writing, particularly in the work of David Lowenthal (1991) who describes the commodification of rural heritage as spawning an 'Englandland' (222)<sup>11</sup>. Lowenthal is responding to what he

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<sup>11</sup> During his plenary lecture on 'Brexit Ecocriticism' at the 2019 ASLE conference, Greg Garrard leans heavily on Williams *The Country and the City* to contextualize the 2016 Brexit vote, arguing that the text's warnings on a nationalized nostalgia are as relevant today as when Williams first published his study in 1973.

describes as the commercialism of heritage, a process that creates a superficial sense of landscape. Williams' *The Country and the City* ([1973] 1993) is an influential text that expands on the cultural dichotomies between perceptions of urban and rural life, a division that leads to unrealistic visions of both environments. For Williams, at the heart of the pastoral is a harking back to times of a perceived rural simplicity, a nostalgia that he tracks through over three millennia of literature to Hesiod's *Work and Days*, a ninth century BC text, which along with modern texts, refers to an idealized 'Golden Age' conveniently out of living memory (20). Williams comments that 'at the beginning of country literature, it is already far in past' (16), and that this nostalgia has led to a commodification of the rural and a legitimization of the socially unjust images it propagates, a stance well embedded by the time we arrive to contemporary literature. With this in mind, Williams declares the country home, as the central point of a tyrannical ordering of capital, people and resources, stands as a symbol of a deeply unjust society and should be treated as such nowadays. As demonstrated, Williams' Marxist theories are still influential, and Riley grapples with this stance throughout the poem. Countering Williams, cultural geographer Alastair Bonnet (2010) argues that nostalgia is a key part of anti-capitalist commerce and that Williams glosses over the fact that personal nostalgia is, and always will be, readily indulged in. A visit to a stately home, for example, is not necessarily a participation in a nationalist celebration of class divides, but simply an allowance of the personal nostalgia inherent in human beings (Kindle Loc. 141). And as a defender of rural



heritage, Paul Kingsnorth's *Real England* (2008) highlights that old village life should be celebrated for its ability to create and sustain tight-knit communities, an aspect of society damaged by the homogenization of retail and service outlets. This is a view that risks sentimentalizing the village and overlooking the economic hardships of rural life, a view that Riley and Smith use the *dérive* to challenge, yet indulge in in order to investigate.

It's the concept behind Riley's line 'moving through certainty', a line repeated throughout the collection, that puts these disparate narratives of the rural onto more of an equal footing, culminating in an almost bewildering level of a multiplicity of place. At times *Alstonefield* is, or tries to be, the rural 'golden age' that Williams warns us about. But it's also a darkly commodified place wracked with modernity that Kingsnorth complains of. This sense of a multiplicitous rural, and a narrator that indulges and exposes a range of pastoralisms, is reliant on Riley's sense of movement and Mythogeographical critique, an architecture of 'and and and' rather than 'either/or'. Riley is not moving *with* the narratives above, nor pushing *against* them, but walking *through* them in an act that goes beyond mere observation in order to embody their legitimacy in the landscape. Both the romantic tint and the political critique have space in Riley's village, and the text as a whole doesn't perform as a coherent narrative of country seduction or a damning indictment of rose-tinted rural perceptions, but more as a shift between these two extremes. As in the quote below,

*Alstonefield* is forever moving between the sanctity of 'pasture' and the more sinister presence of an unidentified invader:

we walk and talk and little notice how  
some recent grasp has thinned the pasture  
until the invasion is complete (22).

The invasive species here is a metaphor for the urban spectacle, the commodification and commercialism of the rural and its own cultural and literary perceptions. Riley's is also a personal journey through the lost promises and half-truths of his own pastoral dreams. The rose-tinted side of the village that shifts in and out throughout the collection is based on a fundamental concept of the pastoral, that the perfect ruralism is a literary or cultural construct (Gifford [1999] 2020).<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, Riley's village becomes a complex destination, both literal and literary, geographical and arcadian. *Alstonefield* is a stage in which the pastoral is both held up

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<sup>12</sup> There are many notable literary and cultural studies on the pastoral, with an exact definition ranging from the pastoral as strictly an ancient dramatic and poetic genre that ebbed and flowed in popularity up until the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, to a more expansive stance that the pastoral can cover any art and literature that confronts rural tropes today. There is no definitive definition of the term, but, in general, see Empson (1968) Williams (1973), Barrell and Bull (1975), Alpers (2005), Nicholson (2008) for the former, and Gifford (1999), who provides a thorough review contemporary pastoral prose, for the latter.

to the light, feared, and indulged in, all made possible by an engagement with a Situationist 'vortex' of place. The place is repeatedly referred to as a 'theatre' or 'arena' (1), where a 'sacred cast' (7), conducts 'impossible meeting[s]' (6) and performs a hundred stories with a hapless walker lost in the middle. This stumbling *through* spawns an ambiguity towards urban and rural dichotomies, the urban 'shopping' and 'transaction[s]' as much a part of the village as the city:

and shopping is a delight, what  
traces left of tribal pain lessen in the rain  
until every necessary transaction brandishes  
the rose of time, triumphantly above  
the stalls of love. Then the heart and the  
mountain range are one. What if the inter-  
vening nonsense turned out to be a small  
entertainment called City of Fear (24).

Although Riley forms a parody of commercialism, embedding an exaggerated emotion into shopping, the tone, at times, remains genuinely elegiac. The poem indulges in the 'rose of time', an acknowledged tint of romanticized country living in the face of the 'City of Fear'. Shopping, in other words, commercialism, lessens the pain of tribal division, suggesting commerce as an ancient peace-maker between factions, mirroring Bonnet's stance of a complicated commodification of the rural. This takes place just

before Riley zooms in on the small figurine of a shepherd for sale at a car boot sale, and Riley highlights that the encounter, a transaction, reflects a social need, one that ironically stands against the 'nonsense' of the 'City'. Riley concludes the encounter with a desire for 'something better than pastoral' (24), a response to the constructed nature of pastoral tropes and perfections, which are more brought to the village by the narrator rather than discovered there. These tropes and visions serve as the manifestation of a rural spectacle, Riley's encounters becoming increasingly cynical as the journey continues. The above quote is typical of Riley's self-conscious indulgences of the rural as a retreat, indulgences which are made all the more stark when juxtaposed with more critical, even hateful, reflections on just this kind of 'rose of time'. The tension of *Alstonefield* relies on building, re-building and eventually undermining this spectacle of commodified tropes (a shepherdess and the innocence it represents), the poem striving to sustain a pastoral vision, then finding disappointment in the unrealized nature of the construct and ultimately turning to a bewildering fantasy world in response to the banalization of the spectacle of British ruralism.

Smith's experiences of Cockington in *Anywhere* are also a striving towards that construct, an 'emotional landscape of relief and surprise' (Kindle Loc. 903) fighting against a bewildering identity in the modern world. His reflections on the village can illuminate Riley's shifting critique. Smith explains that the village, like many others, relies on the perception of a self-sufficient family system of a country house and village economy, a system that held until international trade broke 'the contract with things'

(Kindle Loc. 1087) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that nostalgia for ‘a more stable society’ (Kindle Loc. 1308) has some basis here, or at least can be constructed with greater ease. Conveniently stepping aside from the politics of feudalism, a simpler world emerges. The villagers tended the crops next to the village, harvested them, traded or consumed them, then returned to the soil for more, a localism reminiscent of Wordsworth’s ‘perfect republic of shepherds’ in his bestselling *Guide* to the Lake District.<sup>13</sup> Smith’s narrator Cecile explains how the heavily controlled heritage village fosters a historical oversimplification: the quiet seclusion of the village and its position among the meadows and farmland of South Devon creating an atmosphere which supports its own image, or façade, of rural simplicity. As Cecile spends more time in the village, the façade fades and tales of plague pits, capital punishment, rural poverty and feudal totalitarianism rise to the surface, the village becoming more of a study in the counter-pastoral, but with a thin, almost sinister surface. Smith doesn’t refute that there is a façade in the countryside, but it is more a façade contained *within*, rather than *of*, the countryside, the distinction meaning that the façade is itself an object of psychogeographic study. On entering the parkland enclosing the village and manor house, Cecile observes that a ‘young deer is being chased by ravens’ (Kindle Loc. 953)

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<sup>13</sup> As remarked by Readman (2018): ‘In his eyes, Lakeland had... ‘for many years been a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturalists, among whom the plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour ...’ (106).

but after being caught up in the village's 'intense weave of ideology', Cecile realizes that 'I am deer, and this place is ravens'. As in Riley's village, there is a sense that the rural chases the visitor rather than the other way around. It is a place where pastoral perceptions feed into a spectacle that grows beyond our control. Returning to the stage, in both texts numerous theatre analogies connect with rural idealism, reflecting the constructed yet tangible nature of the idealized pastoral. In Cockington, the topography of rolling hills and shady valleys provide the perfect springboard into the other worldly. Cecile describes how the long sweep of 'virgin' land in front of Cockington Court holds a special place in the psychology of performance:

The pictorial sweep of the Front Lawn is suggestive of the so-called 'empty space' of theatre, theatre's universalising fantasy that there is a neutral, virgin, non-space, a launch pad, a mere airport lounge in which great performers do greatness, unhindered. Such is a place like this, but without greatness; just the ache for something special (Kindle Loc. 1183).

For Smith, this is a sculpted sense of 'virgin', a contradiction reflecting the paradoxical construct of the pastoral, the countryside as a performance of itself, always promising, disappointing or tricking the narrator. This rural 'ache' is also painfully apparent in *Alstonefield*. Riley strives for an unhindered space in which love and hope rule the day. Like Smith's *Anywhere*, this is a 'half-interwoven' tangle, more of a space than a place, both direction-less and progressive, simple and complex. As Riley writes, 'Don't ask, 'where am I going?'/Ask, 'Where does such tenderness come from?' (51). This is in aid

of a 'Piazza del Popolo', a place signifying a community of 'self government', 'republicanism and democracy' (105), reflecting a more gentle Situationism. It's the conditions of the British rural that fosters such a project, and Riley and Smith build on a long cultural heritage of a perception of a contained and independent arcadia. Speaking of the Garden City boom and of other micro-managed endeavors to create a new village, Gillian Darley, writing in *Villages of Vision* ([1975] 2007), highlights the primary tension of such an endeavor:

...any attempt to resolve the anomaly of the artificial creation of a community, which replaces the subtly interwoven strands and patterns of a traditional settlement with an "instant" alternative (11).<sup>14</sup>

The paradox is clear. How to manufacture an organic community, especially 'instantly'? This is a tension that runs through Gillian's Twentieth Century utopian villages; a blend of new architecture and ill-defined old world values that are inevitably

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<sup>14</sup> Muir elaborates on this notion further on, suggesting that the village exists in a holistic relationship with its surroundings because of practicalities rather than desires: 'Much is made of the way in which English villages appear to belong to the surrounding landscape, a harmonious and almost organic part of their setting. The effect is produced partly by the piecemeal growth of the village, with each new building usually being adapted to the contours and features of its particular size, rather than conforming to the rigid geometry of a plan, and partly by the need in past ages to use the locally available building materials' (1980, 95).

let down by an over-bearing paternalism, the pastoral modernist projects of Bourneville and Port Sunlight being prime examples. But Riley doesn't need to answer these dilemmas. His village of vision is free to run riot on the page, picking up talking animals and bushes, old friends and political apparitions. This sense of the rural as a fiction, a fiction which we can freely construct on the page, is why Riley's *Alstonefield* thrives, existing between place and space:

Welcome home to a fiction of a rewarded labour.  
But what a house to die in! What a lay-by in  
which to abandon the hopeless machine and  
stumble off across fields among the slightly  
interested cows begging eternity to a clay bed (80).

Unlike many of Gillian's villages, Riley's is an inclusive vision, the pastoral construct both inhibiting and allowing Riley's fantastic village to take place. We also see a reflection of the Situationist naivete towards a more authentic rural, a stance frequently countered later in the text. Here, the 'rewarded labour', is a resistance against the urban spectacle of the 'hopeless machine' or urban banalization, ironically realized in the utopian rural projects Gillian describes. As opposed to the static, often gated and exclusive modern planned villages, Riley's *Alstonefield* is a place realized by, and in, movement: 'walking slowly I posit a perilous space/called here we succeed' (44). If, as described in the introduction, the spectacle is characterized by a static environment, Riley's challenge relies on motion, on passing through rather than



constructing. It's a continual disruption of Cockington's acceptance of itself as a 'land where time stands still' and an element of what poet Ian Davidson (2007) describes as the proclivity towards merging real and imagined geographies in radical landscape poetry. The page allows Alstonefield to move in a way its literal architecture can't. Yet the traditional image of the village still has a role to play. As real geographies, both Alstonefield and Cockington have complicated roles in modern society, and both writers draw on the cultural image of the stable village, revealing the urban spectacle as embodied in rural cultural perceptions, a banalization that reduces places to commercial and heritage enterprises. Richard Muir, author of *The English Village* (1980), describes the village as follows:

It is a place from which strength and reassurance may be drawn, where the past is always present, where neighbourliness is a way of life and the community is so small that no man needs to be a stranger (6).

Riley plays with this image, ultimately rejecting it for alternative fantasies. The village does have a strength and reassurance, as demonstrated by Riley's charming reflections on the car boot sale, but as his journey develops, the village takes on more sinister and poignant images. The 'dancing maidens' give way to a waltz with a rabbit; the carefree labourers are overtaken by a slave's song about the lash; the Gods and Goddesses in the fields fade away as a cup of cocoa with 'Old Mole' concludes with a warning

'I drifted into a certainty...  
Soldier Mole closes the circle and intones the office:  
Here's your cocoa, are you comfortable, let me put  
this shawl round your shoulders and I'll sit down  
here to the side. I'm so happy that you're back,  
I really am. The world is a hateful place' (58).

At first this retreat from the geography would seem to signal a retreat from a psychogeographical resistance, but Riley's consciously fictive encounters are there to reveal the strength of the Spectacle, fiction and fantasy being the only safe places of 'certainty' in which we could return to. Riley's resistance continues as it drifts away with these fantasies, back to the hateful world which must be negotiated.

### **The Spectacle, Poetry and the Urban**

The image described by Muir above still holds a powerful place in the national imagination, a hold maintained by the 'heritage-tourism machine' (2012, 5) which Smith's *Counter Tourism, The Handbook* aims to subvert. In *Anywhere*, Cecile is guided not by the village's information boards, but by some poetry she's been given:

step out of modernity...  
and into sanctuary  
from the pressures  
and distresses  
you're not alone

in a world in a world of its own (Kindle Loc. 996).

Just as Riley turns to an increasingly imaginary geography in order to understand the real world, Cecile recounts the literary history of the village and area. For Smith, the landscape is imbued with its literary and cultural resonances, and texts often overlap into reality. Cecile's poem (an anonymous one) forms a landscape that mirrors that of Cockington. The heavy rhyme of *pressures* and *distresses*, *alone* and *own*, contribute to an overbearing sense of being surrounded. The 'world in a world of its own' is reminiscent of a heavy surveillance of village life, Gillian Darley's 'vision of a paternalistic society' (171). Again, we get a sense of place as a performance of itself, a façade that, deceptively, mirrors its contents while obscuring them. This world of Cockington is sustained by a belief in itself, a village economy based on the tourism of authenticity, as Smith goes on to uncover. Cecile describes how she turns over a 'Cockington' (Kindle Loc. 1316) packet of sweets for sale in one of the shops and finds it labeled as manufactured in 'Market Harborough', a far cry from a quaint Devon village. Again, we find the 'contract with things is broken'. Cockington specializes in gifts marketed as local or individual, and these kinds of products carry extra weight because they stand for an accessible old world, a stand against globalization, as numerous cultural critics on nostalgia have highlighted (Lowenthal 1991, Boym 2003, Edensor 2003, Outka 2009, Bonnet 2016). As Elizabeth Outka (2009) explains, products that emphasize locality (even if their small print contradicts this) or heritage, form a

kind of paradoxical relationship to the pre-capitalist past they represent, reminiscent of Riley's shepherdess:

Their noncommercial aura made them appealing; their underlying commercial availability promised to make the simulation better than the original, for these new hybrids were accessible, controllable, and—in their ability to unite seemingly antithetical desires—tantalizingly modern... indeed, the paradox *was* the appeal (4).<sup>15</sup>

These products play with a sense of permanence and stability, a perception maintained by the participation of those visiting. Cecile describes Cockington as a 'hallucination' (Kindle Loc. 1074), a symbol of the exact opposite of what people herald it as. Rather than Muir's strength and reassurance, the village is actually 'the melting into air of what seems most solid: cattle, physical labour, bread, anvil' (Kindle Loc.

