

“Not Promising a Landfall ...”: An Autotopographical Account of Loss of Place, Memory and Landscape

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Abstract This paper contributes to discussions about landscape and place and how they are practised in relation to time, displacement, memory and loss. I develop a multi-dimensional account of how landscape is generated in the moment by spatio-temporal topologies *and* topographies in which memory, movement and materiality play full parts. I consider absence, loss and displacement and how they operate within self-landscape practice, and how particular forms of materiality (in this case, large bridges) become charged with all sorts of emotions relating to personal history (how bridges can be psychogeographical “hotspots”). Displacement from, or loss of, home/land/place/nature—driven by one means or another (economic, conflict, environmental degradations)—can be a looming presence in everyday life. Resulting emotions and affective traces can suffuse through and cleave to materiality, and materiality patterned into landscape, in contingent, unexpected and unaccountable ways, which, as articulated through everyday affective life, are hard to represent in (academic) language. Questions are raised about the relationships between self, time, memory, materiality and place, using a non-representational, creative approach, based on image and textual collage.

The past survives however much one tries to drive it down and away from one’s consciousness. It rears up provoked by something overheard or a scene, a place, an object, a tune, a scent even. It is inescapable.¹

Amongst all the clutter in the office is a small screwdriver. A watchmaker’s tool with a thin dark shaft and silver handle. It should be in its drawer with the others. The kids

¹ Dannie Abse, *The Presence* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 5.

might have had it out. I think, “Hmm, I could pick that up and stick the shaft into my [pupil]—[into] the black hole in the middle of my eye.”²

Distant Bridges

Drive north on the A39 towards Bristol (UK), turn left onto the B3116 (veering west a few degrees)—cresting a low hill (one is already quite high), a panorama rolls out of the receding horizon. All of the city of Bristol can be seen, obliquely, and the land before and beyond—a routine journey I have made for over 20 years. I look, every time, to the far horizon, to the very edge of the land(scape), however that might be determined by light, weather and cloud.

It is never the same. Sometimes a rainy day shuts it right down, nothing (much) to see. The distance is an absence. On other occasions, over the head of Bristol, so to speak, way off in the “blue of [the] distance”³ the huge towers of the two Severn road bridges (the older Severn Bridge and the Second Severn Crossing) that span the hidden Severn estuary can just be seen. Although no more than whitish clusters of a few pixels in the picture filling the windscreen, they are the “punctums”⁴ of this view for me. Although the great tidal estuary cannot itself be seen, its scale, the void it forms in the land, is marked by a down-shift in colour, tone and grain between the near-land and the far-land; this side and that side; England and Wales; even, it seems, now and then; the distant bridge pylons incising the margins of those divisions.

And beyond the bridges, on the odd occasions of sharper light, the hills of Wales are in view as gentle waves of the softest grey (Figure 1). I have crossed those bridges many times, routinely and otherwise. I have photographed them almost as a matter of instinct or reflex, for I had no real project in mind—particularly in the early days (Figure 2). I felt that the crossings of the bridge(s)⁵ and the narratives they were part of were of great moment for me and members of my (Welsh) family, and worth marking in some way.

² Owain Jones, work submitted for MA Creative Writing course; Bath Spa University 2004; available from author on request.

³ Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (Edinburgh: Cannongate, 2006).

⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage Classic, 2000).

⁵ Most of this story, and the pictures, focus on the older Severn Bridge.



Figure 1. Second Severn Crossing, 2010. England in foreground, Wales in left distance (all images by author).

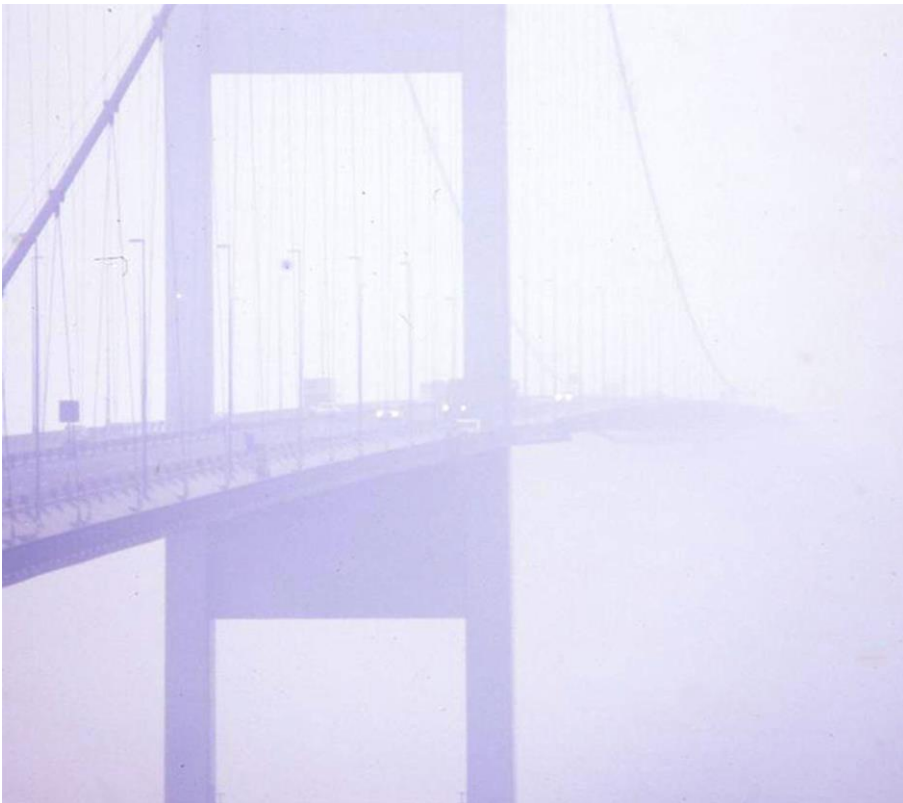


Figure 2. Severn Bridge in fog, c. 1979.

As well as photographing the bridges, and exploring and photographing the wider estuary almost compulsively, I have collected books and artworks, or records of artworks, relating to them. Recently the poet Philip Gross has published a collection about the estuary and bridges, some of which uncannily echo my images and thoughts, for example:

In Mist

Slim slung

The struts and wires of it,

The way it sidles

into white midstream

Taking just a basic kit

of light and line,

Not promising a landfall ...⁶

A bridge disappearing into mist, the far shore, home, lost—landfall denied?