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<sup>15</sup> Bonnet (2016) disagrees with Outka on this point, writing that Outka's conclusion 'fails to register the uneven and unpredictable relationship between authenticity and capitalism' (27), favouring a more holistic relationship between the two. It's also worth noting that his study, *The Geography of Nostalgia*, is based on a more historical tradition of nostalgia in the present day, challenging Boym's (2003) claims that nostalgia is a product of modernity.

1073).<sup>16</sup> But the commodification of traditional village ideals is persistent, spawning a tourist economy that risks shutting down marginal narratives in favour of maintaining the dominant 'chocolate box' (Kindle Loc. 1301) appeal of the village.

At this point, it's worth reminding ourselves of the origins of the Spectacle. Debord's Situationists saw it as embodied in the banalization and modernization of 1950s Paris, a result of mass urban re-planning. Bonnet (2012) explains that 'Twenty-four percent of the surface area of the city was demolished and rebuilt between 1954 and 1974' (75).<sup>17</sup> The Spectacle, then, is about control and manipulation of place, a systemic overwriting of individual experiences of the environment to make way for a more commercially viable collective commodity. In Cockington, the Spectacle is a marketing device, a slippery sense of place utilized to sell goods. Cecile avoids the

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<sup>16</sup> Although unacknowledged it seems likely that the 'Melting into air' here is a reference to Marshal Berman's 1982 *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, the Experience of Modernity, and the phrase has clear Marxist associations.

<sup>17</sup> Bonnet cites Pinder (2000) for these figures and the above quote is taken from Bonnet's chapter, *Critical Nostalgia and the City* in Tina Richardson's *Walking Inside Out* (2012). It's also worth noting that although I have primarily used Bonnet's cultural geography research, he is also a radical walking researcher and has contributed numerous chapters and articles to the subject of contemporary radical walking. However, Bonnet's focus is primarily on nostalgia and the city, and, for the purposes of my study, his thoughts on the Situationists are only useful as far as they provide a background context, rather than contributing to the concept of the rural *dérive*.

usual Saxon village history in favour of stories of slavery, anti-semitism, and the devastation of war, highlighting the tension between the idyllic scene and its troubled realities. If, as Alastair Hemmens and Gabriel Zacarias (2020) state, 'The Spectacle is the dictatorship of social life by the economy' and thus 'we are reduced to its passive 'spectators' (152), Smith and Riley burst through the passivity of the village as heritage site. The Spectacle suppresses the complexity of the village while Riley calls for, 'less fairground and more circus' (24), an injection of theatre and subjectivity in a détournement of the chocolate-box village. Riley's introduction to *Alstonefield* contains two letters to poet Tony Baker, detailing the village as an 'arena' in which 'the soul puts on a show for the people':

I could see that it would be necessary to enter this scene again and again in search of the plot, threading questions and trials into the labyrinth, the complex displays of rock and vegetation, sheep-pens and graveyards, set up by the masters of the challenge, the pluralities that devised this spectacle and left it there like an open book (1).

The Spectacle is a challenge, a performance that beckons us to join in. For Riley it's the tensions of the pastoral and its cultural and personal resonances, narratives forced into fantastic re-makings. He takes Lowenthal's (1991) 'Englandland' (222), based on a historical critique of national commodification, and weaves in a poet's doubt. It's this searching for the plot, the threading of our own questions into the labyrinth of the rural landscape that makes Riley's walk a stand against the spectacle.

The collection refuses the heritage village vision, but doesn't deny its right for a place in the landscape. The charm of the Sherpedess exists, and should be acknowledged, but be treated with suspicion. Riley may be joining the spectacle of rural heritage, but he does so in order to subvert it, acting as a kind of undercover nostalgic. In one sense, Riley mirrors Debord's belief in the rural as a return to authenticity in the face of the spectacle-riddled city. As Bonnet explains:

...a number of important Situationists ended up as escapees from the city, going to live in rural locations that they imagined, as René Riesel puts it, as places where one can 'relearn practices' that in many respects make up the genuine riches of humanity'' (Bonnet, 2012, 78, citing Léauthier 2001, 13).'

Bonnet goes on to highlight that the Situationists upheld a nostalgic view of the rural, a view similar to the one Williams warns us of, and which Riley and Smith contend with. This romanticized vision fed into their perception of the city as a spectacle-ridden commodified environment. Riley plays on this same rural/urban dichotomy. The country is for the genuine working folk, whose walking is an act of returning to values:

They are working people, the musicians and plasterers  
who guide us back to where we live in a dawn halo  
of old and tired devices – see how they walk with their

consorts on the sweet paths of earnest learning and learned  
earning. You who die by my compass this curling morn (99).

This retreat makes sense. Although it's not the city that Riley retreats from, but the capitalized system of modern life, an endeavor that leads beyond the geographical village and into pastoral constructs. The good working people above are phantoms symbolizing hope in a renewed sense of values, reminiscent of characters from Morris's *News from Nowhere*. But *Alstonefield* highlights the fleeting nature of these visions. They are fragile constructs who can't survive sunrise, destined to live or die by the 'compass'. The speaker is seldom a stable narrator, and an 'I' shifts between that of Riley, that of the landscape and that of the Spectacle itself (as in the quote below). The owner of the compass above reflects a wider political system that wields control over the populace. The village is no longer a haven from 'urban despair', if it ever was, but a theatre of itself, a spectacle of modernity against a backdrop of the sublime. The deeper Riley delves into rural fantasy, the more the city follows. But the division between a cold unfeeling city infrastructure and a rural community full of freedom and individuality is far from clear-cut. The cold reach of modernity is everywhere in Riley's village; the 'sombre suits' (77) and the 'hey, I could sell that' (76) mentality, and at times Riley's protests turn into a call for a more clear cut Situationist anarchy. Yet Riley cannot allow the impossibility of the rural arcadian dream to overwhelm his project. As the economy turns the countryside into 'grey/prairies scattered with Disneylands



eating their own/flesh' (74) Riley calls us 'back to earth', 'where despair and love build cairns/on the horizon' (74) and we can

Throw the book into the sea, the balance,  
and applaud the metropolis crumbling into its own goal (74).

In other words, the arcadian dream of a gentle and leisurely rural existence, despite its commodification into a Disney Land, is still worthy of belief. This is only possible in the spaces of the poem. *Alstonefield* allowing a stage for the retreat into cultural fictions and half-truths. But unearthing the urban/rural dichotomy, even to challenge it, runs into the realms of nostalgia, and the role of longing in psychogeography is well covered by contemporary critics. Nostalgia is often leveled as a criticism of their outlook rather than used as a critical framework, as Bonnet explains in his chapter *Critical Nostalgia and the City in Tina Richardson's Walking Inside Out* (2012):

... nostalgia played a creative and productive role in shaping the Situationists' hostile attitude toward late modernity and the society of the spectacle. This was a nostalgia that acted not as a retreat from time but as a challenge to 'frozen time,' not a desire for all things gone but for landscape as an arena of popular identity and memory (77).

Bonnet is proposing a radical nostalgia, a longing belonging to more of a country progressive than armchair sentimentalist. Despite their romanticisation of the rural,

the Situationists did not want to unwind time to Williams's Golden Age. They wanted the opposite; a recognition that the passage and nuances of time were being swallowed up by modernity; the collective consuming the individual. For the Situationists, the past should be appreciated and explored, rather than progressed away from. Memory and small-scale heritages meant nothing to the machine of Modernism. This politics runs through *Alstonefield*, which although may feature the 'frozen time' of cultural constructs, does so in order to play the spectacle at its own game. Riley describes how, in the urban environment, 'what is claimed but self?', whereas walking in the country is 'keeping to the edge of the necessary plot' (7), a retreat that chimes with Situationist thought on the homogenizing urban spectacle. As demonstrated, there are numerous contradictions in Riley's stance towards the rural. At times it is the retreat of pastoral literature, and an almost clichéd urban/rural dichotomy is upheld, but these are generally and increasingly overshadowed by a more nuanced to-ing and fro-ing from the urban to a rural spectacle. As Smith and Outka have explored, it's soon clear that the spectacle of commercialized tropes of locality and place, are as bound up in the rural as the city, and Riley and Smith's retreats are very quickly hampered by the flows of cultural and national landscape identities.

## **Walking Tactics, Multiplicity and the Return of the Retreat**

Just as Cecile Oak puts herself at the mercy of Cockington, Riley's narrative welcomes the self-doubt, contradictions and confusions that the village throws at him, an aspect shared by other Radical Landscape Poets, as Tarlo (2011) explains: 'This is a poetry full of questions, uncertainties, self doubts and self-correction' (12). As she goes on to explore, this is also a poetry of motion, a resistance against a static pastoral and a realignment of contemporary radical poetry's focus on the urban. Motion and pace play a big part of this. Walking is the method by which to fully open oneself up to the landscape. It allows you to feel the terrain, fostering collaboration and self-reflection, and as an underdog sense of travel, embodying a kind of anti-establishment independence of thought. Walking as resistance is not limited to psychogeography, as Rebecca Solnit points out in *Wanderlust* (2002), highlighting the many political protests and pilgrimages that have used walking as an act of peaceful disturbance.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Francesco Careri *Walkscapes* ([2002] 2017) gathers statements and quotations from avant-garde walking artists and collectives, including the Situationists. The pattern that runs through the Land Art, nomadism and the architecture he discusses is still one of resistance, but a resistance towards a more prescribed or romantic view of walking as a pedestrian activity that doesn't go beyond observing our environments. Francesco's book aims to assert walking as a potentially radical practice. The boundary between

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<sup>18</sup> See also Refugee Tales (2016), Herd. Et. Al., for a more contemporary example of protest-marching.

the radical activities Francesco collects together and the Situationist psychogeography is narrow, but relies on intention<sup>19</sup>. As Francesco explains, it comes back to the homogenizing nature of the spectacle:

The *dérive* made it possible to steer one's way through this sea and to direct the point of view in a non-random way toward those zones that more than others appeared to embody an elsewhere capable of challenging the society of the spectacle (165).

Highlighting and engaging with these 'elsewhere[s]' shifts the focus of city streets away from commercial enterprise, combatting the spectacle by exposing and alienating it. In psychogeographical terms, the walker has the potential to move against the dominant flows in the landscape. It welcomes individual doubt and reflection as to which route to take, with a special hypersensitivity to the surroundings that highlight their multiplicity. Moving *through*, rather than following the prescribed paths and flows to their destinations, say shops and restaurants, shifts the activity of the streets from primarily commercial to primarily leisurely. It's this walk that allows

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<sup>19</sup> Francesco, as well as other literary and artistic critics such as Ford (2005), and Goldsmith (2011), and the Situationists themselves (Khayati [1966] contained in Knabb (2006) 222-228), also cite Dadaist practices as an influence on the *dérive*.

Riley to slip free of the world of knowledge and certainty and dwell in the multiplicity of motion:

...To know is an evasion.  
this walk at its furthest point relinquishes  
the driver's seat and stands nowhere at the dark  
junction not knowing which direction to take  
or what shall ever be the gain (50).

This doubt of direction and aim fosters a sense of possibility, the heightened perception of getting lost and relinquishing control key to understanding the contemporary radical walking movement. Smith (2015), in defining *radical* as opposed to *romantic* walking and writing practices, uses Robert Macfarlane's sense of a long and often arduous journey, for example in *The Old Ways* (2012), to epitomize a commodification of walking that radical walking resists, commenting that Macfarlane's travelogues

...have a predilection for interpreting the journey; when that happens the mobility solidifies into a commodity that is reassuringly unique and recognisable... Radical walking tops all this by its clinging to the rim of the abyss not as an extreme moment on a mountain pass but as the *modus vivendi* or precarity that Mythogeography promotes...' (54-55).

Smith's and Riley's rural *dérives* refute any feelings of the walk as self-enlightenment or a grasp at knowledge, rather walking is a multiplication of meaning and identities, rather than an escape from them. *Anywhere* and *Alstonefield* are packed with more questions than answers and they refuse any sense of a reassuring solidity, making a coherent analysis more difficult, but also combatting the spectacle with the contradictions of an 'and and and' of observations. At one point, Riley remarks that the 'silence I contain' (72) is all he ever found in the rural, reflecting Smith's (2015) approach to the self and the vital role of subjectivity in radical perceptions of the landscape:

The struggle for the subjective in psychogeography is not an added bonus or a self-indulgence allowable once the serious business is complete; it *is* the serious business. The architecture of multiple selves rather than the architecture of the streets is the key terrain of psychogeographical change (38).

It's this questioning of identity in relation to the environment that leads Riley on, his voice splintering into other characters by the end of the journey. By asserting the self, and its memories and emotions, in the landscape, Riley takes on a Situationist's call for multiplicity. Although there is a personal reflection in *Alstonefield*, it is more a reflection from and of the landscape Riley has traversed, rather than a sense of self. These reflections are more on general humanity than an individual history. After describing a cosy domestic scene, Riley remarks that 'none of it means anything but a

long track from a death to a birth' (51). There is room for nihilism in the village, and the presence of death and time is everywhere. 'We heal into death' (58), moving towards an end that reflects the journey of Riley's night-long odyssey. The village reflects Riley as a youthful hopeful, a political radical, a reluctant realist, a nostalgic pastoralist, and a visionary surrealist. The fact that the landscape has a place for all these shifts is down to the act of moving slowly *through* it, of merging our lives, hopes and fears with its own. The passage of the poem becomes about a deeper human understanding of the rural environment, but more significantly, it's just as much about an understanding of one another. This is led by Riley's sense of self in Alstonefield, a self that is, at times, contradictory, tormented and joyous, and the arena of the rural allows these tensions. Cecile's explanation behind her walk in Cockington is reminiscent of Riley's drifting, highlighting the role of subjectivity and as Smith (2017) states in *Anywhere*, a 'self-mythologising' (Kindle Loc. 8010) of the self:

...there is no art to what I am doing! I am going with its flow. Crudely looping, and the space is looping, the texts are looping; it has everything to do with me. It has its sting in me (Kindle Loc. 1116).

This mythology of the self is still reliant on the landscape, its spaces looping around the focal point of the walker. The sting of Alstonefield is in its hope for a new world. Riley is torn between two key narratives, which strain against the borders of personal and collective memories. The first is of a space of renewed unity with the land and a

community built on shared values, a vision sprung from the trappings of pastoral retreats, a world that 'time's cynicism can't fill' (54), and the opposing narrative, a personal disappointment in the rural, a place already too cut up by 'Westminster' 'mafioisi' (22) and modernity to foster any kind of hope for an equal future. These two strands clash continually. At one point Riley encounters the owner of a phantom café who refuses to take any payment, and explains his lack of business acumen as follows:

*...the principle  
is very clear. To construct a space in which  
worth is realizable and whatever anyone is bears  
its meaning forward so that time lived, always  
at an end, holds at any point its own prize where  
the transaction is returned across hope. This is simple,  
is virtue, is the act of the unacknowledged giver (65).*

This 'space' can be taken for Riley's mission for *Alstonefield* as a whole. The simple act of giving away a product, in this case a sausage, is a symbol for a new economic system, one based not on commodities, but a looser sense of hope and value in individuals. 'Time lived' holds its own prize. This will be a place beyond monetary value, where life fulfils itself and transactions are replaced by gifts, a Situationist reframing of commercial streets. Money is a persistent theme in *Alstonefield*. The valley has never 'suffered profit' (34). The villagers smile and dance



'in the face of profit' (39) whereas the 'machine' (39), the 'production unit' (47) of modernity is fed by death and cash. In response, *Alstonefield* maintains an aimlessness, a fight against the despair of 'work and structure' (42). In Riley's vision, it becomes a 'plural space' (43) where you can feel like a 'citizen not a subject' (43), again playing on a sense of rural freedom, a realm not subjected to a centralised authority, adapting a Situationist call for a new urbanism (43). This place, or rather space, mirrors Debord's famous *never work* slogan painted on the streets of Paris (Ford 2005, 23). It relies on a radically revalued sense of commodity, a system of people rather than economics. Returning to Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, we see that the concept of the commodity is central to the spectral flows of power keeping people apart:

The world at once present and absent that the spectacle holds up to view is the world of the commodity dominating all living experience. The world of the commodity is thus shown for what it is, because its development is identical to people's estrangement from each other and from everything they produce (Kindle Loc. 213).

*Alstonefield* provides a refuge from that world, a return to small scale production, a promise to renew Smith's 'contract with things' and ensure that solid things don't melt into air. This is that first narrative fueled by a collective memory (however faulty), of a holistic simplicity with the soil that extends to an economy. But before we fall into a sequel of Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Riley's objective is hampered by his own stake

in the world outside of the retreat, an awareness that anchors the village firmly in the present and bursts any utopian balloons. To the phantom café owner, he replies, 'I know, but my heart shakes for the cold world (65).' A sense of personal realism surfaces throughout Riley's encounters with this new space, and a tormented and regretful self resurfaces:

I don't blame you  
for running love against profit, O lubric self,  
but I know the victim well. I know the sore  
throat, the scratched palm, the sleeping bag  
in the shop doorway (12).

In other words, 'Pennies are good shit'. But the village stands for more than an alternative economy or way of life. It's a chance of a renewed politics on a human to human level. This is an embodied politics that values a holism with the tangibility of the landscape, the body and mind reflecting the very real ground beneath our feet, a 'republicanism... in the form of what we are' (45). But Riley never allows himself fully into that world. It's presented fleetingly, glimpsed in apparitions who disperse soon after appearing. The political dream remains just that, a vision to be longed for on these 'godless terraces' (75). We are reminded again that what we're presented with is not a reflection of the landscape, but a dialogue with its cultural and personal heritages. As well as a torn sense of self, the pastoral serenity is interrupted by

frequent jarring moments of technology and modernity. Towards the end of the poem we're firmly jolted out of the tender meadows when the sunrise brings about the rhythms of 21<sup>st</sup> Century agriculture:

... Soon the farmworkers  
will be out in those mobile telephone booths spreading  
hip-hop music on the land (100).

Riley's journey is bombarded by this complex multiplicity of place, a landscape ever-shifting between place and space. The title of *Alstonefield* also engages with a long tradition of place-name poetry, a 'loco specificity' that, as Neal Alexander and David Cooper point out,

is inextricably indexed, of course, to a line of pastoralism which runs through English poetry from the Romantics to Thomas Hardy to Edward Thomas to A.E. Houseman to Eliot.' (2013, Kindle Loc. 296)

But unlike the pastorals above, the title of Riley's collection is the most fixed element of the narrative, a struggling anchor for the self, and a constant re-arrangement of place in the face of the banalization of the spectacle. As a self-conscious construct, *Alstonefield* can partially indulge in pastoral tropes without risk of over sentimentalizing the landscape. In other words, the text is not designed to seduce

us into country living, but rather to demonstrate that the landscape is haunted with its opposite; the pastoral with the anti-pastoral, rural poverty and rural fecundity. Riley frequently breaks any narratives to address or instruct the reader or elaborate on the act of writing the poem: 'Several pages of worked/time graft my trust to this fair lecture' (10), an act that underlines the poem as a path to both pastoral critique and, paradoxically, the realisation of the pastoral enterprise. This is a poetry that forms the basis for its subject, that elevates the book into a navigable place which holds opportunities the physical landscape doesn't. The vision of *Alstonefield* is as real as the page in our hands.

And the voice is broken before  
the alterior face, the future is cast open  
on the page. (15)<sup>20</sup>

This constant awareness of construct doesn't mean that we don't, as Smith puts it, 'trip down the rabbit hole'. The village's multiplicity means it treads the thin lines of the pastoral, dipping in and out of sentimentality and indulging in the retreat as much as undermining it. The pastoral retreat, as Gifford explains, is 'a return to essentials; it

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<sup>20</sup> See also 'The shoes/ of this text, recommended for poetical discretion, are/Clarks with firm soft soles' (69).

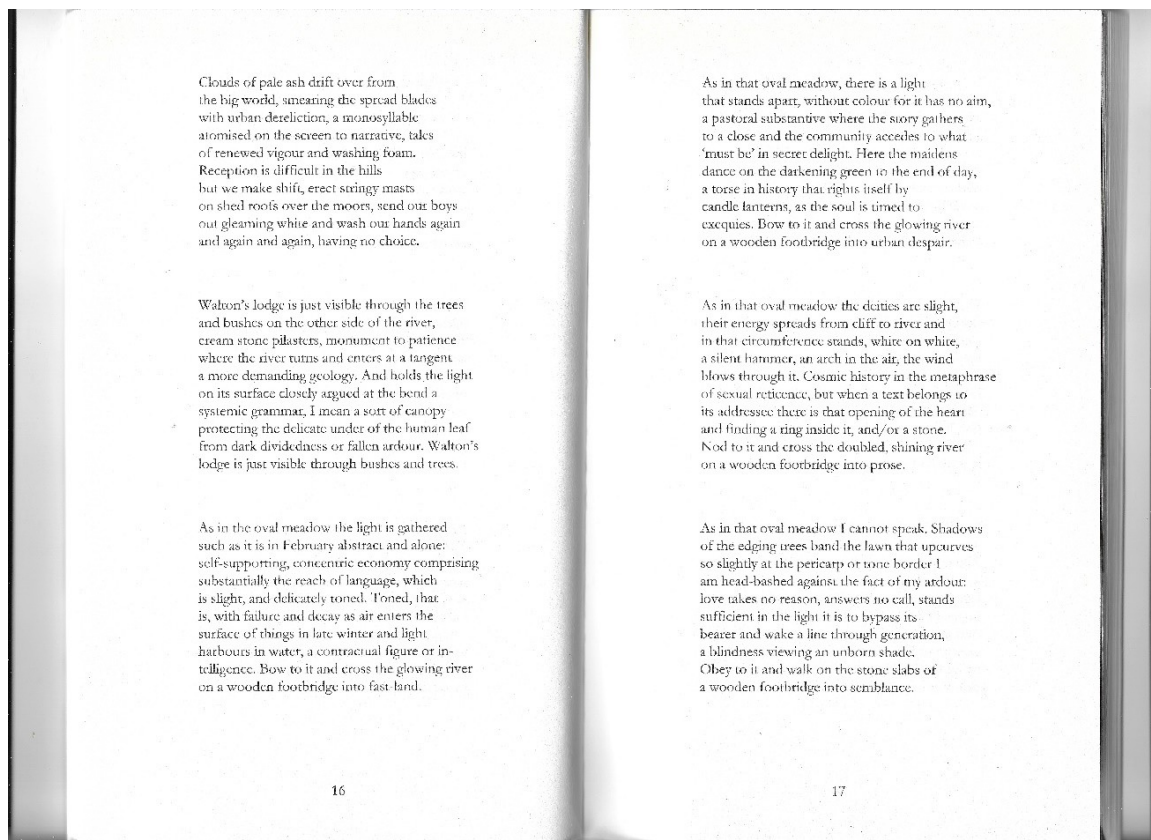
is reductive in a way that can be either simplistic or profound' ([1999] 2020, 56).

*Alstonefield* is certainly the latter, with the spectacle embodying the simplistic, but Riley frequently nods towards the urge for the simple country value of an anti-intellectual Situationist joy, 'a keeping to the edge of the necessary plot' (7). Avoiding any truth and knowledge, in other words, certainty, plays a powerful part in Riley's village, and again we return to the idea of movement in the landscape. Alexander and Cooper (2013) group *Alstonefield* with Oswald's *Dart* and Clark's *The Hundred Thousand Places*, journeys 'in, through and across' that 'reveal the meshwork of habitats, microclimates and ecologies that make up any singular place' (Kindle Loc. 252). This movement means wandering through truths, never dwelling long enough for them to take hold, Smith's embracing of subjective truths. Riley's 'moving through certainty' is a pastoral statement against both the politics and the cultural images of the rural. It's the action of writing the landscape with the self in mind, a continual rediscovery of place and the potential of creating it anew with every step. Yet this is not an anthropocentric message. The journey is fragile, gone as soon as it happens, and so writing and walking become a way of constructing a myriad of spaces within a place. The walk is as much on the page as on the land, and the bound text of *Alstonefield* forms an alternative landscape which lives within and yet beyond:

...The night

collapses nightly into this loss, and someone has to  
walk it into day through the dark of dreams, scratch  
the writing across the sloping desk-top over the  
furrows and ink pits (93).

The walk on the page is a method of moving through the spaces of place in a more tangible way, a record of the near-invisible narratives of landscape. Yet Riley's form, a consistent column of stanzas that rarely break rank, is not an obvious visual cue for a walk. Whereas Allen Fisher's *Place* (1974) or Iain Sinclair's *Lud Heat* (1975) offer more visually staggered depictions of journeys, Riley's uniformity signals a journey through ideas, the form a steady epic through a chaotic world. Riley rarely ventures from the form demonstrated below, maintaining three stanzas per page held together by frequent enjambment.



If the text is a landscape, Riley's does not visually reflect the turns and hills of Alstonefield, but relies on a more un-drifting form in which his drift can rebel against. The uncertainty of his walk juxtaposes the confident squares of text, a contradiction between lyric efforts and the slippery subject they deal with.

### ***The Wine of Sleep: Memory and Nostalgia***

For Riley, walking through the village means also treading the line between the sentimental and the progressive. For example, the 'globe of love' mentioned earlier, a

phrase that would, at first, seem more at home in the Post-Romantic canon than under a banner of Radical Landscape Poetry, gains depth with some more context:

Gradually in the wine of sleep a completed memory  
compassed by care makes a globe of love. Very  
little I can do with it, alone. But it is like  
a repair depot that continues through governments  
and wars at the end of a small back road where  
carefree labourers stroll around dark and competent (11).

And further on,

It was my wine to rest by the stone wall at  
summer's end far from Cambridge, where  
chthonic severance dictates endless toil (11).

*Love* is a word rarely used in Radical Landscape Poetry, a genre which tends to value the gritty and unsold elements of the traditional landscape, but love is everywhere in *Alstonefield*. In fact, Riley establishes early on that if all humans disappeared, we would leave behind 'the only thing we are, a record of love' (6). Here it is 'a completed memory/compassed by care', an acknowledgement of the role of memory, both personal and cultural. The image is based on the understanding that



memory is notoriously and wonderfully unreliable, and in this rural context, Riley nods at a long tradition of rural reminiscing. As explored earlier, Williams' (1973) much cited escalator details Britain's long history of rural novelists and poets, most notably Thomas Hardy, harking back to better times just in or just beyond living memory. Unreliable memory is a stalwart of the pastoral genre. Gifford describes how Robert Jeffries, author of the 1892 *The Toilers in the Field*, championed the peopled and labored rural, stating that 'In the life of English Agricultural labourers there is absolutely no poetry, no colour'. This firm anti-pastoral stance rests on an awareness of memory's fallibility, but as Jeffries goes on to explain, even the most ardent realists are susceptible to rose-tinted recollections: 'memory, like the sun, paints to me bright pictures of the golden summer time' (quoted in Gifford [1999], 2020, 127). Where does this leave Riley's carefree labourers taking a stroll in 2003? It comes back to the construct. Riley's vision taps in to a wider cultural perception of the rural as embodying a kind of national memory of origin, a pre-modern and pre-capitalist closeness to the soil. This is a vision drifting across the fields of Alstonefield, plaguing, delighting and ultimately disappointing our narrator who must grapple with a landscape saturated with meaning. This pattern continues throughout the text. As often as Riley sets up the journey as a pastoral retreat ('to set the burden of technology aside like a wet rucksack' (83)), he punctures that 'globe of love' to deliver a home truth of the countryside:

...It would be specious to pretend  
That any bit of British Countryside is anything  
But an agricultural factory marked Piss off (23).

Anger over a mis-sold or let-down rural is especially emotional in a British context. As Tim Edensor (2002) explains, as a concept, the British rural has an enduring presence in our society, writing that such landscapes are...

so ideologically charged that they are apt to act upon our sense of belonging so that to dwell within them, even for a short time, can be to achieve a kind of national self-realisation, to return to 'our' roots where the self, freed from its inauthentic – usually urban – existence, is re-authenticated (38).

The rural as a re-authentication of self, a Situationist ideal, plagues Riley's walk, but crucially, as explained above, Riley does not dwell in any one space for long. Jeffries 'golden summer time' is a vision indulged in but ultimately rejected. Gifford (2020) goes on to highlight that this is a key tension underlying rural writing: 'The difficulty for the anti-pastoral writer [is] in finding a voice that can be celebratory whilst corrective, that does not adopt the very vices it is criticizing...' (135). Returning to the extract above, it's the act of picking up a collective memory that makes it real, not its historical or political basis in fact. That this memory can be completed is a more complex idea, and suggests a kind of disembodied restoration, a memory made real in the mind but not actualized in the world, in other words, 'compassed by care'. This is part of a wider

pattern of longing in the poem and represents the primary tension underlying Riley's encounter, between an urge for a restorative realm and the knowledge of its impossibility. So just as the poem provides an arena for the possibilities of love, a rare opportunity for completion, Riley admits that 'the bulk of love obstructs all my fantasy' (10), a distraction from a 'you' from the world outside the village. Upkeeping the fantastic village demands all your attention. We are again reminded that the spaces that the text forms is not the same as the place the text stems from, the 'inscribed line' here either being part of the landscape of the page, or the text of the landscape:

Eye-bright, the inscribed line, the river's margin.  
And a glow-worm at the path's edge, I thought  
it was the world shining in love's desert.  
I passed it by in the warm night thinking of  
a republic of the (heart, mind) republic of the,  
for and by the, soul-light or nothing... (34)

The 'globe of love' is a collective ideal returned to throughout the collection. There are frequent mentions of a landscape that holds its people, repetitions of 'enclosure', 'edge', 'centre', 'ring', 'rim', 'lip', 'oval', and ultimately this boils into a sense of *Alstonefield* as an intense concentration of pastoral tropes, a landscape that triggers narratives of love, loss and hope. This is a contained space with an uncontainable story and so it is no wonder that the walk spirals increasingly into wild sub-plots of dancing

rabbits, talking moles and bushes moonlighting as surgeons, their existence impossible to understand:

So answering we die. But the green road continues.  
It is itself death we are in. As are the berries  
hanging in the great red clusters on the dry hawthorns.  
As I pass down the valley each bush calls my name  
and clearly states its thesis in the available space  
Of the night... (84).

...goodbye to the soldiers, let a holocaust of nostalgia  
and love spread all around us! (85)

But the surrealism has stemmed from a project central to Riley's pilgrimage, that of a sense of restoration. This is not inherently a nostalgic urge, but we can see the role of the emotion in Riley's negotiation with what the land could be/could have been, and what he encounters on the walk. A more thorough discussion on defining nostalgia can illuminate Riley and Smith's multiplicitious reflections of place. Svetlyana Boym (2001) writes that nostalgia can fit into two categories: restorative and reflective, categories that are ways of giving shape and meaning to longing. The distinction between them provides an insight into *Alstonefield* as a tense blend of tangible pasts and their impossibility:

Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time (41).

Restorative nostalgia demands a strict understanding of truth, a belief that a slice of the past existed completely as we understood it to. Only then can it be recreated in its entirety. As explored earlier, Riley's truths are too multiple and contradictory to be this perfect. Restorative nostalgics also deny the cracks and imperfections of time and desire an environment that looks both old and new at the same time. Boym puts forward the example of the restoration of the Sistine Chapel in the 1980s, in which the Vatican faced a choice of restoring Michelangelo's work in such a way that it reflected their interpretation of his original aims for the chapel, or to restore it with new artists, a kind of 'creative collaboration with the masters of the past', as many sixteenth and seventeenth century artists had done before. The Vatican opted for the former, and Boym outlines the concerns this raises:

What is more authentic: original images of Michelangelo now preserved through time, or a historical image that aged through centuries? What if Michaelangelo rejected the temptation of eternal youth and instead revels in the wrinkles of time, the future cracks of the fresco (46).

This is not to say that Riley's village aims at a restoration of the cultural ideal of the English village, more that he recognizes glimpses of that construct, some real and some fantasy, in the landscape around him. Riley gives agency to those 'wrinkles of time', forever questioning the future cracks of the countryside, cracks which widen with drifts through time and place.

### **Conclusion: Dancing, Love and Landscape**

*Alstonefield* disrupts the cultural village construct more than restores it, but Riley's elegiac imagery frequently plays with the idea of an idealized simpler time. However, the village shifts so much that we cannot call Riley's project restorative. Passing a cave rumoured to be where 'A cobbler/his wife and seven children lived within living/memory', Riley describes the scene:

...wattle awnings over the entrance and  
in the evenings they sat round a fire singing  
a narrative polyphony in divided head-tones  
while the weather suited itself and death hung

suspended (37-37).

This is a life so idealized that it can only ever be looked back on, a death-less pastoral existence. We get closest to restoration in Riley's utopian handling of love. The poem frequently incites the emotion as the basis for *Alstonefield*, and the final few lines of the 101 page epic signal a fading out of the village and the 'peace and serenity' it conveys:

...Lets call it a new day –  
a tired man motionless in a car thinking feeble thoughts.  
Where are you going, dove, this pale wine  
of a new day? Bundle of nerve calling over the slates  
and pausing on the wires that conjoin, where  
are you off to now? I'm going right out of this world,  
and I'm taking your love with me (101).

In *Alstonefield*, love is bound up with hope. It's a strength from which a new world can be built, one that takes on the pastoral tropes of innocence, community and the corruption of the urban. As Riley explains, 'virtue is what people return to' (58). Riley's frequent use of love, for example, does not automatically signify a restoration. In fact, it shows the opposite, that the vision of Alstonefield we've experienced relies on a basis of hope and love because it has no historical grounding. Riley champions the role of love in a landscape poetry that Alexander and Cooper (2013) describe as pivoting on 'process and flux' (Kindle Loc. 237), commenting that contemporary landscape poets are looking for places that are 'unsettled, in process and radically open to change'. For *Alstonefield* this is exactly why love is needed. It forms a human grounding to the pastoral shifts that complicate the British rural. This complication brings Alstonefield firmly into a reflective nostalgia, which, as Boym explains

...is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude. Re-flection suggests new flexibility, not the reestablishment of stasis (49).