Intentions

I seek to contribute to recent discussions of displacement, landscape, memory and presence/absence⁷ in the environmental humanities, particularly in certain literary informed cultural geography. In particular John Wylie's⁸ key work which explores "motifs of absence, distance, loss and haunting"⁹ in order to counter the stressing of presence in recent treatments of landscape, which focus upon embodiment, materiality and perception. I explore a similar set of motifs, but in doing so hope to develop two main themes. Firstly, I seek to express the

⁶ Philip Gross, extract from the poem "Bridge Passages" in *The Water Table* (Tarsset: Blood Axe Books, 2009), 37.

⁷ Mitch Rose, "Gathering 'Dreams of Presence': A Project for the Cultural Landscape," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006): 537-54.

⁸ John Wylie, "Landscape, Absence and the Geographies of Love," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 34 (2009): 275-89.

⁹ Wylie, "Landscape, Absence and the Geographies of Love," 275.

process of becoming-in-place/landscape which is a hyper-complex interplay of practice, time, space, memory, text/image and materiality, all of which is compressed through the extraordinarily rich, ongoing moment of affective becoming. Presence is active through materiality and memory, even if it is speaking of absence, so rather than their being treated as an oppositional dualism, I am seeking to explore how they co-construct each other. Secondly, I seek to express differing inflections on how displacement can affect presence-absence and how it can manifest itself in landscapes, and be bound up with powerfully lived geographies of remembering and forgetting,¹⁰ “ecologies of place”¹¹ and mappings of melancholia.¹² I seek to do the above through a generally non-representational,¹³ autotopological¹⁴ account of landscape with a cadence of the trauma of displacement and the loss of place.

It is autotopographical because place and landscape are always centred on the person(al) and articulated differently in each case in a series of connections through remembered/forgotten place-times. But also I draw upon my own (and my family’s) particular life geography as a case-study of sorts. This is an attempt to explore the time–space dynamics of displacement from the home/family/childhood landscape—the absences that that brings, recollections and revisitations, and accompanying feelings of grief and confusion.

To achieve the above a number of interweaving themes and questions are developed. How do the consequences of displacement course through, and attach themselves to, materiality affectively patterned into landscape? This question links to wider discussions of diasporas, mass-scale displacement and other forms of (enforced) movement which are important generators of trauma, and of interest within various strands of geographical thinking.¹⁵ To

¹⁰ James Sidaway, “Shadows on the Path: Negotiating Geopolitics on an Urban Section of Britain’s South West Coast Path,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27, no. 6 (2009): 1091-116; S. Legg, “Reviewing Geographies of Memory/Forgetting,” *Environment and Planning A* 39, no. 2 (2007): 456-66.

¹¹ Nigel Thrift, “Steps to an Ecology of Place,” in *Human Geography Today*, ed. Dorren Massey, Philip Sarre and John Allen (Oxford: Polity, 1999), 295-352.

¹² Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹³ Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space/Politics/Affect* (London: Routledge, 2008); Ben Anderson and Paul Harrison, *Taking-place: Non-representational Theories and Geography* (London: Ashgate, 2010); Hayden Lorimer, “Cultural Geography: Worldly Shapes, Differently Arranged,” *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 1 (2007): 1–12.

¹⁴ Deirdre Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁵ For example, Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

what extent is place (however imagined and defined) central to practices of self?¹⁶ Can the loss of place constitute a challenge to successful self-making? How might this work through interplays of materiality, experience and memory? These are, of course, deep questions which go to the heart of what it is to be human, and to the heart of what it is to be a human in modernity, where place and home, in at least some key senses, are routinely/systematically devalued, degraded and destroyed.¹⁷ And, as also expressed, what are the relationships between such processes and how we are always in time(s) and place(s) through the extraordinary complexities and uncertainties of memory? The very real challenges (emotional, ethical, sensible) of embarking on narratives of home, landscape, place in relation to memory(s) are beautifully illustrated by Hayden Lorimer's paper *Homeland*.¹⁸ There the memories of others are in full play; here, for better *and* worse, the memories being worked are (mostly) mine.

A Brief Note on Method

What unfolds is a collage of images and writings which I feel offers a "local method"¹⁹ through which the interplays of processes I am subject to (and I perform) can be creatively expressed (not simply represented). It is a story about my and my family's movements from the farm where I grew up in Wales, near Cardiff, to a new farm in England, near Bath (both UK). The Severn estuary, with its wonderful tides, divides those two places and times, and is crossed by the two bridges over which I/we have journeyed many times. I seek to create an expression, to tell *of* a story, which is in the making as it unfolds. I seek, however inadequately, to use writing as a method, thus continuing the trend of what could be termed "literary geography,"²⁰ particularly that where the story itself, the telling, takes, as it were, centre stage methodologically.²¹

¹⁶ Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Casey, *Getting Back into Place*; John Douglas Porteous and Sandra Eileen Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Hayden Lorimer, "Homeland," *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 4 (2014): 583-604.

¹⁹ "[We] require a [new] procedural methodology, taking seriously the particularities of the sites, the unpredictability of circumstances, the uneven patterns of landscapes and the hazardous nature of becoming": Marcel Hénaff, "Of Stones, Angels and Humans: Michel Serres and the Global City," *SubStance* 83 (1997): 59-80.

²⁰ I use this term to capture a range of geography that seeks to use writing as a method, key exponents being John Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007) and Hayden Lorimer, "Herding Memories of Humans and Animals," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24, no. 4 (2006): 497-518.

²¹ E.g. Hayden Lorimer, "Homeland"; Fraser MacDonald, "The Ruins of Erskine Beveridge," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39, no. 4 (2014): 477-489.

The collage-like writings and accompanying images stand at the margins of being systematically and/or instinctively ordered. Academic convention demands the former, but I have some faith in W. G. Sebald's account of "haphazard [instinctive] method" which he asserts is the only productive method.²² The haphazard and instinctual—the business of following one's nose (as a dog on a scent)—is the only way to make real progress on a subject. The systematic soon loses the scent (of life). John Law also questions the extent to which standard social science methods and languages can effectively deal with a world where much "is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have a pattern at all."²³ This is very much the case with memories (forgettings) and absences, and the experiences of sorrow, anxiety, uncertainty and grief they can generate. It is hard to put into a narrative that which is non-linear, non-thought based, not-clearly known/felt, always on the move.