This new flexibility towards the past is characterized in the village's multiplicity, at times the landscape's sublimity overshadowing human frailty:

restless pastures seem to suck light  
into themselves as if nothing human had  
any right to it, they say, make yourself  
gods and better, or leave it alone... (12).

Again, not a genre we might associate with a brand of poetry that, as Harriet Tarlo (2012) explains, aims to push ideological boundaries. She explains that the role of Radical Landscape Poetry is a linguistic pushing of the boundaries, seeking out a language that 'dances and defies expectation' (9) a 'deceptively simple' approach to language and landscape. *Alstonefield*, as we have seen throughout this chapter, exceeds these definitions. The language of the sublime is alive and well in the village; the valley's sweeping light-shows and hills populated with 'summit ghosts' (63). But the sublime is also there to be ridiculed. A particular 'folding' of the land prompts this passage:



...In the night it stands as a thing  
of millennia while school parties and solitary  
selves pass below with their notebooks and  
note in their books, 'This big arch of black  
rock made me think that the earth is a thing  
merely witnessed by me and all my kind, miss (60).

The landscape is both stunning and playful. Tarlo's 'dance' is especially significant here, an action that symbolizes merriment in the face of reason, as Riley remarks: '...the fox dances/with the hare and the lamb adores its tomb' (37). Riley's village repeatedly resists any attempt to pin it down. Among the scenes of sublimity, we have other scenes of half-absurd modernity: the locals too busy watching TV to notice that the stone barn shifts position in the night; the 'fair contours' of the map robotized by 'warlords' (62); the cars running down walkers with 'the work day whip' (23). This is not a landscape to be defined and shelved into a pastoral to anti-pastoral spectrum. The village itself is the spectrum, and as such invites us to dance, not write, with this mass of multitudes. In fact, dancing is central to the whole enterprise and Riley instructs us to 'Relax the throat,/hold harm at arm's length and dance with it' (37) among other frequent images of dancing contours. It is not our place to understand the village, but to move through it and in that sense participate with its myriad of meanings. Key to this is being open to the perils of the path, of being willing to sacrifice ourselves to multiple pathways.

Love and loneliness are fitting ways to end *Alstonefield*. Moving through certainty takes courage, determination and a tormented honesty. As mentioned, at one point, Riley calls for 'Less fairground and more circus' (24), and this is exactly what the landscape responds with; rural politics and self-contradictions forming a multiplicity of layers that punctures any scheme for a renewed 'globe of love'. Riley reintroduces play into the British village, dancing over delicacies of a land stripped by world-views, and embraces personal fantasies as having legitimate agencies in the landscape, maintaining an 'and and and' of stances. This is in order to create not a 'university's poetry', but a 'poetry that occupies its moment completely' (35), a distinction valuing movement and image over ideology. And yet there is a progressive politics in Riley's village and the act of moving through it in such a way. If, as Smith (2014) says, 'The feeling body, alive with thoughts, is a resistance; theatre and insurgency combined' (186), then Riley's journey is categorized by such resistance. In *Alstonefield*, the landscape spills across narratives, savouring the tensions and contradictions that walking opens up. Riley offers a renewal of Situationist *dérive* that echoes Smith's rural mythogeography, providing an elegy for a multiplicitious cultural landscape and a reframing of the urban *dérive*. His practice questions the Situationist's obsession with cities, acting out a psychogeographic investigation that proves the rural as an environment as commodified, bewildering and powerful as any city streets.

## **Chapter Two**

**Howe's Documentary Détournement:**

***Frolic Architecture, Captive Words* and Archival**

**Resistance**

## Howe's Documentary Détournement: *Frolic Architecture*, *Captive Words* and Archival Resistance

Détournement has a peculiar power which obviously stems from the double meaning, from the enrichment of most of the terms by the coexistence within them of their old and new senses (Debord [1958], 2006, 67).

The critique of the dominant language, the détournement of it, is going to become a permanent practice of new revolutionary theory... Détournement confirms the thesis, long demonstrated by modern art, that words are insubordinate, that it is impossible for power to totally coopt created meanings, to fix an existing meaning once and for all (Mustapha Khayati [1966], 2006. 223).

Susan Howe's *Frolic Architecture* (2010) appropriates text from the archives of eighteenth-century theologian Jonathan Edwards and his family, a collection of 'letters, diaries, notebooks, essays, and more than twelve hundred sermons' (Howe, 2014, 45).<sup>21</sup> The result is a complex play with space and time, each poem a collage of fragments from archival transcripts. Howe talks about being drawn to Edwards because of 'his fire-eating sermons where each judging word has its own particular cell' (2014, 45). As a preacher, Edwards understood the power, both revelatory and

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<sup>21</sup> The *Frolic Architecture* sequence is contained in Howe's *That This* (2010).

deceptive, of language, and his voice captured Howe over the course of many years. In *The Midnight* (2003), she mentions his 'restrained but furious eloquence' (43). In a response brewing over the seven years building up to *That This* (2010), Howe exposes certain phrases of his and his family in order to mine them, alienating them from the confines of their origins and releasing them towards the possibilities of the expansive page. This is a modern and adapted use of a Situationist détournement, defined by Guy Debord as a collage of two or more 'autonomous element[s]', the tension of which comes from an interplay between layers of 'double meaning'; 'the enrichment of most of the terms by the coexistence within them of their old and new senses' (Knab, [1959] 2006, 67). Howe's poems are untitled, and the sequence reads as a discussion of archival confines and an uncertain documentary afterlife. The Situationists, who coined, developed, and practiced détournement as an act of resistance, used it to appropriate elements, often disparate elements, in order to form a new relationship, or, even better, a series of relationships.<sup>22</sup> For the situationists, a détournement of language aimed to create, as Zacarias (2020) explains, 'a truly communicative language' (229), akin to what Howe describes as the 'felt fact' of poetry, a phrase I'll go on to explore. For Howe, the détourned elements strike a

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<sup>22</sup> As numerous critics have pointed out, and as I'll go on to explain later, the artistic act of détournement was not especially unique among the avant-garde, and the Situationists leaned on it so heavily in order to position themselves in the same canon as Dada and the Surrealists, rather than differentiate themselves from them (Zacarias, 2020, 214).

complex interplay of the past and future, the Edwards' texts released into a new and uncertain context, a confusion that forms a further imprisonment. Détournement's focus is straightforward, designed by Guy Debord to be adopted and adapted by everyday users of public space. The artistic practice, characterized by collage and layering of disparate visual and textual elements, aimed to expose the flows of power, either in a place or authority, a mission Howe adapts to the spaces of the archives. *Frolic Architecture* turns the archives inside out, ensuring an unstructured space in which the Edwards' material, wrenched out of historical and biographical context, creates a disturbed sense of linearity akin to a Situationist architecture, as developed by the often-quoted Ivan Chitchevlov in *Formulary for a new Urbanism*:

The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space. It will be a means of knowledge and a means of action ([1953] 2006, 3).

Howe's 'frolic' sense of space is packed with visual movements, sparks of half-legible texts acting against another in an unstable sense of time and place. The quote above also serves as a reminder that the group aimed to go beyond theorising on space and urban spectacle and encouraged an antiauthoritarian resistance that challenged both Capitalist and Marxist models in favour of more vague visions of autonomy (Dworkin, p 5). Stemming from the Lettrist International, founded by Guy Debord in 1952, the Situationist International developed the practice of psychogeography that has gone on

to be adopted and adapted by walking-enthusiasts all over the world. It began as an artistic act of resistance against the commercialisation of Paris's city streets and is now most popularly associated with the travelogues and the prose of London-based walkers and writers such as Ian Sinclair and Will Self. Guy Debord defined the act in broad terms:

Psychogeography sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. The charmingly vague adjective psychogeographical can be applied to the findings arrived at by this type of investigation, to their influence on human feelings, and more generally to any situation or conduct that seems to reflect the same spirit of discovery ([1955] 2006, 8).

A response to a geographic environment that focuses on emotions and behaviours is certainly vague, and the definition doesn't touch on the Situationist's internal politics, which were far from charming. The group, headed up by Debord, ran from 1957 to 1972 and with only ten to twenty members at any one time, Debord kept a tight, perhaps tyrannical, reign on the theorising of Situationism. The result was an often precarious state of membership, with Debord swiftly expelling figures that challenged the directions of the group. The strict, yet broad, criteria are suggested by the following anecdote by artist Jean-Michel Mension:

If someone had said... “I want to be a famous painter”, if someone had said “I want to be a famous novelist”, if someone had said, “I want in whatever way to be a success”, then that someone would have been tossed instantly out of the back room right through the front room onto the street. There was an absolute refusal... We rejected a world that was distasteful to us, and we would do nothing within it (2002, 129).

The Situationist rejection of any hint of authority was preserved by its limited numbers, Debord's autocratic hold also ensuring the group would never amount to anything more than a fringe organisation. Simon Ford (2005), in *The Situationist International*, comments that these small numbers means the group ‘remained well positioned for agitation and conspiracy’ (9), activities that Debord often exaggerated, mythologizing Situationism as a more active part of the avant-garde of the twentieth century (11). Ford points out that it was Debord's love for scandal and embellishment, and his decision to publicly announce the ‘death’ of Situationism in 1972, which, ironically, ensured its immortality and attracted future artists to the politics of the movement. Debord ([1967] 2014) wanted to reject and yet disrupt what he termed the ‘Society of the Spectacle’ in his book of the same name. As I'll explore in greater detail with reference to Riley's critique on a rural spectacle, the concept is purposely ill-defined by Debord, a slipperiness responding to, as Craig Dworkin (2003) puts it, the spectacle's desire towards stability, its overall aims being to “freeze, fix and congeal” (9), society, capital and the built environment. Dworkin goes on to define the Spectacle in a passage which is worth quoting in full:



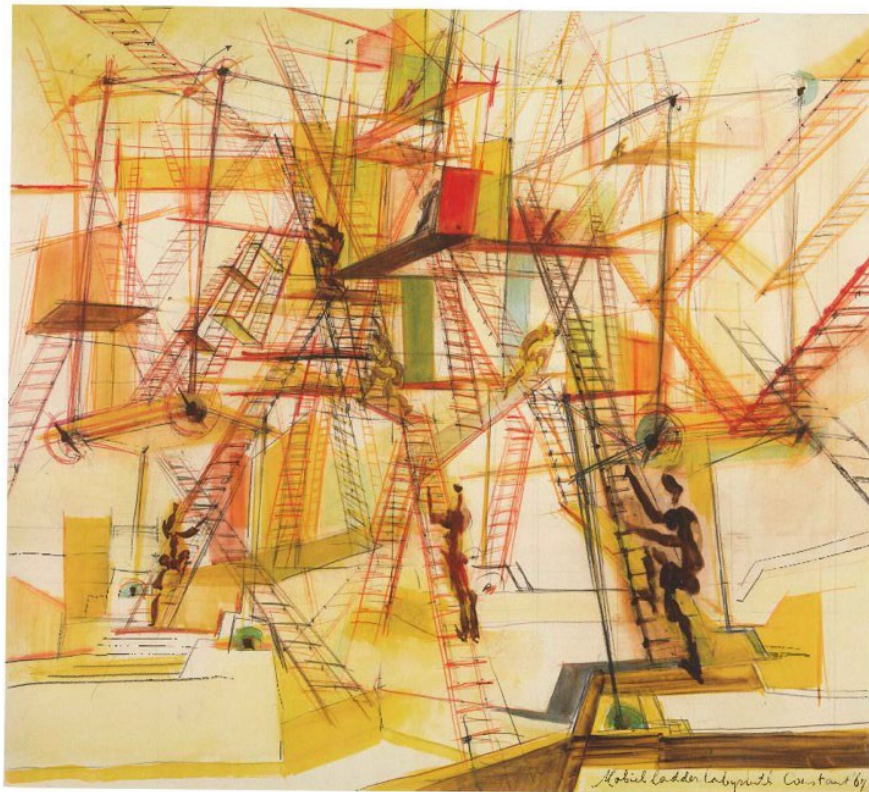
Debord diagnoses the way in which the logic of capital has come to dominate and orchestrate the realm of consumption as it has previously only governed production. Where once, he nostalgically imagines, we lived in an age when time away from work was genuinely outside the demands of capital and beyond its panoptic gaze – when, in short, “no one was looking”- there is now no longer any part of the day, however ostensibly “private”... that escapes the demands of capital. Leisure time and “time off” have themselves been co-opted until there is not a single time in the day, as William Blake would say, that Satan cannot find.

That satanic permeation is the condition of the “Spectacle” (9).

Dworkin introduces many of the Situationist themes of this study and many of the themes Howe (and Riley, as demonstrated), engage with: power, time, nostalgia, work and leisure. Riley unpacks a contemporary commercialised rural and tentatively harks back to a semi-mythic landscape, safe from the division of consumer and consumed, a place preserved in a pre-spectacle innocence akin to Debord’s rejection of any notion of the success of capital. Whereas Howe engages with the power and hierarchy of the archives, her work responding to the authority of a readily consumed documentary history, exposing Debord’s spectacle as propping up a tenuous historical identity. Both writers build on Debord’s social critique, albeit in radically different ways, ultimately developing Situationist artistic practices for differing contemporary and cultural environments.

Debord was joined by artists and writers such as Michèle Bernstein, Asgar Jorn and Constant Nieuwenhuys, producing a myriad of individual and collective

psychogeography-inspired writings and artworks. Their broader aim was to create 'political and cultural interventions', eventually playing a small but significant role in the Paris student riots of May 1968 (Knabb, 2006, 10). Perhaps the most tangible demonstration of their vision of a new urban society is captured in Constant's *New Babylon*, a series of models, maps, drawings and installations that Constant worked on for almost twenty years. The piece below, titled *Mobiel Ladder Labyrint* (Mobile Ladder Labyrinth), demonstrated the 'state of flux' (Tempel, 2016: Book Blurb) that characterised the Situationist mission.



This architectural sense of movement is political as well as aesthetic. It was a 'dream of an ideal society', that relied on 'relinquishing old values' (Tempel, 2016: 7). Yet a Situationist future is not a clear-cut trajectory. It relies on a radical sense of time that Howe's *Frolic Architecture* adopts in response to a homogenising sense of history in the archives. For Howe, the archives are an arena made public but under close surveillance, reflecting the restrictions of urban planning the Situationists fought against. Just as the Situationists envisioned a new architecture of 'CONTINUOUS DRIFTING' (Chtcheglov, [1953] 2006, 7) which refused the stasis of urban environments, Howe values the same sense of temporal and spatial movement in the restrictions of archives. Shifting beyond the past, Howe focuses on a more ambiguous sense of time in a place characterised by searching for historical fact. She comments that, for her, a journey through the archives is guided by a 'visionary spirit', a

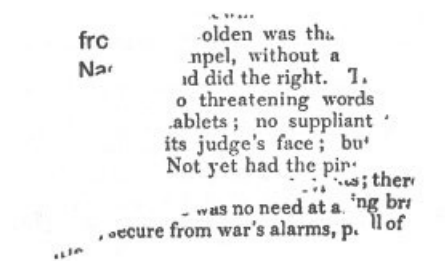
...deposit from a future yet to come, [...] gathered and guarded in the domain of research libraries and special collections (2014, 17).

It's this recognition and enactment of a future in historic environments that the pages of *Frolic Architecture* facilitate, each poem about to sprawl into the stage of white space surrounding it, as I'll go on to demonstrate. The architecture of Howe's pages are suitably 'frolic', resonant of twentieth century architectural tropes of 'complexity and contradiction' as investigated by Robert Venturi's 1966 publication of the same name. Venturi identifies a series of themes in contemporary radical

architecture, namely the use of ambiguity, contradiction and juxtaposition in the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens, Luigi Moretti and Le Corbusier, concluding that a multiplicity of a structure is key to its complexity:

I am for the richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer “both-and” to “either-or,” black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once ([1966] 1990, 16).

Venturi is arguing for an appreciation of the building beyond its function, its aesthetics not just a reflection of its utility, but, in some cases, a challenge to it. We see a parallel sense of contradiction in Howe’s *Frolic Architecture*. If language’s utility is communication, Howe refuses this simplification, instead distorting and disturbing a sense of meaning, in this case, the meaning of historic documents. The poem below, for example, is typical of the sequence which consists of cut up transcripts of the Edwards family documents arranged and scanned in to create one image.