Sebald also suggests that:

the more obvious you make a symbol in a text, the less genuine, as it were, it becomes, so you have to do it obliquely, so that the reader might read over it without really noticing it. You just try to set up certain reverberations in a text and the whole acquires significance that it might not otherwise have.²⁴

Memories of Catenary Curves

I first took photographs of the bridges as a car passenger, my father driving, my mother beside him. I grabbed shots (e.g. Figures 3 and 4), on the move, experiencing the bridge passages at different times of day and year and in different emotional states of "leaving" and "going." I developed the films, and printed a few of the frames, in a Bristol Art College darkroom. Then, as projects of sorts did form ("artistic" at first, then academic), I looked out on the bridges from different vantage points, and continued to take photographs while crossing them in new life circumstances. And I made trips to the estuary shore from where the bridges could be viewed as part of the landscape.

²² W. G. Sebald, "A Conversation with W. G. Sebald," in *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W. G. Sebald*, ed. Lynne Sharon Schartz (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 93-118, at 94.

²³ John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004), 2.

²⁴ W. G. Sebald, in conversation with Eleanor Wachtel, "Ghost Hunter," in *The Emergence of Memory*, 37-62, at 54.



Figure 3. Crossing the Severn Bridge, c. 1979.



Figure 4. Crossing the Severn Bridge, c. 1980.

The distinctive beauty of the old Severn Bridge (and other suspension bridges) comes in part from the catenary curves of the suspension cables which support the deck. Such bridges are, more or less, matters of tension. The Severn Bridge quivers and jumps to the rushing load it carries. One can walk across it and feel this, as I have often done. The old Severn Bridge was one of the most advanced suspension bridges of its time. However one engineer and bridge watcher pointed out that the largest and most wonderful catenary curves that cross the estuary are formed by the power cables that are carried over the water by two sets of giant pylons.²⁵ One set of these stands alongside the old Severn Bridge, the other some miles upstream at another site I often viewed from school. The pylons loom in the car window as one crosses the bridge, seemingly like sentinels marking each bank. These too I have photographed both while on the move and from one shore or the other (Figure 5). They, along with the bridges, form some of the infrastructure of many of my dreams.

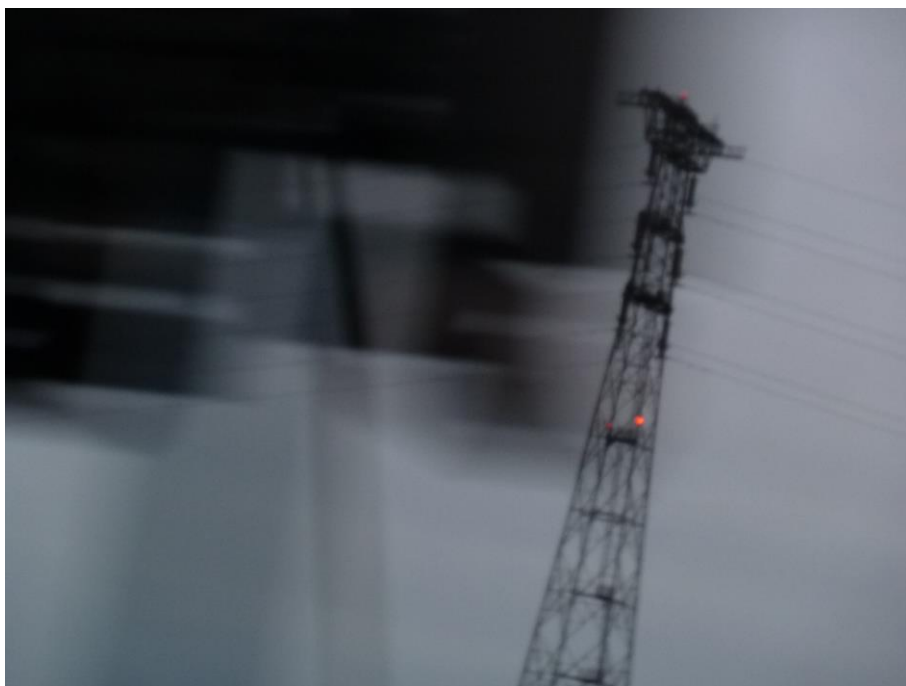


Figure 5. One of the huge pylons carrying power cables across the estuary, seen from the Severn Bridge.

²⁵ I read this on a website dedicated to bridge engineering which focused in detail on the suspension bridges and the Severn Bridge in particular some years ago. I cannot now find that site or information. Another entanglement of memory, loss and landscape.

Bridges have always been constructions rich in cultural importance for obvious (and less obvious) reasons. They are clearly of immediate and practical importance in allowing people to cross between territories, and across a range of obstacles, thus making them vitally important in military, political, economic and social terms. They inevitably channel people's disparate journeys through their portals, and mark the way into and out of a place. They become linked to notions of identity that can include nationalism, regionalism and localism. They become symbols of place not only because of their psychogeographical intensities as routeways, but also because their physical prominence and distinctiveness in the landscape make them landmarks (Figure 6). Bridges are intensities of psychogeographies in terms of crossings from one realm to another, and in how they gather landscapes and lives around them. As Martin Heidegger puts it:

The bridge swings over the stream with ease and power. It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. ... One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. ... The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. ... Resting upright in the stream's bed, the bridge-piers bear the swing of the arches that leave the stream's waters to run their course. ... The highway bridge is tied into the network of long-distance traffic, paced as calculated for maximum yield. Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and from, so that they may get to other banks and in the end, as mortals, to the other side. ... The bridge gathers, as a passage that crosses.²⁶

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001).



Figure 6. The Severn Bridge, c. 1982, seen from Severn Beach.

Murk

Brown sky over the channel, not
 pollution but reflection. Correspondences:
 as *below, so above*. Today,

with light as if from somewhere
 else, the bridge's peppermint-cream
 hint-of-neon filaments

rise like a bright idea, against
 that collusion—a bridge underwater,
 or the ideal on one, sunk

in the density of things, in material gloom.²⁷

²⁷ Philip Gross, extract from the poem “Bridge Passages,” *The Water Table*, 37.

This way of bridges gathering lives around them is so for me, members of my family and unknown others in regard to the Severn road bridges. Both form part of the motorway network between south-east Wales and south/south-west England. I have lived a life shaped by the Severn estuary (Figure 7): growing up on the farm near Cardiff; holidaying each year further west on the Pembrokeshire coast at Tenby; going east to boarding school at Newnham-on-Severn (on the banks of the Severn), then to another school in Taunton; as an undergraduate and postgraduate in Bristol; on a new family farm near Bath; and post-doctoral study and employment in Bristol, Exeter, Cheltenham and Gloucester. The bridges articulate this life geography like a central knot in some complex web. I, with various members of my family, have criss-crossed the estuary thousands of times, and looked across it (over the ever-shifting waterscape of the tidal estuary) to the other side, countless times more. But there came a point when we lived on one side rather than the other; a move from old farm to new farm; from Wales to England; from there to here; from then to now; from one shore to the other shore—over the flowing tides.

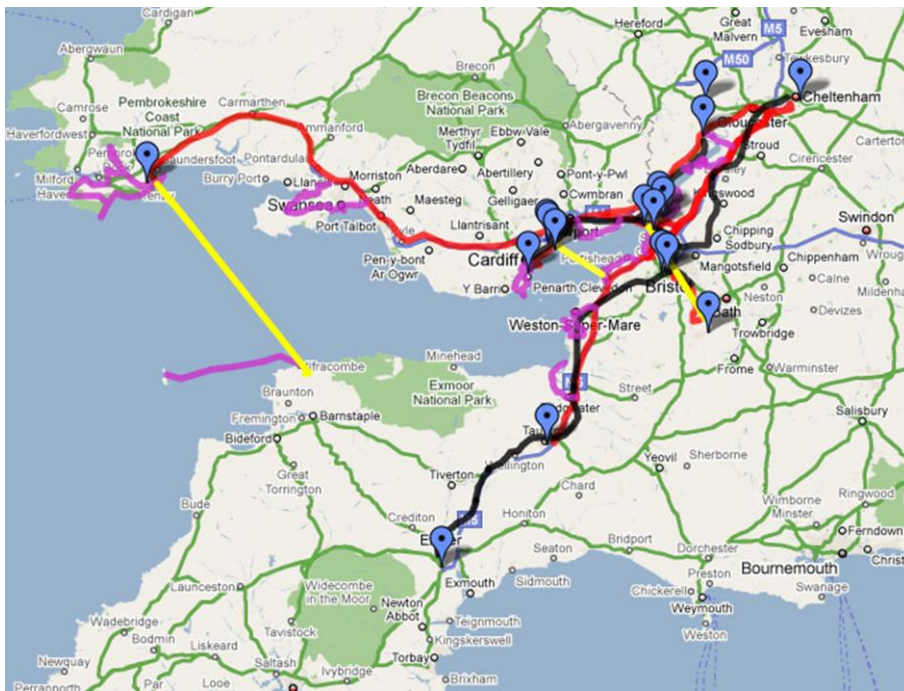


Figure 7. An estuary-shaped life, with the Severn bridges as time–space fulcrums (from a personal Google map).

Displacement, Loss, Memory and Landscape

Wylie discusses tensions between phenomenological understandings of embodied self in place/landscape (possibly dwelt lives) and poststructuralist understandings of the fragmented, contingent, performative self that militates against such coherent narratives of settled being/becoming (of self or place or landscape). Melding the useful values of both these approaches, Wylie summarises landscapes “as a matter of movements, of biographies, attachments and exiles.”²⁸ Thus landscapes are *always* made up of losses, absences and presences—but differently so for different people, and in changing constellations of asymmetrical tension. Can the loss of home place/landscape destabilise the self? As I will show, some people do claim this, and I wonder if my family and I have experienced such a process. But this notion rests on settled ideas of place–self interaction. If places, and our becomings in them, are always more contingent, unsettled, patched up, then where does that leave notions of belonging, and displacement from belonging? What role does memory play?

Certainly, memory processes are central to the self and ongoing practices of the everyday. We form an autobiographical sense of self but this is by no means a deliberative or known process.²⁹ Memories (working with the material traces they encounter) are not simple or biddable processes, but rather dauntingly complex aspects of ongoing life operating in the unconscious and affective realms. Many have commented on how memory is not just one of a number of mind functions, but is rather the foundational function of becoming which underpins all others including language, practice, emotion and affective exchange.³⁰ If memories are central to the self and the performance of the ongoing present, and if they are shaded by trauma, losses and absences in particular ways, then is the ongoing self also so shaded?

For Heddon, memory “rather than place, is the safe harbour” as it is the home of the self.³¹ But it can also be an ongoing source of anxiety and trauma.³² And to what extent can we trust

²⁸ Wylie, *Landscape*, 210; see Iain Biggs for this assessment of Wylie’s work, “The spaces of ‘Deep Mapping’: A partial account,” *Journal of Arts and Communities* 2, no. 1 (2011): 5–25.

²⁹ Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (London: William Heinemann, 1999).

³⁰ This is discussed in much more detail in Owain Jones, and Jo Garde-Hansen, eds., *Geography and Memory: Identity, Place and Becoming* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and Owain Jones, “Geography, Memory and Non-representational Theory,” *Geography Compass*, Social Geography Section 5, no. 12 (2011): 875–885.

³¹ Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance*, 95.

memory? Some suggest “in talking about the past, we lie with every breath we draw.”³³ It is very difficult to know how memory and any narrative of self really works.

The past can be grasped only in the awareness that it is impossible to have access to essence, origin. The legitimacy of narratives, as well as that of identities, does not come from the past, but from the contemporary act of narration. What is more, these narratives, as in Derrida and Benjamin, involve what is not present.³⁴

Exiles and displacements generate absences in terms of past lost home(lands) which then live in complex relation to new dwelt landscapes. I and my family have experienced a form of displacement, so here I am exploring some of the consequences that has generated. This, then, is concerned with memory and affects of absence—and everyday life/landscape as a complex process of interflows suffusing through bodies, memories, texts and materiality. Tim Ingold sets out a basic understanding of lives-lived-in-place(s) as “meshworks” of flows of/in/through bodies, materials, spaces.³⁵ Absence, a not-being-anymore, or not-being-with-me-anymore (there is a difference), can form such threads, carried by memory, photographs, flowing through objects, places and texts in ways which inflect the living landscape of presence. Ideas of meshworks and lines (or networks) must not be seen in overly technical or clinical senses. Lines of flow, yes, but ones which can leak, seep, stain, mingle and de-mingle, and emit interference and jamming signals, amplifications and resonations. All lives are riddled with flows of loss and resulting absences, but in differing ways, to differing degrees and with differing outcomes.