This architecture is similarly ‘workable’ in several ways, historical texts juxtaposed in both theme and visual position, forcing a reader to turn the page for greater legibility. Reading Howe’s work as a resistance to a singular historical authority has been well covered by critics, Collis (2005) and Montgomery (2010), in particular, and my focus on Howe’s more recent *Frolic Architecture* (2010) aims to explore this narrative in the context of psychogeography. Although Debord and the Situationists were primarily encouraging a revolution in our relationships to urban spaces, this relied on a new awareness and deployment of language, securing themselves as part of the ‘artistic avant-garde’ of the twentieth century, while maintaining a politically radical rhetoric (Debord, [1963] 2006, 402). Art may have been an ‘investigation of possible ways for freely constructing everyday life’ but this was always aimed at contributing to a ‘new revolutionary contestation’, one that would be embodied in future artists such as Howe (402). Howe’s is certainly a poetry of resistance, most obviously a Debord-ian anti-authoritarian strike at linearity. As numerous critics, most notably Stephen Collis, Mandy Bloomfield and Will Montgomery, have identified, Howe’s visual sense of a

collaged past is fundamentally 'anti-hierarchical', the solidity of source material 'disturbed by poetic mutability' (Collis, 2006, 17). In the case of Susan Howe in particular, Situationist terms are often used to describe her poetry. Many scholars have identified the role of the *dérive* in Howe's work, and many more, including Howe herself, use the term 'drift' as both noun and adjective to describe the theory or visuals of her work. Montgomery (2010) talks about the 'lexical drift' (x) of history in her poetry, going on to describe how poems in *Eikon Basilike* (1989) are influenced by an 'ideological drift'. He even describes how her '*détournement*' of texts functions as an encouragement to return to 'texts that are no longer in cultural memory' (78), but Montgomery does not expand on the term and Situationist frameworks are absent from any critical approach. Tracing the use of the term and the notion of 'drifting' in Howe's *Thorow* (1990), Montgomery leads us back to 'Lyotard's praise of the *dérive*', an act that Thoreau, and thus Howe, would have been aware of. He points out Lyotard's statement: 'Drifting is in itself the end of all critique' (106), implying that the act is question and answer in itself. Although Montgomery doesn't make clear whether he's adopting the Situationist use of the '*dérive*', his use of the more specific '*détournement*' suggests so. Yet wider Situationist theory is not explored. My study is informed by these slightly blanket uses of the term, and I aim to move beyond the mostly shallow criticism regarding Howe and the Situationists. As previously mentioned, Craig Dworkin (2003) provides the most thorough Situationist framework to Howe's poetry, and I'll be leaning on Dworkin's *Reading the Illegible* throughout my

chapter on Howe. However, Dworkin's focus is mostly on the Situationist's theorizing on language, and their core psychogeographic messages and their urge for a redevelopment of our relationship to place go largely unexplored in relation to poetry. Most critics, like Montgomery, use 'drift' in such a way that skims over the Situationist vision of the term as an act of resistance. W. Scott Howard compares Howe's use of 'photographs and narratives, histories and hallucinations' (2019, 20) in *The Quarry* to W.G Sebald's novel/travelogue *The Rings of Saturn* (2002). Sebald weaves between narratives, both imaginary and historical, juxtaposing violence with landscape histories. At one point, for example, switching mid-sentence from a description of a hanging to instructions for economical landscape gardening (262), emphasizing a multiplicitious landscape identity akin to Situationist goals. Sebald's work is seen as a significant contemporary psychogeographical text, and has inspired and directed many practitioners in the modern walking movement. Phil Smith, while developing the practice of mythogeography, spent three months tracing Sebald's journey across the South East<sup>23</sup>. Howard's comparison between Howe's visual juxtapositions to Sebald's ever-shifting landscapes demonstrate a further need to expand on a Situationist-Howe connection when it comes to studies of place. Howard's study, *Archive and Artifact: Susan Howe's Factual Telepathy* (2019) approaches her work through the historical contexts of her archival items, particularly those of settler captivity tales. Howard is

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<sup>23</sup> Excerpts from Smith's journey are printed in *Mythogeography* (2010)

particularly interested in the use of the drift in *Pierce-Arrow* (1999), and he acknowledges the span of critics that have investigated the ‘psycho-geographical relationships between language and landscape’ (82) in her work, but he doesn’t take this theme any further. Howard notes that the term is generally a response to a sense of physical movement on the page:

Although Brian Reed, David Clippinger, and Kathleen Crown also engage this psycho-geographic theme, their essays respectively emphasise material/visual textuality, self/other critiques, and traumatic witnessing... (2019, 82).

Howard’s focus is not on pursuing psychogeography, but he does point out that in Howe’s case, the term has mostly been used to describe her mixing of ‘language, memory, history and time’ (88). Albeit unconsciously, in his critique of Howe’s visual use of disparate source materials, Howard reflects the Situationist use of *détournement*, particularly around idea of a documentary agency and the interplay between old and new meanings, and it’s this sense of *détournement* that I focus on in my chapter on Howe, expanding on Howard’s identification. As he explains, the strength of the collage is in the agency of the constitute parts, a phrase mirroring Guy Debord’s *Détournement as Negation and Prelude* [1959] 2006).

The two fundamental laws of *détournement* are the loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element—which may go so far as to completely lose its



original sense—and at the same time the organisation of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect (67).<sup>24</sup>

Howard's study is largely focused on cementing Howe's visual disruptions as a response to the content of each individual source, the implication being that, unlike in a *détournement*, Howe's primary concern is for exploring and conveying history, albeit by disturbing it. His 135 page chapter "*scape esaid*": *Radical Contingency and Historical Figuration* is made up of an epic journey through the archival documents that spawned Howe's *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* (1987). Howard provides an in-depth historical guide to the figure of Hope Atherton, connecting Howe's collage disruptions with Atherton's settler captivity narrative. He acknowledges that this approach is not highly original, discussing how Joyce and Montgomery have also tracked Howe through the archives in this way. Howard, however, aims to use a wider array of historical sources and testimonies of Hope Atherton, and delves into these and the archival sources in more depth. His focus is on the historical truth of the narrative, and viewing Howe's poetry as stemming from this sense of asserting a truth, commenting that 'By historical figuration, I mean a dynamic fusion of historical discourse and poetic figuration' (82). He concludes that Howe's poetry acts as a 'recovery, reconfiguration, and regenerative return' (114), of history, his 'historical figuration' here being very much rooted in a re-writing of the past, a collaborative practice with the figures and

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<sup>24</sup> 'detourned', rather than 'détourned' is used in the original text.

documents of the archive. For Howard, this is what Howe's 'factual telepathy' boils down to, a 'telepathic connection' to the dead that make both *Articulation of Sound Forms in Time* and *Frolic Architecture* 'kindred breakthrough works' in terms of re-visiting histories (121). Although engaging, I find Howard's reading a little prescriptive. There's less room for what Montgomery describes as 'winds of readerly interpretation' (37), and placing such a focus on a 'historical figuration' neglects the fragments' agency as a new creation. Howe's work is certainly a fragmentation of documents that constitute a disturbance of authoritative histories, but it doesn't stop in the past. The poems in *Frolic Architecture* are less sweeping in their aims. Rather than a restoration of the past, they perform well into the future, the text cut up to such a degree as to obscure most sense of an original narrative, forcing the textual shards into new identities and trajectories, a key part of the Situationist détournement. Critics such as Mandy Bloomfield (2016) have expanded on Howe's use of the fragment as creating new potentials, shards of texts never closed down but open to an uncertain future, a visual curation that stems from a rerouting of the original. The poem below (45), for example, demonstrates Debord's 'loss of importance of each detoured autonomous element' (67), the key word here being that 'autonomous'. Each element is again crowded, jostling for space in the jagged parameters of its new shape. In *Frolic Architecture* at least, the collective harmony necessary for Howard's 'historical figuration' is impossible, as is Montgomery's notion that Howe's work encourages a reader to pick up texts that have fallen out of 'cultural memory', presumably because

they're harder to get a hold of. Frolic Architecture, like Situationism, doesn't send the participant in any particular direction, it simply repels them from a prescribed direction. The poem below, for example, doesn't send us back to the original for interpretation, but moves that original forward in an unpredictable manner:

ing body my body slipping  
 ing body my body slipping  
 d down full toward its own

secret sermon rough  
 a myst sermon of gra  
 1 and i sermon sent to

Movement is at the core of the poem.<sup>25</sup> Visually the 'slipping' body in the first line has already slipped, cast down towards its own 'sermon' and exposing a clean and crisp beam of white. This is a confrontation of the self, but Howe, as confronter, applies a light touch. She allows the language to lead the way, the repetition of sermon moving down the page as Edwards, and the reader, slip into a space created by combining and

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<sup>25</sup> The poems in *Frolic Architecture* are untitled, but most are paginated. Where possible, I have referred to the page numbers when discussing an individual poem.

re-combining multiple lifetimes of texts. Text is valued as individual cells, autonomous and suggestive, lapping and overlapping. Words are vulnerable but determined, the 'secret', 'rough', and 'sent' above are in the midst of developing into something more powerful, their exposure forcing them to grow into the space around them, expanding a détournement of the past into a future narrative.

As mentioned, Dworkin's *Reading the Illegible* is the most in-depth analysis of Situationism and contemporary avant-garde poetics, and Dworkin contextualises the poetics of a visual and formal resistance ranging from Susan Howe to Charles Bernstein, Tom Phillips and Rosemarie Waldrop with Situationist texts and theory. Although Dworkin limits his detailed exploration of Situationism to his first chapter on Howe, rather than leaning on Debord's writings throughout, he emphasises that the movement is a forerunner to numerous contemporary radical practices, and an integral lens by which to approach contemporary 'illegible' and politically engaged work:

...the Situationists provide a historical and conceptual analogue for the revolutionary impulses that have been generally less well articulated in the political discourse around the Anglo-American art and poetry discussed in other chapters (5).

Dworkin does tie in Situationist writing with the performances of the derive and détournement, but his approach is more concerned with Debord's creative and critical

writing than the role of radical walking techniques in contemporary poetics, and this thesis as a whole highlights the use of movement as a resistance to a specific environment. *Reading the Illegible* has been a key text in my understanding of Howe's resistance to archival hierarchy and Riley's social critique, but I'd like to re-orientate a discussion of a Situationist poetics with the techniques of radical walking in mind, highlighting the role of walking and movement as a key negotiation of the flows of power in a place.

### **Communication as the 'Felt Fact' of the Collage**

Howe's sense of the collage as disruption adheres to Situationist thought. In his 1956 *User Guide to détournement*, Debord calls for a new organization of meaning that stems from curating disparate elements:

Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the juxtaposition of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organisation of greater efficacy (2006, 15).

This 'greater efficacy' is akin to what Howe describes as the 'felt fact' (2012, 47) of ideas. Although seemingly contradictory, it's Howe's intuitive re-positioning that leads to a greater efficacy of Edwards' communication, or rather, the 'felt fact' of those ideas

rather than their direct articulation. In distorting his sermons on faith, *Frolic Architecture* conveys Edwards' themes of belief and morality in a surprising and engaging way, a reader making leaps between shards of texts to encounter the Edwards' sermons and reflections on faith and identity. Instead of paraphrasing or reflecting his work, Howe distorts it, creating visual shards of individual meanings that create a web of the 'felt fact' of the Edwards materials. For Howe, this act of détournement, an embracing of mis-communication, is actually the heart of poetry's communicative abilities. Howe describes poetry as the love for this fact, a visual and textual distillation of communication. The poem-collages in *Frolic Architecture* perform what Debord describes as an interference of different worlds, a threading and unthreading of original elements, responding also to the antecedents of Surrealism's 'found object' or Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-made', and the wider significance of the collage of appropriated elements, as Zacarias (2020) explains: 'It is a commonly accepted fact that the ready-made marks a turning point in the history of twentieth-century art' (215). Howe taps into this 'turning point' to make a new use of the 'ready made' in the form of archival material. The poems are full of feeling; hope, alongside violence and death, the rawness of everyday life. Yet the undetermined voices search the edges of their unhuman archival environments, trapped in boxes and catalogue numbers. In Howe's collection, these two elements are suddenly and starkly dropped into an open field of white space, a 'frolic architecture' of what the Situationists referred to as a 'situation' (Debord, [1957], 2006, 38). The Situationists' ultimate goal

was to create 'situations' that challenge the homogenizing city streets. Détournement was a tactic towards this, an act generally overshadowed by the 'dérive', the basis for numerous contemporary radical walking practices and a term I've contextualised in relation to Peter Riley. These performances built towards a 'Constructed Situation':

a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambience and a game of events (Anonymous [1958] 2006, 51).

Howe's poems build towards and away from their own elements, the white space of silence beckoning the texts to expand in a 'game of events', events of archival restriction, personal diaries and sermons. Generally, a crowd of textual shards chafe and layer one another, forming compact shapes that sit like islands on the page. These are tense with movement, a stilled tension on the edge of bursting. In the poem below (41), the first visual piece in the collection, two appropriated shards of the Edwards archives float in a longing distance:

ient	in one. No sun
n the	ior did the waxin
der h	ot yet did the ear
own	n the circumamb
ocean	ed her arms alon
e lan	l, though there v
nd a	e could tread th
sea ;	air was dark. T
ned ti	; all objects w
	ld things stro

Howe's poetry relies on movement. The two texts list at the same slight angle, forming towers that have been freshly and precisely sliced apart. Each shard feels isolated, calling ahead of itself as it transitions across the page. In the texts we glimpse words of distance and movement: 'circumamb...', 'tread', 'ocea..', 'lan..', and 'sea'. There's also danger: 'No sun', 'air was dark'. The stutter of broken words give a sense of the unfinished and unknown: '...ent', '...der', '...nd', 'alon...', and 'strov...'. Legibility, understanding, is only available in glimpses, fractions of a coherent whole. This is a response to the disparity of archives, a place of knowledge but also a hopeless grasping of coherency. A collection of someone's life, curated either by separate deposits, chronologically, or by type, can never span their complex whole. It's a life fragmented, requiring leaps through time and space. In response, *Frolic Architecture*



further fragments these shards in order to create a future. As an opening poem, it introduces the tone for the collection. Each piece is a situationist 'moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed', disparately curated into a sequence that spans the loves and deaths of the Edwards' family material. Crucially, Howe sets up the page as a board, the pieces only in their beginning moves. The collection forms a 'game of events', elements of a very real life broken up and combined to form a new 'unitary ambience'. Except the unity of this ambience is always in question, the 'events' of separate shards lapping at and overlapping one another. The poem above is typical of the sequence's visuals, a game of tension being played as pieces on the page fight for clarity. This tension in and between elements of texts is what boils over into a new beginning. A Situationist creation of 'ambience' is key to approaching the poems. *Frolic Architecture* is a series of atmospheres, the pages transitioning between identities, times and places, the legible phrases providing a solidity that is often confusing and contradictory, the most tangible creation here being at atmosphere of tension. In reading the illegible, Dworkin (2003) articulates the allure yet challenge of approaching such works:

I was unable to figure out how to write about them; they stood out as works about which I had nothing to say, and the extremity of their resistance was in itself a strong invitation to make the attempt.' P xxi

My approach to Howe's poetry has been through the atmosphere of the page, the visual communication as valid as any text. The collection as a whole also has a haunting quality. In some poems there's an intense longing, abstract discussions of faith and the soul, whereas other poems engage with scenes of domesticity and more everyday anxieties. Ultimately, the poems form a sequence that reflects on itself, a coming to terms with the Edwards family's pasts and futures and a grasp at that 'unitary ambience' the archive suggests but never delivers. These attempts at poem-situations stand as sudden junctions in the linearity of the archives, fragmenting and giving agency to strands of archival flow. Ultimately the collection stands against the finality of cataloguing, the poems conjuring urgent, even violent, visual bursts of the archival stasis that held, and still holds, their voices.

Expanding on Situationist theory and artistic examples of *détournement*, I'll argue that Howe extends a psychogeographic investigation of place into the spaces of the archive, adapting Situationist thought on the flows of power in language and environment, and ultimately forming a 'constructed Situation' that resists the confines of the archives. My approach positions Howe's poetry as an adaption of Situationist politics for the spaces of the archives, her collection *Frolic Architecture* (2010) demonstrating an innovative appropriation of archival sources that aims to create a new visual architecture of language. Howe's adapted *détournement* expands on the intentions of the Situationists; to disrupt the flows of power in a place, but her tools are not the maps, media signs, paintings and footage the Situationists were attracted

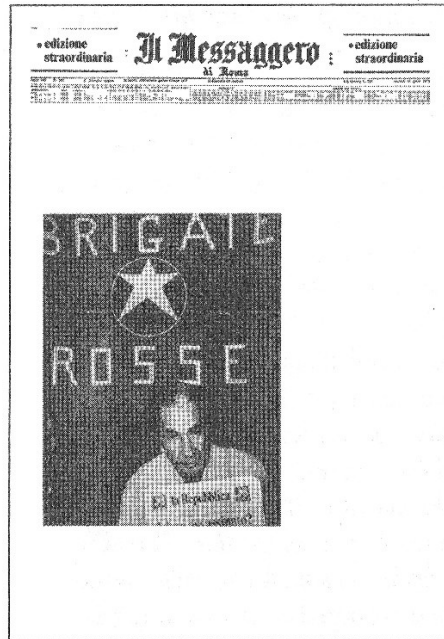
to, but the fragments of history in the archives, détournant a sense of time, place and identity in order to resist the categorization of history and open up fragments of texts to new narratives. In a broad sense, Howe's pursuit of an illegibility is a resistance to a spectacle of 'convention[al]' communication, as Dworkin explains:

In linguistic terms, the spectacle corresponds to the conventional "conduit" models of communication... writers produce texts which readers then consume. [Détournement] disrupts these hierarchies with an archaism of mutual production that pushes the dialogue between reader and writer to such a degree of interaction that the very distinction between the two disappears... (11).