There is great interest, in geography and beyond, in experiences of displacement, diaspora, migration and exile—in how individuals, families, communities and larger groups have had to leave what were (or they at least considered to be) their home(lands) for a range of reasons which include conflict, and various forms of cultural, economic and ecological degradation, turbulence or violence. Inevitably such displacements bring movements to newly occupied homes and landscapes, and memories of the places, people and things left behind. These

³² Belinda Morrissey, “A Domestic Geography of Everyday Terror: Remembering and Forgetting the House I Grew Up In,” in *Geography and Memory: Identity, Place and Becoming*, ed. Owain Jones and Jo Garde-Hansen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³³ William Maxwell, *So Long, See You Tomorrow* (London: Vintage Books, 1996), 112.

³⁴ Myrian Sepúlveda Santos, “Memory and Narrative in Social Theory: The Contributions of Jacques Derrida and Walter Benjamin,” *Time & Society* 10, nos. 2/3 (2001): 163–89.

³⁵ Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011).

remembered absences can become entangled in a range of materialities and practices of the new home landscape.³⁶ Often these processes are considered on a large scale, such as post-colonial experience and trans-global migration and displacement, but, in other cases, displacement can be more local in geographical terms and singular in the experiences of individuals and families.

Memories, texts (photographs) and material traces are vital in practices of ongoing life, as they weave between once-present and now-absent. Again it is a question of how and in what kind of circumstances do these processes occur. Mindy Fullilove suggests that people who have been traumatically displaced experience “root shock”:

the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of some or all of one’s *emotional ecosystem*. Root shock can follow natural disaster, development-induced displacement, war, and changes that play out slowly such as those that accompany gentrification.³⁷

John Porteous and Sandra Smith focus in particular on “domicide” (the destruction of home):

[T]he meaningfulness of domicile resides in the probability that home is central to our lives and the likelihood that the forcible destruction of it by powerful authorities will result in suffering on the part of the home dweller.³⁸

In an interview by Rachel Cooke, Iain Sinclair offers an account of how this might function:

[Sinclair] talks about the poet John Clare, who as a child walked beyond his knowledge, beyond what he knew, only to find that he no longer knew who he was because the birds and the trees didn’t know him. “This is what I feel about this landscape. I’ve walked out into it so often that it accepts me. Bits of stone and river accept me, and I know myself by that. If the landscape changes, then I don’t know who

³⁶ C. DeSilvey, “Salvage Memory: Constellating Material Histories on a Hardscrabble Homestead,” *Cultural Geographies* 14 (2007): 401-24; Divya Tolia-Kelly, *Landscape, Race and Memory: Material Ecologies of Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Divya Tolia-Kelly, “Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-memory through Artefacts in the British Asian Home,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29 (2004): 314-29.

³⁷ Mindy Fullilove, “What is Root Shock?” accessed 11 June 2011, <http://www.rootshock.org/>. (emphasis added).

³⁸ Porteous Smith, *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*.

I am either. The landscape is a refracted autobiography. As it disappears you lose your sense of self.”³⁹

Janisse Ray writes of her remembered childhood home landscape: “I carry the landscape inside me like an ache.”⁴⁰ How to express what this feels like? It occurred to me only the other day that somehow, in the DNA of each of my body cells, a map or tracing of the old farm might be found (Figure 8)—some tiny plan or map of the fields, farmyard and house.



Figure 8. An aerial photograph of the old farm in Wales: the house and farmyard are near the centre; the farm itself fills the left and bottom of the picture (date unknown, but pre-1977).

The destruction of place—“topocide”⁴¹—is, then, by some accounts, a destruction of identity. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” (Article 3); and that “Everyone has the right to a nationality” (Article 15). But are nations—often coerced and/or coercive (post-)colonial

³⁹ Rachel Cooke, “The Interview: Iain Sinclair,” *The Observer*, accessed 8 June 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/feb/08/ian-sinclair-interview>.

⁴⁰ Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1999).

⁴¹ John Douglas Porteous, “Topocide: The Annihilation of Place,” in *Qualitative Methods in Human Geography*, ed. John Eyles and David Marshall Smith (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 75-93.

constructions—the main ground of place identity? Or is it home, community or region? Should “right to place” be a human right rather than “right to nation”?

I became an academic geographer through a roundabout route (as far as I am aware). My love for (our) nature, landscape and place, and then the loss of that, manifested itself in artworks and photography which preceded my immersion into various geographic literatures. Now the loss and absence of that childhood and family landscape are occupying my thoughts more, and in some quite troubling ways. I seek ways of narrating this, which reveal rather than smooth over, the confusion and pain of absence, the lacunae of memory and entanglement of self-in-landscapes past and present.

As a number of writers have pointed out, absences can become ghosts that haunt cities (and other forms of landscape).⁴² But they are generated by the disappeared who continue to haunt space. The reverse might also be possible—living ghosts, wandering through landscapes that can never become their home—spaces haunted by the lost living. All the while, as my family and academic life unfolds, I routinely see the bridges in the far distance, and still quite frequently have causes to cross them. Indeed I find causes to cross them.

“Not Promising a Landfall ...”

I grew up (in part) in the late 1950s and 1960s on a farm on the edge of the village of St Mellons, east of the city of Cardiff, south Wales. The farm was partly on the Wentlooge Levels adjoining the Severn estuary, and partly on gentle slopes which, further inland, rise up to become the Welsh hills. This was a very rich (childhood) landscape. Rich in terms of the densities and combinations of spaces, materials, people, animals, emotions and actions which formed this place. It was a landscape of fields, woods, hedges, barns and sheds, machines, animals, farm workers, weather, the railway and crossing, the estuary, sea walls and tides; and the life of a complex family—six siblings and four adults—who lived in the semi-ramshackle, large, ancient house, and numerous cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents who lived in four neighbouring farms and houses.

42 Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: Sage, 2005); Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Karen Till, “Places of Memory,” in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell and Gerald Tuathail (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 289-301; David Pinder, “Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City,” *Cultural Geographies* 8 (2001): 1-19.

We (siblings, workers and father) walked or rode (tractor and trailer, or car) west across the fields to our paternal grandparents' farm; or up the farm lane to our elderly but independent maternal grandmother in her perfumed, lace-festooned flat; or east or south to cousins' farms, one tucked under the sea wall near the docks of Newport; or further up the lane to the home of a non-farming aunt and uncle. We got to know "the square mile" of home.⁴³ It seemed a whole world. A yet wider (vast) extended family was seeded through the further landscape both in space and time. My father knew well all the farms on the levels between Cardiff and Newport and beyond, and their histories and their links to us and each other. He attended, almost without fail, the weekly agricultural market in Newport where farm business was done, and gossip exchanged, and drink shared, in the market pub.

The lower parts of the farm—the "moors" which ended with the sea walls and salt marshes of the estuary—were distinctive in feel, use and management. For years my father was on the local Internal Drainage Board.⁴⁴ The tides, sea walls, sluices and reens⁴⁵ were things of deep professional, and I would say "dwelt-type," interest to him. They were also of endless fascination to us children tagging along on trips "down the moors." In summer, we worked to make hay; driving the tractors at walking pace; rolling bales for collecting; helping stack them as loads on the trailers; and then unloading into the barns. In winter, we cut the strings of the same bales and packed flakes of scented dried grass tumbled off the moving wagon and onto the frozen ground, our breath in the frost drifting into the steam and breath coming off the following cattle.

The fields—the Bankie; Goxy; Long Field; Show Field; Pentwyn; Little Wet Field (king cups); the Willy Walter; the Gillfach; Crab Tree; Wycamower; Penetlass; Barn Field; Cae Cob big field (to name the ones I remember)—had their differing histories, uses, quirks and characters. Some seemed to be my father's favourites, others less so. I knew which woods and which fields were the homes to a great variety of wild flowers. Each spring I picked a bunch for my mother: wood anemones from the Little Wood, primroses and blue violets from the hedges of the Gillfach. In the winter, the stream (home to water voles) flooded into large wind-ruffled shallow lakes, a whole shimmering blustery world for playing and exploring.

43 Mike Pearson, *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006).

44 Internal Drainage Boards are a type of local authority in areas of special drainage needs; they have certain duties and powers in relation to the appropriate management of water in the landscape.

⁴⁵ A tight grid of drainage ditches with route-ways of small bridges.

And there were the trees—the walnut, cherry, elm and oak near the house and many others of note further afield, and the old orchard with decrepit but fertile standard apple trees of various types, through which the stream ran, and also apple trees in the large garden (Figure 9) in which my father grew voluminous amounts of produce.



Figure 9. The garden, c. 1978.

As children we tried to cross the harvested fields without touching the ground, jumping along the ragged chains of plump wheat sacks which slid off the combine harvester ready for picking up. The barns, where the sacks were stored, were deep, dark and musty, and warmed by the bodies of animals. As deep and safe a space as is it possible to imagine (I felt), with the rattling wind and rain of a winter storm blowing down the channel audible outside. There were abandoned lofts which were home to rats and defunct milling machinery, and patrolled by feral cats. There was a bomb pool in Cae-Cob wood and another in the field by the house, made by bombs dropped by a German bomber returning from attacking Cardiff docks in the Second World War. The house pool was surrounded by scrubby thorn trees and the home to moorhens. The explosion had damaged the back of the house. This was one of the many farm and family “legends” that were told and retold around the table at meal times.

Deep in the fields there was a remnant of a green lane hinting of an ancient droveway through the moors. There were orchids and kingcups in the grips⁴⁶ of the wet fields. And the main London to South Wales railway ran through the lower part of the farm. We had our own,

⁴⁶ Shallow drainage channels.

thrillingly (for us children) dangerous, unmanned level-crossing which sheep, cattle and wobbling loads of hay had to cross regularly. This was fringed by large areas of abandoned railway sidings slowly succumbing to scrub. Here grew the first and biggest blackberries. The sea wall made the south horizon. The tides beyond. The high hills—Tumbalum with its distinctive “pimple,” steeper Machen, and the black peaks of a few massive coal tips indicating the coal mines of the Welsh valleys (which featured in some of my brother’s art and the lives of valley cousins)—made the far-off north horizon. There were herons and pylons and, in one remote outpost of the farm, wide, wild salt marshes close by the docks of Cardiff, occasionally covered by the second highest tides in the world. We drove stock along the coast road through the fringes of the city to and from this summer grazing. The tides were a rhythm and energy that connected the house to the estuary. And there was always the changing view of the “other side” over the estuary.⁴⁷

Scenes from my first late-teen romances took place in the old barn (with my first “serious” girlfriends whom I met on the Art Foundation course in Cardiff). The farm, with its extended family, was an extraordinary place to bring friends to. There were piles of derelict machinery and animals everywhere, buildings full of centuries of dust and whole archaeologies of tools, sacks and anonymous brown bottles of ancient animal tonic. The farmyard was an extensive set of spaces and a labyrinth of route ways—the cowsheds, root house, rickyard, the old barn, the new barns, the pigsties and hen houses (old railway sheds). Cows were milked twice a day, calves put to suckle on nurse cows, pigs and hens to feed. In summer, it was baking sun and dust and swallows diving through the open cowshed doors. In winter, it was mud and dimly lit sheds, the heat of animals and the smell of hay. The milking system had a drone of vacuum pump with a hissy, pulsey beat: the sound I woke to, every morning of the year, sometimes with the coastal fog horns which rolled a sobbing boom over the moors. My older brothers built dens in the barns. The house was a space of steamy cooking of the garden produce and meat from butchered animals served by my mother and aunt (not really an aunt but a one-time servant girl who merged into the family). All meals were cooked on the Aga,⁴⁸ the heat of which revived sickly lambs and piglets. Coal fires blazed in the other rooms.

⁴⁷ This part of the farm and our use of it, is set out in Owain Jones “An Emotional Ecology of Memory, Self and Landscape,” in *Emotional Geographies*, ed. J. Davidson, L. Bondi and M. Smith (Oxford: Ashgate, 2005), 205-218.

⁴⁸ A brand of solid fuel stove kept alight permanently for cooking and heating (and which has become a rural icon).