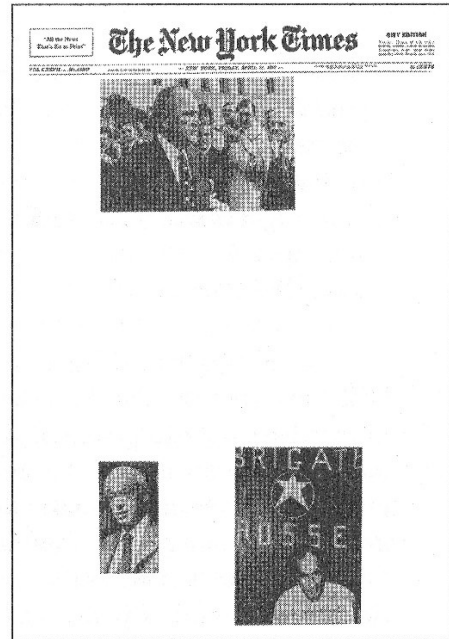
Howe challenges the idea that the archives contain unquestionable narratives of the past, highlighting that the reader/viewer is as much a maker of that past than the documents themselves. Howe is concerned with a 'dialogue' between the usually sanctified and restricted realm of the archives and the more readily accessible public environment of the published page, confronting the authority of a historical narrative and inviting a reader to collapse the 'distinction' between writer and reader. It's this 'frolic' sense of the architecture of language, as opposed to the authoritative architecture of research libraries, that challenge the Edwards materials into new arrangements, a poetic response to Venturi's (1977) architecture of an 'and and and' over an either/or. Whereas the archives is governed by procedure and order, Howe's pages release seeds of writings that grow associations in relation to their new arrangement, a disarrangement of original sources allowing for a playful sense of

multiplicity. Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) provides a concise definition of détournement as a 'way of taking existing objects words, ideas, artworks, media etc., and using them differently so that they become entirely new experiences' (38). For the most part, however, this was done with a political edge. For example, as Goldsmith points out, Debord suggested renaming Beethoven's Eroica Symphony to Lenin Symphony, and Situationist René Viénet re-subtitled foreign films into feminist protest statements (38). Similarly, Asgar Jorn called on museums to paint over their old paintings and bring them up to date. For the Situationists, détournement was also an opportunity at parody, satirizing power and the language of mainstream media. Goldsmith goes on to track the term beyond the Situationists to concept artist Sarah Charlesworth, whose work had the same disruptive power. Goldsmith explains that in a project titled *April 21, 1978*, Charlesworth edited out all the text from forty-five newspapers from around the world, leaving only the pictures to contradict or confuse a sense of the day's

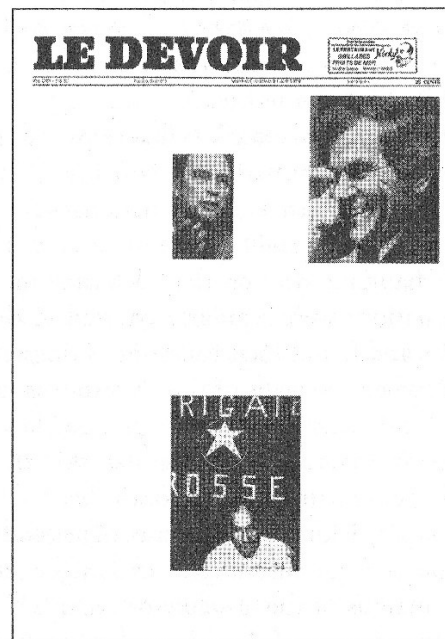
happenings:



A



B



C

For example, *Il Messaggero* (above) features a large photo of Italian prime minister Aldo Moro, at the time kidnapped by the terrorist group the Red Brigade. Whereas the New York Times featured three smaller photos. Their position, size, and choice of picture prompt questions of the differences between local and international reporting, as well as the politics of the newspaper. Goldsmith claims that this posed the same tensions of place and power that the Situationists were interested in:

What does this tell us about local vs. international news? ... About the politics of the newspaper? A simple gesture of removal reveals a lot about the visual thinking, politics, and editorial decisions behind what is presented as stable and objective information, elegantly revealing the structures of power and subjectivity behind the news (42).

It's this elegant 'revealing' of the 'structures of power' that détournement excels at. The strength of the technique is in the relationships formed between the old and new contexts of the détourned elements, an uneasy 'co-existence' ([1958], 2006, 67) as Debord says, that creates a double meaning in and between the appropriated material. We see this same sense of what Goldsmith describes as 'visual thinking' in the exposure of the structures of power in Howe's poetics. Her appropriation and misappropriation of historical sources détourne a sense of time and place, the grand narrative of historical events and American identity undermined by the anonymized,

distressed and incoherent voices in *Frolic Architecture*. A visual restructuring of power is key to this. Howe's détournement takes the form of a collage, a literal cutting into and choreographing of a scattering of the past. Howe parallels the Situationist guidelines on détournement and language, and creates a hybrid work that reads as an innovation of Debord's theories into a psychogeography of historical documentation. For Elizabeth W Joyce (2010), Howe's sense of the space of the page

reshapes cultural configurations of space through her drive to infiltrate interstitial areas of "third" spaces: the silences of history, the margins of the page, the placeless migrants, and the uncharted lands (15).

These "third" spaces are ripe for psychogeographical investigation, and Howe's détournement of archival texts turns historical voices into 'placeless migrants' pushed out into the uncharted page.

### **Howe, Psychogeography and Détournement**

As examined previously, Howe's work is often read as psychogeographical, but many critics apply a light touch to contextualizing practices such as the 'dérive' or 'détournement' which were the key tactics of a psychogeographical approach. Generally these terms are used as adjectives divorced from the theories of the Situationist International that developed them. *Frolic Architecture* challenges the

sovereignty of the archives with the ever-shifting slashing, fading and reconstructing of appropriated histories and voices. Howe's sequence reads as a *détournement* of The Edwards' family diaries, responding to the wider space and performance of the archives, culminating in a collection that moves through, and in so doing, breaks apart, the stasis of a space held in by archival gatekeepers. Howe's *détournement* takes the form of a collage, *Frolic Architecture* consisting of a series of visual poems made from carefully arranged fragments of archival text. At a fundamental level, this disarrangement of the original reflects the core Situationist understanding of *détournement*, a 'liberation' of original elements, as Merlin Coverly (2010) explains

...*détournement* seeks to liberate a word, statement, image or event from its intended usage and to subvert its meaning... *détournement* creates new and unexpected meanings by hijacking and disrupting the original (95).

Howe liberates historic voices by 'hijacking' them; releasing them from their archival origins and subverting their statements by cutting them off mid-sentence and forcing fragments of text together, forming new meanings in the process. However, as in the definitions above, Howe's *détournement* relies on the anchor of origins, a disrupted and hijacked original still harboring its original meaning. This creates a tension between the past and present, the space of the archive and of Howe's liberated page. Throughout *Frolic Architecture*, there's a focus on constructing a future from the past; Howe's distortion of historic materials as a release of fractured presents rather than a



representation of the past. I'm interested in *Frolic Architecture* as a sequence of constructed, and ever-constructing, 'situations' stemming from what Howe calls the 'visual grids' and 'breathing spaces' of the page (Howard, 2019: 233). The poems perform a tension of voice and visuals that resist the environment of coherence and stasis in the archive, providing a platform for a more multiplicitious documentary afterlife, one that constructs, as the Debord [1957] called for, a meaningful 'ambience' (Knabb, 2006: 38). This effort relies on movement, a key concept which Howe shares with radical walking practitioners. To contextualise the poems as individual and collective 'situations', I've approached the poems as a series of curated 'détournements', utilizing the largely unexplored connections between psychogeographic practice and Howe's movement through the temporal and spatial parameters of the sense of archived time. Howe's poetry relies on moving beyond what a document is, or was, to what its voices could be. Just as Howe (2014) relies on 'intuition' (43), a 'factual telepathy', that allows her to feel the 'enduring relations and connections between what was and what is', the poems in *Frolic Architecture* are granted an agency to move with, through and against the spatial flows of the page. They perform what the Situationists called for: a releasing and liberating of the individual, except Howe releases a myriad of voices from the confines of archival boxes and catalogues, their existence made keener by their own self-discovery and relative anonymity. The voices in *Frolic Architecture* are encouraged to walk between what they are and what they were, negotiating the anchor of archival prescription as they

transition into a documentary afterlife, an environment that 'brittle[s]' the very real human lives it holds:

effect silk codes would have on  
agents in the field, he answered that  
or what shall I say to you  
ifort to me that I was so separate  
tage—our lives are all exceeding brittle  
could hide behind the silk  
In common  
circumstance—Remember Lot's wife

The 'I' is here fractured beyond recognition, a clearing of identity. Archived documents speak back to their confines, calling not only to their previous lives, but to a hope for a future world. Howe's response is a détournement of a text's identity, a fragmentation of meaning that allows a disparate grouping of juxtapositions to grow of their own accord. In distorting texts, Howe returns their agency. Her focus on short fragments allows these intertextual relationships to investigate their own language, as Will Montgomery (2010) explains:

The poet can explode a word's condensed significance, releasing a chaotic freight of earlier meaning and intertextual reference (91).

This 'freight' is what *Frolic Architecture* both unpacks and flees, releasing a complex layering of relationships between and within the Edwards' archives, a 'détournement' of their old and new senses. Walking is still a big part of approaching Howe's work in this way, although, unlike in Peter Riley and Harriet Tarlo's work, I'll focus more on the theory and politics that underpin Situationist definitions. In Howe's work, it's the politics of the *dérive* rather than its physical practice that contributes to her negotiation with the environment of the page. Her ability to create, and curate, what Peter Quartermain (2008) describes as 'small islands of localised meaning' (184) means a reader negotiates 'a haze of uncertain stumbling bursting into pockets of lucidity, clearings in the thicket'. Stumbling, bursting, and clearing are exactly what the use of space in *Frolic Architecture* prompts from both the reader and from its own disparity, forcing a reframing of time and space. In turn, This *Frolic Architecture* delves into the self as much as the external environment.

### **A Frolic Architecture: the future of the past**

Howe expands on her process of writing the sequence in an interview with W. Scott Howard (2019), suggesting how it was the process itself that took precedence over any prescriptive aims:

I cut into passages from my transcriptions with scissors, turned and adjusted them, taped sections onto sections, ran them through the copier, then reworked and folded over the results. The mirroring effects leads me on (218).

This 'mirroring' is key to approaching her détournement of the text. The poem looks inward but only in order to splinter new meanings from its own disparate shards. The repetition in the poem below emphasizes the role of movement that Howe's process creates.

walking just below my father's orchard (after I ha  
~~walking just below my father's orchard (after I ha~~  
~~erigion and the concerns of my soul my busine~~  
~~religion and the concerns of my soul my busine~~  
prayed for an labored after an awakening sense o

Nothing is static, the text itself recreating its associations, and thus itself, in relation to its new arrangement. Everything is in flux, still turning, adjusting, and folding, a 'mirroring' that repeats the whole process over and over again. As above, most poems tilt to the side, spilling or at least threatening its contents in this unstable assortment. Here the repeated treadmill of 'walking just below...' leads us down to an unexpected third line 'religion and the concerns of my soul...'. The identity of the speaker(s) is never clarified, and the stuttered voice is more that of the current arrangement than of any one historical figure. It's the poem that speaks to us as a new creation. It may

be lifted from and prompted by the voices of the past, but Howe's curation propels those voices forward into a new realm.

Détournement is just the beginning, a technique used to free the Edwards' materials into new arrangements that provokes new and unsettled narratives of identity and faith. Their trajectory is developed by the reader, splintering the collection into the further multiplicity of a readers' interpretation, an aspect key to the Situationist politics, as explained by Dworkin in the introduction to this thesis, but in a quote that is worth revisiting now. Dworkin (2003) identifies the 'spectacle' in received or conventional means of communication, explaining that the 'true communication' lies in works such as Howe's, a poetics which rebels against the conventions of language:

"True communication," in Debord's sense, disrupts these hierarchies with an anarchism of mutual production that pushes the dialogue between reader and writer to such a degree of interaction that the very distinction between the two disappears..'(11).

The archives, and the terminology of cataloguing, provide the confines *Frolic Architecture* pushes against, the 'mutual production' of the poems also reflecting a creative relationship between source text and present author. But the question of what the poems are pushing towards still remains. What exactly is this 'architecture' moving towards? Where is this détournement heading? And why détourne in the first

place? A literal translation of the term brings us *rerouting* or *hijacking*, the destination

still unknown. The focus is on a turn away from the past, but crucially the direction is left open. This is the 'situation' Guy Debord and The Situationists were working towards, and before entering into more of an analysis, it's worth further contextualizing the challenges of détournement. Simon Ford (2005), author of *The Situationist International, A Users Guide*, emphasizes that détournement was not a particularly unique enterprise in the twentieth century artistic avant-garde:

As a form of creative plagiarism, there was little in Détournement that was particularly novel, except perhaps, its new name and the extravagant claims for its effectiveness. Precursors can be found in the collage work of the Dadaists, the Surrealists and, more closer to home, the word, letter and pictogram collages of the Lettristes (37).

Howe provides a reinvigorated sense of 'creative plagiarism' by focusing on the spaces of the archives. The visuals of her work are as much a drift through narrative as they are through picture. The tension between the visual and linguistic plays a significant part. Howe's détournement is akin to a theoretical drift. Curation is involved, but elements are allowed to combine in a non-prescriptive manner, allowing that all important 'readerly interpretation' (Montgomery, 2010: 37). *Frolic Architecture* is akin to how Montgomery describes Howe's *Hinge Picture*, 'a humming network of decontextualized meanings' (115), which in the case of the poem below, reflects Debord's attitude of 'leaving the imbeciles to their slavish reference to "citations"':

is                      . We need all three! Amazing. He  
                          door swinging open and shut (carpet)  
                          glass in. 1208 EF G 3 of 3 folders.                      e out  
 is all                      grace th.                      ernist hush brittle tent love  
 cover                      little Fold.                      ink has                      the finer parch-                      again  
 out one out the last word on the                      thin fan                      out there  
 ust                      to make the final book a h. paper in-                      that whe  
 pened                      but one word Hark! I cant ma. side                      at s

The poem forms a box, reminiscent of the containers of archival materials, except this box is shifting and sliding to the right in a sense of constant movement that the fragments, and their new shapes, provoke. Nothing is settled. An 'is' hangs in the air, giving the impression of a lone survivor of the curatorial process. The rest of the poem is made up of 4 shards that interrupt and disturb their neighbours, the overall effect being a sharp compacting of movement, that again, threatens to burst. And again, individual words and phrases are sliced or cut off in mid-articulation, a disturbing act of silencing. The poem is highly disparate, making a 'historical figuration' both impossible and unnecessary. The détourned elements have almost lost all their original sense, allowing Debord's 'organisation of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect' ([1958], 2006, 67) to take form. The



question of *Frolic Architecture* is what is this new scope and effect? As we can expect from Howe, this is not a clear-cut aim. At a fundamental level, the effect of each poem is one of stumbling. There's an awkward-ness about both the visuals and language here, an unsettling of content that forces each poem to stutter forward. That puncture of '1208 EF G 3 of 3 folders' is at the heart of the piece. Catalogue identifications are frequent focal points in the poems, tying the content into an uncomfortable embrace. They break any sense of a burgeoning narrative from the shards of language. For example, a voice above begins to form with 'We need all three!', and 'door swinging open', and we catch a glimpse as to a sense of excitement, a real life, or series of lives, that breathed and thought and made one another laugh in the late eighteenth century. This is juxtaposed against the cold language of the archive, the '3 of 3' folders that attempt to contain a life. The rest of the poem is similarly concerned with beginnings and endings: 'open and shut', 'last word', 'the final book', a dominant theme in the whole collection. The new scope of the Edwards material is again one of movement, both towards and away from the voices' pasts. Words may live on, but only by confronting their own disparities in this tight-knit arrangement. The question that then remains is, perhaps, why move at all? In general, the collection unsettles a spectacle of a stable and coherent history, and, as Craig Dworkin explains, this resistance is reminiscent of Situationist texts, namely Debord's *Mémoires* and *Fin de Copenhague*:

...part of the force of the many labyrinths which spiral through the pages of Situationist texts is their representation of structures in which one is trapped and hopelessly lost; if the Situationists no longer make attempts to exit from these mazes, it is because they recognise that the only escape is to transform the geography in which one is (always) trapped (13).

More specifically, *Frolic Architecture* releases and re-interns the voices of the Edwards' texts. Howe's appropriation constructs an alternative labyrinth to the hierarchy of the archives, the alternative spaces of the page forming a kind of moving prison of a false liberation.

### **Moving Against the Edwards Archive: 'Others, not I, are looking...'**

Howe approaches the archives as a realm of contradictions. Marginalized voices are preserved, yet sidelined. The dead live again but are restricted to the parameters of paper. Hidden histories await rescue but releasing their truth requires a fragmentation. This complexity reaches a peak in *Frolic Architecture*, in which the practice of archival research is embedded into the poems. This approach relies on détournement. The awareness of the material's curation becomes a way to understand, and thus challenge, the dynamics of that curation. The material exists in the tension between its origins and its new deployment. The poem below, for example, features eleven shards of overlapping text, phrases and words that visually begin a narrative of movement against 'their prison':

in the edges around  
 QU'APRES CE their prison  
 PREDICATEUR  
 ON LE PEUT AP bodies th  
 I hand of Lucy Wetmore Whittelsey  
 with confining Midae; nec Delius aures  
 Box 24 Folder 1377.  
 t's  
 what's  
 nters  
 onne  
 nt R  
 he if life a dark  
 ing yin d to c f .

This poem serves as the collection's premise; anything that can move can still be alive. In distorting original sources Howe unthreads their textuality and resists the 'prison' of 'Box 24 Folder 1377'. The voices of the Edwards family may be slashed and stunted, but this is as much a response to their archival environment as their content. Here the 'hand of Lucy Wetmore Whittelsey' an eighteenth-century figure, moves around the 'edges' of the poem, acknowledges the complexity of footsteps that Howe responds to. She's referring to Lucy's work of transcribing her mother Hannah's (wife of Jonathon Edwards) private journal. Howe expands on this layering of voices in an interview with critic W. Scott Howard (2019: 218):

even as I may think I am the one doing the composing, there is also another composer: Hannah. There is still Hannah's acousmatic voice. So the first person pronoun, the I, is really a shifter, depending on context and speaker....

Echoes. It's all about echoes.

The archives are silent, yet heavily peopled. Echoes of the past reflect echoes of human mortality, the living researcher following the dead one in stark intimacy. Frolic Architecture is about these echoes breaking free. Howe doesn't acknowledge the collection as a subversive act, the comment above reflecting the anchor of Hannah's voice rather than displaying any sense of the parody or satirizing aims of the Situationist *détournements*. Howe's *détournement* is of a layering of voices, each *détourned* element echoing one another not as a parody of the original, but a parody of its sense of time and status as a historic artefact. 'Hannah's acousmatic voice' is uncited, leaving a reader uncertain as to who is speaking, echoes stretching long beyond their origins. Yet Howe has expressed a regret at not pushing the sources further, comparing her process to a more recent work:

...I still felt that Frolic was anchored-down to some material, a document or fact—to Hannah Edwards' original text—whereas TOM TIT TOT tosses chance and discipline together in a more kaleidoscopic way (26).

The 'chance and discipline' that Howe admires in her collection after *Frolic Architecture* suggests the process of *Frolic Architecture* as something of a stepping stone. But détournement relies on an anchor, and Howe is selling the collection short here. The voices of the Edwards' material cannot be pushed in a 'more kaleidoscopic way' as this risks losing Debord's 'double meaning' of détournement, the 'double' relying on the strong presence of the original meanings of the document. The original must still be present to allow the performance of the whole, the old meanings of the documents as important as their new ones. Howe disturbs their sources but maintains enough of their historical context to create echoes between past and present arrangements. Howe's subversion functions in multiple ways, all against the sanctity and authority of the archive. The poems push forward on numerous fronts; firstly against their origins, secondly against their own curation, and finally, against the confines of the archives. This combination forms a tentative hope for a new space, the loosely clumped 'situation' which I'll expand on later. The collection is about future possibilities, about building a world between time and place in which the Edwards family texts gain an agency to move across the page and into a new life.

Throughout *Frolic Architecture*, cells of text are juxtaposed in a disparate fashion, building a response to Edwards' approach to language that looks beyond the historical anchor of regarding the texts as sources. The words are free (although free to do what is a question I'll return to). In a basic sense, they are free to resist their documents. Responding to Edwards's command to 'Extricate all questions from the least confusion

by words or ambiguity of words so that the Ideas shall be left naked', Howe, referring to Edwards, comments:

Poetry is love for the felt fact stated in sharpest, most agile and detailed lyric terms. Words give clothing to hide our nakedness. I love to imagine this gaunt and solitary traveler covered in scraps, riding through the woods and fields of Massachusetts and Connecticut (2015, 47).

As explored in the introduction, the 'felt fact' is a grasp at communication, an effort to make the idea as 'naked' as possible, although Howe's idea of a stripped down concept is as complex as the rest of her poetics. Coherent articulation is less important than ambience. Yet Edwards was a powerful speaker in more traditional terms, articulating theological concepts in an engaging method of a preacher. In détourning Edwards' texts, Howe critiques his authority, deconstructing and complicating him by showing him covered in scraps. By exposing him, she reveals a more ragged and fragmented individual who evokes sympathy rather than authority. She distorts his words, cuts and appropriates them in a way that destabilize their meanings. Yet the result on the page may be a far more powerful 'felt fact' than the original linear diaries and sermons. In the poem below, for example, a reader has to construct, and only possibly re-construct, the words 'harked' and 'hell', the most legible word being 'distortion':

of the distortion of her among the

Again, Howe's motivation comes back to movement, creating a dynamic and slippery space that resists the spectacle of a received language. In a broader sense, her work challenges the reader-author relationship, and as explored by Dworkin (2003), this kind of poetry focuses on 'the defiant activity of words when they refuse to be merely containers for instrumental communication', which is a 'touchstone of Situationist poetics...' (11). The poems in *Frolic Architecture* disturb their sources in order to disturb their place in the archives, constantly pushing against archival confines and the wider relationship between researcher and history. This has led critic Stephen Collis (2006) to term Howe an 'anarcho scholar', her approach to the sovereignty of the archives mirroring that of Jaques Derrida. Collis (2015) links Howe and Derrida's resistance towards the 'Arkhē' of the archive, citing Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995):

The Arkhē of the archive, Derrida reminds, is both "commencement" and "commandment," origin and law, and the arkheion itself was originally "a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded" (1-2). Origin, first principle, first place, command, authority, magistracy — all these are part of Derrida's

contemplation of the archive. “The archons are first of all the documents’ guardians,” and it is in a state of “house arrest, that archives take place” (Derrida, 2) (Collis, p. 18).

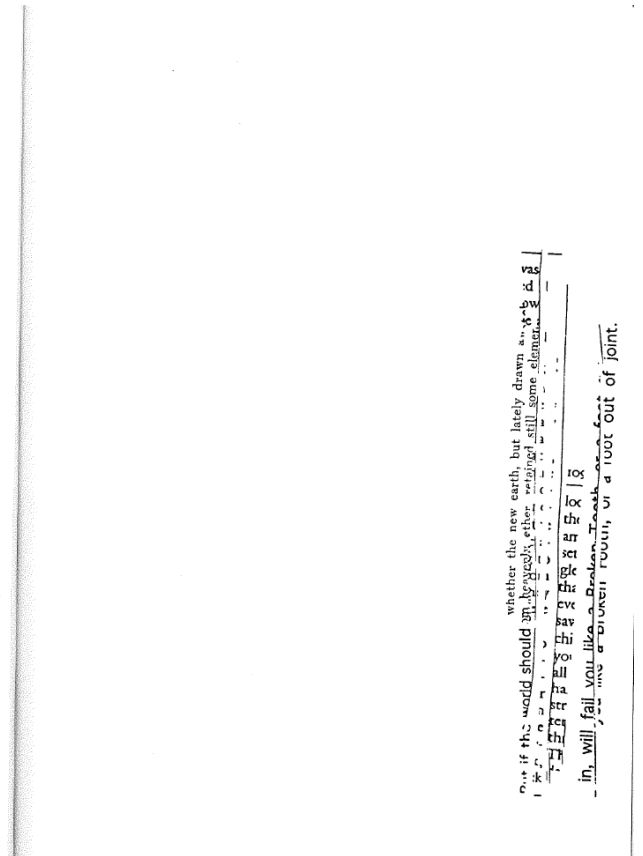
Howe’s poetry acts against this sense of a document’s ‘commencement’ of historical importance. She refuses its sanctity, but this is only the beginning. Collis discusses Howe’s work as that of a resistance, a search for the lost or marginal. In *Frolic Architecture*, this is only half the story. Breaking free of this ‘house arrest’ means a questioning of what next for the texts. Unrestrained, where does the Edwards family go? Howe does not give us a straight narrative, allowing the expansive page to both threaten and beckon the family members. Once fragmented, they are free to build again. Howe is well known for her visual disturbances of the page, the power of her work coming not from a prescriptive arrangement of narrative, but an open-ended collage that invites the reader to further the arrangement. Commenting on one of Howe’s most visually varied collections, *Eikon Basilike* (1993), Montgomery (2010) writes that

Not only are the more typographically innovative pages emblematic of a process of scattering, but even the more conventional poems are apt to be blown by the winds of readerly interpretation (37).

For *Frolic Architecture*, there are no ‘conventional poems’, but there are moments more conventional than others. These moments of relative clarity are given a

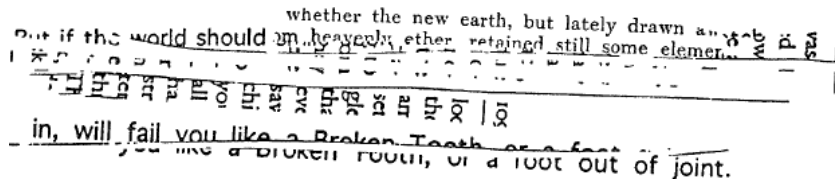


particularly stark reception of expansive white space. The poem below, for example, takes up a double page spread for which, on the left hand side, even the page number has been excluded.



The text again forms a tower listing at a slight angle, but this time dark slashes of ink create a disturbing, even violent sense of the raw cuts of material, the empty page on the verso framing the poem. Visually the tower is overshadowed by space, and thus, by possibility. An open horizon spotlights the text but also beckons it to respond leftwards, a feat the jagged lines lean away from. A reader must re-orientate the page,

a literal détournement, to read the most complete lines.



This brings a 'new earth', a 'heavenly ether', but one that's gouged open by the parallel line 'fail you like a Broken Tooth, or a foot out of joint'. Between the two we have a collection of faded or cleaved words that form a bridge of uncomfortable static. This is a wide-ranging détournement of the Edwards material. Different fonts and sizes indicate different sources, yet none are cited, a move that again frees the page to be more visually open, and un-anchors the content. Howe's insistence on appropriating the text in this way is mirrored by Debord's [1956] thoughts on the role of détournement:

It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of those fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish reference to "citations" ([1956] 2006, 15).

This attitude towards citations is taken to an extreme with Howe, who, by practically anonymizing her sources performs the ultimate resistance to archival knowledge. The poem above is a response to the promise of the archives, a 'heavenly ether', where

individuals can live on, yet living really means awaiting rescue by researchers. There is something about this place that's more like a 'foot out of joint'. Combining these elements in this way works towards that Situationist 'unitary ambience', the visuals and words here creating a disturbing sense of lost hope. In terms of 'unity', Howe is allowing the archived voices to speak together, the 'I's always undetermined. The Situationist intention, as explored in the introduction, was an overhaul of urban life, a new architecture that re-frames place and our relationship to it. They aimed for a new 'ambience' of place that allows for a more subjective understanding of our environments. The 'ambience' created by Howe's *Frolic Architecture* is an unsettling experience, highlighting the wider role of the archives as distorting identities by placing them in an alienating environment, Derrida's address of the 'Archons, those who commanded'. Howe fragments this environment in order to create the past anew on the page. She allows individuals to rise up by anonymizing them, protecting them from their own 'citations' in order to facilitate their growth into something else.

Howe exposes Edwards efforts at articulation, undermining the weight of written material he left behind. Returning to the quote above, if words 'give clothing to hide our nakedness', and Howe still imagines Edwards as a 'gaunt and solitary traveler covered in scraps', she demonstrates that the weight of his materials are still not enough to clothe the voice behind them. Howe sees beyond his writings, glimpsing a contradictory and troubled individual, undermining the authority of any singular voice. Although equipped with the layers of his 'twelve hundred sermons' (Howe,

2010, 21), Howe refuses to give way to his voice, utilizing the détournement of texts to perform a more scattered sense of I, for example, in the following poem:

and as new made unknown story  
 by the moral alibi, 'Others, not I, are looking'.  
 takes use of others as a mirror in order to look at  
 conscience I  
 teller. The country people, the sylvan dei

As readers, we are the 'Others' that are looking, yet the poem forms the squint of an eye looking right back at us. Archival research involves a looking inwards as much as outwards. In the archives, the span of Edwards' life is laid out, accessible and yet impossible. There may be intimate discoveries in which we feel moments of connection with the archival subject, but the people behind the documents are a construct at best. We piece them together from the essays they left behind, but also their private diaries, scraps and marginalia which were never intended for posterity. The archives suggest the ability to grip life, compartmentalize it and label its different movements, but Howe's scattering of the 'I' moves against this cataloguing. The 'frolic'

in Howe's collection challenging the hegemonic architecture of control and power that the archives is supported by. The poems in *Frolic Architecture* certainly break free, but they carry their confines to the page, the message being that words and their origins can never be free, a response to what Dworkin (2003) refers to the 'labyrinth' of Situationist texts, a representation of an ever-present political structure (13). In Howe's poem above, 'Others, not I, are looking'. This is the pattern across many of her collections, Howe's work responding to but ultimately reflecting the confines of language: *A Bibliography of the King's Book, or Eikon Basilike* (1989) stems from an 1896 book of the same name; *Pierce Arrow* (1999) has emerged from the archives of Charles Saunders Peirce; *My Emily Dickinson* (2007) is as much poetic as critical; *Debths* (2017) is packed with quotations from poets and artists. Howe's more strictly critical essays collected in *The Birth-mark* (2015) and *The Quarry* (2016) are still poetical explorations into the archives and the characters held there, and even in this prose format we are still left to narrate the meaning between what Quartermain (2008) describes as 'islands' of text (184). In general, Howe's work acts to create a highly peopled archive. The eye of the poem above signals a reflection of the self that a creative-archival researcher undergoes. The message is stark. Howe's appropriation and mis-appropriation are not static final acts, but more of a fully-fleshed détournement in which texts move between their old and new meanings, acting and interacting a new future. Howe creates this from the past, playing with historical fragments in a way that releases them, yet emphasizes the strength of their roots,

ultimately resisting a sense of a static or archive-able history. What Guy Debord called for on the streets of Paris, 'a spirit of discovery' (Quoted in Coverley, 2010, 81) that re-frames our relationship to our environment, Howe has enacted on the page in order to push the reader-author relationship to new depths. Although, whereas Debord's resistance is one of street-by-street walking, Howe responds to the rooms and catalogues of archive libraries, addressing the language of the past and historical power. Despite their urgent instruction, Coverley highlights that the Situationist impact on urban planning at the time was 'zero' (85). Their critique of architecture was on a political and artistic level, and the small fringe nature of the group ensured that they would never reach a mass appeal. Howe's *Frolic Architecture* taps into another Situationist aim, that of, as Mustapha Khayati explains, exposing language as the 'house of power' ([1966], 2006, 222), a house that wields language in order to 'guard the oppressive order' (222). In *Captive Words, Preface to a Situationist Dictionary*, Khayati describes how détournement is a 'critique of the dominant language':

Détournement... confirms the thesis, long demonstrated by modern art, that word are insubordinate, that it is impossible for power to *totally coop* created meanings, to fix an existing meaning once and for all (223).