There was stuff everywhere, all mixed up: drawers in the kitchen, sitting room and cellar and in the farm workshops, all full of an unaccountable jumble which could be poked about in—for need, or interest—for hours; attics and store-rooms were filled with more stuff. And there were arguments and territories and wars and alliances between the adults of the house. And the garden, the woodshed, coalshed, old washroom and the old privy, and the lane (unadopted, potholed—in 1963 it filled up with snow), between the hedges that my father had cut by hand, up to where it joined a network of country lanes and then on to the city. There was the hand pump where my father washed his hands and the vegetables in well water, and where generations of knives had been sharpened on the stone basin so it was worn down on one side. I salvaged that. The beautiful giant elm tree at the top of the home field died from Dutch elm disease in the early 1970s. I was upset. It felt then, or maybe looking back at then, that it was the harbinger.

Whether they are part of home or home is part of them is not a question children are prepared to answer. ... Take away the pitcher and bowl, both of them dry and dusty. Take away the cow barn where the cats, sitting all in a row, wait with their mouths wide open for someone to squirt milk down their throats. Take away the horse barn too—the smell of hay and dust and horse piss and old sweat-stained leather, and the rain beating down on the plowed field beyond the open door. Take all this away and what have you done to him? In the face of deprivation so great, what is the use of asking him to go on being the boy he was? He might as well start life over again as some other boy instead.⁴⁹

The farm was in the very western part of what was then the county of Monmouthshire. My father applied for permission to build one new house for my brother who was returning from college to join the farm partnership. This was refused as our, and the surrounding farms, were classed as greenbelt land around the edge of the city. Everything changed when the village of St Mellons was incorporated into the city of Cardiff and the county of Glamorgan on 1 April 1974, following the 1972 Local Government Act. To cut this long bit of the story short (and the details are still unclear to me anyway), our farm and those around it were acquired for development by Cardiff City Council using Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) under the 1976 Community Land Act—“considered by many to be a half-way house to land

⁴⁹ Maxwell, *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, 113.

nationalisation”⁵⁰—to build new housing estates. A CPO was also used to obtain the salt marshes near Cardiff docks for a landfill site. Our family and others subject to the CPOs objected, but to no avail.

Other Separations

A significant complication in this story is that all the male children in the family (five out of six) were sent away to boarding school. My older brothers, being closer in age, went first to one then the next, being at one school together for at least some years. There must have been a time when they all left the farm for months on end, leaving me (the youngest) and my older sister at home with the adults—a huge change in the affective energy of the household (and farm labour force). But I can’t really remember that.

My memory is patchy and damaged, I think, by shock or trauma. I went “away to school” aged seven years and six months. I was a small, shy, needy, “backward” (dyslexic) child and the whole experience, especially the first few years, repeated at the beginning of each term, was deeply upsetting. I remember weeping and begging to stay home, weeping in the car, and then weeping and begging when finally deposited at school. So I was repeatedly displaced from the wild, rich, chaotic freedoms and landscapes of the farm, house and family for the miserable strictures of boarding school. I still get feelings of very deep anxiety before making any long journeys (for example to attend conferences).

The one solace of the school that slowly emerged in my imagination was that it stood by the banks of the River Severn, on the outside of the great horseshoe bend, some miles below the city of Gloucester. So I still *saw the tides*, and heard them as the Severn bore rushed by (sometimes deep in the night), and had plenty of opportunity to gaze across to the far shore, a place at once in hailing distance yet also remote as a dreamland. And there were also the striking landmarks of May Hill and the Severn Bridge.

To return home from the school meant overwhelming relief and joy but, as the holidays progressed, the dread of leaving for school again grew ever stronger. I then moved to a second, almost equally detested, school, this time having to cross the Severn Bridge on each

⁵⁰ See Vic Blundell, “Labour's Flawed Land Acts 1947-1976,” accessed 5 November 2014, http://www.labourland.org/downloads/papers/Vic_Blundell_DLT.pdf.

See also Susan Barrett, “Local Authorities and the Community Land Scheme,” in *Policy and Action: Essays on the Implementation of Public Policy*, ed. Sue Barrett and Colin Fudge (London: Methuen, 1981), 65-86.

journey there and back, sitting glumly in the back of my parents' car, gazing at the huge pylons and the state of the tides.

Searching for a new home

The CPOs were served in 1977. Once it was clear that they could not be opposed, questions of compensation concerned the exchanges between family solicitors and those of the city council. The 1976 Community Land Act worked on the principle of leaving affected property owners in the same position in terms of monetary value as they were in previously, but it took no account of other “values” or losses. Very little of the huge differential in value between the land as agricultural and development land was passed on by the city to the affected owners. My father and brothers then started to cast around for a new farm to move to. Sorties were made west to Pembrokeshire; north into mid-Wales; and across the Severn Bridge to south-west England, over the estuary, to the “other side” which had always been the distant view.

A new farm was eventually purchased, and all the farm stock, machinery and family, bar one sibling who by then had his own house in Wales, crossed the Severn Bridge. I had preceded them, moving to Bristol as a student. I was leaving home (again) in the piecemeal way that students do: living in a flat in Bristol, which, perhaps by chance, again overlooked the tides—this time of the Avon, a few miles before it opens into the Severn estuary. My undergraduate dissertation (1981) was entitled “Stories and Pictures of the Severn Estuary” and told of the way the estuary connected its cities to the world yet divided the land, and also the story of the farm and the salt marshes lost to landfill. So just for a year or so I made trips back home over the Severn Bridge (taking photos of the last days of the farm—and the bridges). Then home was no longer there.

Subsequently my trips “home” (my parents' new house and the new farm) were to a new, unknown landscape on the hills near Bath, and to a strange farmhouse into which the complicated family did not quite fit. The old house (three storeys) had had separate adult territories and time zones. The new house (two storeys) could not accommodate these so easily. And then it dawned on me—or one of my brothers pointed it out—that one can see the Severn bridges in the far distance when standing on the highest point of the new farm. The estuary itself is not visible, but its presence again signalled by the familiar down-shift in tone between the near and far land. My father had always commented on the view in reverse

—from Wales to England. But for him that was a matter of immediate practicality, for telling the coming weather. I subsequently became a bit obsessed by views across the estuary, and photos—looking over or looking back—from one side to the other.

The landscape of the old farm still haunts me. Its loss pains me greatly. It is this displacement and absence that now animate my current “personal landscape” (and that of my family) in complicated ways. This is not discussed much among us, I just get glimpses into that. It feels to me that it is the geography itself I grieve for: not so much the life there in terms of family, which was quite difficult in some respects, but the place, the landscape itself. Perhaps the place itself was my refuge. I don’t really remember it as events—but as material spaces.