Khayati argues that only by creating new meanings, and giving terms to those meanings, can we resist the authority of language. The Situationist development of the *dérive* and *détournement* are the results, giving terms to acts already, at least in part,

existing in the practices of twentieth century artists. Howe doesn't give any terms to her practice and her aims are less sweeping than that of the Situationists, but her détournement of archival power mirrors Khayati's statement above. Détournement, the creation of new meanings from the fragments of old, is the most effective way to slip free of power. By cutting off historical texts, Howe literally cuts off their coherency, confusing the identities of the rulers and the ruled. Howe's disturbance of archival texts reflects a Situationist distrust of words, and her psychogeographical investigation into the language of the past questions the fix of an 'existing meaning', prompting and provoking a myriad of meanings. This sense of flux as a resistance is a questioning of historic knowledge, the knowledge in the archives having been written by the victors, and, as Khayati goes on to explain, in the language of the 'rulers':

The noun governs; each time it appears the other words automatically fall in around it in the correct order. This "regimentation" of words reflects a more profound militarisation of the whole society, its division into two basic categories: the caste of rulers and the great mass of people who carry out their orders (226).

Howe subverts the noun's governance, literally scattering the 'regimentation' of words and refusing that 'correct order'. More specifically, passages of faith, identity and freedom in *Frolic Architecture* are rendered incomplete, the key aspects of Edwards' sermons and diaries refused dominance over this new space of the page.

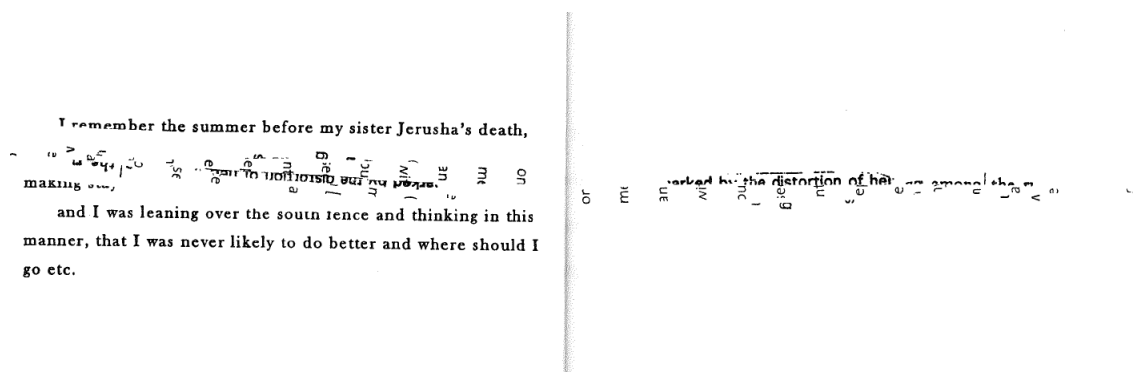
### **Conclusion: Constant Drifting**

Mirroring Ford and Merlin above, Goldsmith (2011) writes that the key elements of détournement have been adopted and adapted by writers and artists across the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries, finding antecedents in William S Burroughs's 'cut-ups and fold-ins' and Ian Hamilton Finlay's concrete poetry (36). He highlights that the general criteria of détournement, a method of simply using existing objects in a way that creates new experiences, is broad enough to appeal to both writers and visual artists, but he also reminds us that the Situationists saw these as tactics, not just as part of the creative process, but as means to a political end. Their ultimate goal was to create physical situations, interventions 'intended to be a catalyst for social change filtered through a reorientation of normal life' (36). As discussed previously, *Frolic Architecture* relies on movement, a page in constant flux with its disparate shards of text. This sense of transition is closely aligned with the Situationist ethos, echoing politics of the *dérive*. The situation relied on movement, and a liberation of the individual. This liberation takes into account marginalized voices and the politics of physical and temporal spaces.

The voices in *Frolic Architecture* are not the grandiose or epic voice of settler history, rather it is an amalgamated construction that's brought down to earth by moments of mundanity and the everyday. By doing so, Howe critiques the truth of



those voices, questioning the coherency of historical narrative. There are discussions of life, love, and death, but these occur in snapshots of matter of fact phrases. Details of eighteenth-century colonial life are absent and there's no sense of the sweep of historic affairs that Howe could have focused on. The poem below, for example, is typical of Howe's preference for phrases that could easily be spoken today:



The work is out of time, and as a result, fosters a link between times. The individual lives through and beyond time, albeit not in the same form. Tracking the poem back to its original source gives us some further context. Howe publishes the source, a 1738 diary entry of Hannah Edwards Witmore, in the notes of *Spontaneous Particulars* (2014, 75). My discussion of this source attempts to conclude many of the themes of this chapter. The lengthy diary entry begins with the first line of the poem above, 'I remember the summer before...' but the remainder of the conventional lines occur halfway down the diary fragment. Howe has effectively paraphrased the diary entry by picking up certain lines and presenting them in this way, and the area of visual

disturbance between the starkly legible lines provides a bridge of static. Between the sharp clips of text is the word 'distortion', again bringing a transparency to Howe's process. This is not Hannah Edwards Witmore, nor is it even her text, but a more straightforward distortion of words on the page. The line 'I was one evening walking just below my father's orchard' also stems from this source. Again, Howe focuses on the everyday images. Left behind, in the original diary entry, are discussions of religion, the soul, awakening, sin, and the supernatural. As Hannah leaned over the south fence she...

saw a bible open before me... Which a little surprised me, but I attempted to read, but did as sensibly seem to be hindered by a piece of stays intercepting and covering the pages (75).

None of this makes it into the poem overtly. There are, as mentioned, instances of the words 'soul' and 'death' throughout *Frolic Architecture*, but they are not given as much clarity as the more domestic images such as that above. Howe, it seems, wants us to see the everyday of the Edwards family. The simple doubt and uncertainty of the voice is made all the more vulnerable by the expanse of white surrounding it, a blank reply to the 'where should I go'. The answer is towards a reflection of the self. Throughout the collection, a sense of an 'our' is absent, despite the sources being from multiple individuals. There are, in contrast, constant instances of 'I', four in this short section, coupled by details that build an image around this multiplicitous figure: 'I was leaning

over the south fence'. The individual is both persistent and undetermined, free to play in the 'Frolic Architecture', but bereft of previous identity. In order to give them more power, Howe anonymizes the individual. This sense of the everyday echoes the Situationist grounding in the agentic subjectivity of the individual. They were interested in 'human feelings', psychogeography being defined by Debord as

the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals ([1955], 2006, 8).

An understanding of time, space, and their transcendence was a big part of the creation of situations. This was how an individual could comprehend and fight against the Spectacle, creating a unique ambience that opposed the hegemony of capitalism. As part of a call for a new architecture, Situationists Ivan Chtcheglov stated that future urban environments will be 'a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space' ([1953], 2006, 3). It would also be a place of 'CONTINUOUS DRIFTING' (7), in which 'The changing of the landscapes from one hour to the next will result in total disorientation'<sup>26</sup>. Howe's *Frolic Architecture* works towards that call, confusing the

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<sup>26</sup> Although these texts officially predate the creation of the Situationist International, they stem from practices that were to become synonymous with the movement. See Knabb's introduction to *The Situationist International Anthology* (2006) for more detail.

reader with multiple voices and tones, and quite literally, a changing landscape of the page. Whereas the Situationists saw this as only possible in an urban environment, Howe highlights the same prevalence of contradictions and complexities in the more obviously restricted location of the archives, as do Riley and Smith in the British rural. In *Frolic Architecture*, as in accessing archival documents, no page can be navigated in exactly the same way. Withdrawing archival material requires sometimes extensive searching through online or physical catalogues, filling in forms, and sifting through boxes of material to find the relevant ones. Each procedure requires a slightly different approach, just as Howe's poems require a constant rotation of the page and a careful study in order to make out many of the words. The Situationist's city is here transcribed into the research library. Reading is just the beginning, or even secondary. A reader slips into a viewer as the shards, the way they are cut and interact with their surroundings, are read as autonomous elements themselves. This use of the page stems back to individual agency, each shard a separate, either literally or figuratively, agentive 'I' in a Situationist 'total disorientation'. Howe expands on this stance in the first, and most legible, poem in the collection (39):

That this book is a history of  
A shadow that is a shadow of

Me mystically one in another  
Another another to subserve

In the collection, it's an undetermined voice and shifting 'I' that 'subserve[s]' one figure into another. However, it's also their relationship to the page that heightens the lack of a singular dominant narrative. The page serves as an environment for a 'CONTINUOUS DRIFTING', each voice merging with another. At a fundamental level, Howe's negotiation of the space is akin to Goldsmith's description of psychogeography in the introduction to this project. She goes against the linear 'daily movements' of the page seemingly 'without intention', subverting the 'prison' of the archives by decontextualizing history. This also plays back to the idea of the individual, and as discussed, Howe points the Edwards family towards a future un-anchored from the past. Howe again answers a Situationist call:

The history of poetry is only a way of running away from the poetry of history, if we understand by that phrase not the spectacular history of the rulers but the history of everyday life and its possible liberation; the history of each individual life and its realisation ([1963], 2006, 152).<sup>27</sup>

'Liberation' and 'realization' are key ideas for Howe, and her wider work also takes on the same stance towards historical figures. This liberation is closely tied to a

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<sup>27</sup> This quote stems from an anonymous Situationist article titled *All The Kings Men*, published in the *Internationale Situationniste* #8 (1963).

questioning of the self, and the ultimate impossibility of that liberation. Howe releases figures by emphasizing their doubts and uncertainties, using both visual and linguistic methods. Again, this is a Situationist free-ing of an everyday life, 'not the spectacular history' of more key figures. For Howe this is a questioning of her own role in appropriating, and misappropriating, historic voices. Howe (2003) remarks,

Why am I so fictitious and active?

Simply because there's no one in the world and never has been anyone in the world like you.

Not-me—though you and I (61).

Time plays a role in this narrative also, with half-built scenes and characters colliding across place and space. The question of when exactly *is* all this happening, is more relevant than when exactly *did* all this happen? The poem below, for example, introduces a situation in relatively fleshed out clarity '...I always hoped for... it seemed comfort to/ confusions of worldly affa[irs]... fear I was not prepared'.

kept up I always hoped for  
 ; I seemed to be set at gre  
 concern with it, it then ap  
 that the inhabitants were  
 and it seemed comfort to  
 confusions of worldly affa  
 mind in general tho melar  
 ught of the dangers I wa  
 fear I was not prepared  
 in small hand on p  
 tray pencil commonplace  
 now  
 ay fr  
 after  
 ay h  
 v-bir  
 war  
 e!  
 the  
 at  
 hir  
 -c  
 ' sc

There is a segment of time set up here, a hope and fear for the future, and an implication of a past ‘...the inhabitants wer[e]’, all leading to a sense of a present. All relatively straightforward, although the introductory chapter to the collection makes it clear that these are the words of Eighteenth-Century figures, adding another layer to our poem. This is complicated by the visuals of the other sections. ‘in small hand on p...’ is in bold. Whose hand and what is in it anyway? This is followed by ‘tray pencil commonplace’, the tools of writing bringing us out of the hope and fear of the first passage. This is happening on paper, Howe reminds us. The triangular segment below that, prompting us to turn the page, begins ‘now’ and continues ‘[a]fter’, adding further layers to the sense of time. Does the section’s angle and ‘now’ conclude the narrative, a geographical rounding off of the picture and a punch into the present? Most significantly, how does the vertical line on the left-hand side function? The

‘[p]aper band/n.d. [F]older 1376’ acts to remind us that all this was contained in the archives, but the lines separation indicates that we have escaped that environment.

This détournement is what sparks off this *Frolic Architecture*, a means of knowledge that relies on unexpected relations. Movement is still key, the questioning shifts of time serving to add to that constant flux of ‘total disorientation’. The collection is a place to drift through, free from any prescriptive timelines. For Howe, using time in this way links back to the individual. In her essay *The Disappearance Approach*, between details of her husband Peter Hare’s life and death, and a biography of Jonathan Edwards, Howe drops the statement:

If your names are only written and no ‘originals’ exist, do you have a real existence for us? What happens to names when time stops?

Answer: Nothing happens: There is no when (2010, 20).

If there is no ‘when’, then the Edwards materials are further freed from their origins. Their words live on, move into other combinations. Disorientating time is also a statement on the everyday. The marks of history are jumbled; turning points and conquests lose their pivotal sense of linearity and are brought down to earth in a tangle of space and place.

Perhaps the question still remains: why détourne these elements? The question remains because the poems in *Frolic Architecture* do not settle into a



coherent narrative. They are a Situationist 'game of events' that are only just approaching their first moves, their unresolved nature at the heart of their détournement. Yet, the voice is too doubtful to know the game. Again, this is a reflection of their archival environments, and Howe's response of cutting them free. In the poem below, for example, two tones of voice are in stark juxtaposition:

What shall I leave to you or what shall I say to you

AS IT WERE WAIT FOR THE JUDGMENT OF (th  
 remissions and connexions of the imaginations. p  
 rivers, by the laws of most nations, and by the natural it  
 is, is attributed to the proprietors of their banks, except- t  
 as the Rhine or the Danube, which seem too large to fol- th  
 to the property of the neighbouring fields. Yet even the  
 sidered as the property of that nation, through which cont  
 something while I live that may contribute  
 bear them such a relation in the fancy. near  
 which are made to land, bordering upon rivers, follow xt  
 ilians, provided it be made by what they call *alluvion*, y  
 and imperceptibly; which are circumstances, that assist  
 e conjunction. err  
 y considerable portion torn at once from one bank and  
 becomes not *his* property, whose land it falls on, till it  
 and till the trees and plants have spread their roots into  
 e thought does not by itself call it.....  
 distinguish between the necessity of a separation  
 n's possession, and the rules, which assign particular  
 persons. The first necessity is obvious, strong, and in-  
 or

The question of 'what shall I say to you' is a common theme throughout. Here it is struck against the more formal register of the block of prose. An informative passage on land law, literally, the law of the land, is skewered by that more doubtful 'I':

‘[something] while I live may contribute...’ and ‘exceedingly brittle and uncertain...’.

Again, a Situationist idea of the individual against the possessive collective arises. The message above seems to come back to the individual, and their use of space, both of the archives and the page. The personal lines above are dispersed and overshadowed by the block of more formal text, the ‘I’ unable to move in the sea of dense text.

Although the lines struggle for clarity, they also successfully disrupt and pierce the law of the land.

Howe’s *détournement* challenges the idea of text as meaning, skewing and distorting historical knowledge and identity into a new shapes, creating meaning between shards of language. Whereas a more liberated and multiplicitious Situationist architecture was largely unfeasible, Howe’s sense of space on the page provides an ideal playground. In wrenching voices away from their origins Howe fosters the kind of escape from confines that the Situationists failed to do in practice.

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## **Publications**

### **Poetry:**

**Mechanics Institute Review** – *If the Latitude is Known, A Metal Window Dictionary, A*

*Village Manifesto, As Coloured Green* (March 2020)

**Lighthouse** – *JET FATHER ACCOUNT* (Issue 21)

**M58** - The Window (forthcoming)

**Architexture** – Placed in the Streetcake Experimental Writing Award 2020

**Published poems that appear in this thesis under different titles**

**or in very altered forms:**

**Stand** – *Outside the Court, 4 ½ Miles* (Volume 18:1)

**Post-Road** – *Five Ways to Read a Village* (Volume 36)

**Ope: An Anthology** – *Up in the Valley* (2019)

### **Prose Publications:**

**Walking Bodies (Triarchy Press)** – *The Documentary Drift: Lutyens, Cockington and*

*Poetry* (forthcoming chapter)

**Antonym Journal – *Three Steps Towards a Rural Utopia* (2018)**

**Self Published (ongoing) GIF Versions**

**available at [samkempoetry.com](http://samkempoetry.com):**

Architexture

JET FATHER ACCOUNT

A Metal Window Dictionary

**Presentations at Conferences:**

**Flows and Floods**, University of Warwick, February, 2020: *Flows of the Page: Radical Walking in Radical Landscape Poetry*

**PGR Research Showcase**, University of Plymouth, December 2019: *The Mayflower Drift: Blending Place and Poetry*

**Walking's New Movements**, University of Plymouth, November, 2019: *Space to Move: The Ground Aslant, Radical Form and Mythogeography*

**Happiness: From Enlightenment to Present**, Kings College, Cambridge, October 2019: *Moving Through Certainty: Negotiating Narrative Tensions of Nostalgia in Peter Riley's Alstonefield*

**Association for Literature and the Environment**, University of Plymouth, September

2019: *The Mayflower Drift, re-placing historical accounts*

**Posthumanism Walking Weekend**, University of Exeter, Tavistock, August 2019:

*Searching for the Bedford Cottages*

**Great Writing Conference**, Imperial College London, July 2019: *Towards a Poetics of*

*Mythogeography*

**International Practice-Research Festival**, University of Plymouth, June 2019:

*Diffraction, Poetry and Walking*

**Creative Writing Postgraduate Research Showcase**, University of Plymouth, March

2019: *The Text as Landscape*

**Postgraduate Research Showcase**, University of Plymouth, December 2018: *Nostalgia*

*in British Landscape Poetry*