The views back over the estuary (weather permitting) and of the bridges feel like a form of haunting that keeps memories, absences and longings simmering away (Figure 10).

Sometimes the far shore and Wales, and where the farm was, cannot be seen at all.

Sometimes distant banks of cloud look like distant land. Sometimes the far shore is clear and sharp in sunlight while the near land (England) is in shadow—sometimes the reverse.



Figure 10. Severn Bridge, c. 2010.

Memory renders displacement and absence complex. It brings what is absent—other times, other places—into presence. Photographs play an important role in the articulation of absence. Jay Prosser writes of photographs not bringing the past into the present, but the

reverse: “not signs of presence but evidence of absence”—of loss.⁵¹ So now I am trying to sort out all the photos of the Severn bridges, the wider estuary and the old farm. This is not easy: I have hundreds, if not thousands, of photographs and negatives, in boxes and files, and digital images in folders on PC and Macintosh—a jumbled ecology of stuff. (I have even made videos of crossing the old Severn Bridge—some are on-line.)

So far I have found over 200 images specifically of the bridges. This series of photos spans the change from chemically based photography to digital. Digital photography with its hugely increased immediacy and capacity makes a difference to how loss and displacement might be represented by images. The rolls of 35 mm film we used contained space for 24 or 36 images. Once developed, in the mysterious atmospheres of the darkroom, contact sheets were printed, then a few frames selected for printing. There was a serious commitment and craft dedicated to each image. The negatives stored in delicate tissue paper sleeves in files seem an analogy for memory itself—fragile, subject to fading and damage. The profligacy of digital media seems to work (with memory) entirely differently. There seems to be something almost sacred about film negatives—even ones holding poor images. They were, after all, directly touched by the light of that place, at that moment. The light had touched the materiality of the place and then soaked into the emulsion of the film. The “translation” to digital data seems to break that physical link. Where am I in all this stuff—these images?

Thrift asserts:

people [are] rather ill-defined constellations ... which “are not confined to particular spatio-temporal coordinates, but consist of a spread of biographical events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings which can be attributed to a person.”⁵²

We are thus constructed by losses as we are by presences. How well do the “ill-defined constellations” that form selves hang together is the question? Which forces are centripetal (gathering self), which are centrifugal (scattering (sense of) self)? How does this play out in relation to landscapes and everyday life? The tensions that Wylie focuses upon will be both in self *and* in landscape. Material objects, photographs, texts and living memory scramble

⁵¹ Jay Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

⁵² Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 222-23, citing Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998).

how absences and presences interplay in the practice of ongoing life. The construction of self out of absences always brings (us to) an edge in becoming: “The passing of time itself is traumatic, involving as it does the loss of the self, its continuous destruction through consignment to oblivion.”⁵³

Dreams (“The Essence of a Bridge”)⁵⁴

In 2010, I took the train to Totnes, passing the Exe estuary—tide in. On my way back—tide out, mudflats grey—I read a *Guardian Family* article about a woman mourning her childhood home: the home was repossessed by a bank (still hated by her) after her parents got divorced. Going back, some years later, and being shown around by the new family’s children was something of a solace. But she subsequently regretted not “stroking the walls” when she had had the impulse to do so.⁵⁵ The longing is physical—for the physicality, the materiality, of the lost place.

That night I dreamt of the beaches of Tenby, (a very frequent dream setting), being scoured by fierce winds that drove sand into improbably high banks far out in the wide and exposed intertidal area. A frequent feature of these dreams is the tide receding improbably far or rising improbably high. The setting of the dream changes—and I am standing at the top of the yard at the old farm, looking down its gentle slope to the lower barns: the whole has a patina of grey, glistening, churned and channelled mud (as it often was). And a wave of grief hits me. My dreams recreate, in heightened, distorted psychogeographical richness, the various places of the movement from one place to another centred around the restless estuary. Often series of dreams run for a few years (if feels like this or is just dreamt as such), to be replaced by others:

⁵³ Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 19, citing Christopher Bollas, *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁴ Philip Gross, extract from the poem “To Build a Bridge” in *The Water Table* (Tarsnet: Blood Axe Books, 2009), 49.

⁵⁵ Lulah Ellender, “A Long Way from Home,” *The Guardian*, accessed 20 September 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/nov/27/childhood-home-repossession-divorce?INTCMP=SRCH>.

- Standing on a hill near Bath, looking out over the vale, to Bristol, to the far hills of Wales, and the tide rising out of the hidden estuary and reaching so high that it fills the whole space drowning everything in between the near and far hills.
- Being in the old farmhouse in Wales looking out through a small, high window in the attic and seeing a silver tide wash right up to the house. Or looking out over the estuary while fierce tornadoes and explosions devastate the far shore.
- Being on one shore of the estuary, looking across to the other side, with its complexities of ports, industry, bridges and tides, and the turbulence of the brown waters. Or travelling up or down the waterway itself, noting the dramatic hill landscapes on one shore or the other.

For a while, the old Severn Bridge was a dominant theme of my dreams. Always its geography—the hinterlands on either side, the entry and exit roads, the composition and spaces of structure—was distorted, exaggerated, more complex. Many dreams feature impossible rooms and voids in the bridge structure itself; journeys across almost never fulfilled. These have stopped (for now). I have nostalgia for them. Or did I dream that I had had a series of dreams about the bridge?

Messy (non)-Goodbyes

My family stayed in the farmhouse as new access roads were driven through the fields and hedges, one looping around the farmstead like a noose (Figure 11). The far fields became building plots, then new streets, and families moved in. I talked to, and took photos of, children from these new houses playing in the detritus of the next building phases—sites now much closer to the house. I dream often of the once secure and private yard and barns being invaded by strangers and strange presences and people trying to get into our house.



Figure 11. The start of the destruction of the farm, c. 1977.

Then the barns were demolished. I took photos of these final moments; salvaged odd pieces of oak beams. Then, at last, with new houses crowding up to the garden walls, it was time to leave the farmhouse itself. Once, in a fierce storm years before, I could not sleep, and I told my mother I was scared as the winds coming across the moors battered wildly against the windows. She soothed me and told me that the house had stood and protected all in it for 400 years or more. But it was clear it was no longer a sanctuary: my father shouting and cursing down the phone; unsettling meetings and discussions with solicitors and valuers; my mother trying to keep the peace.

We left, taking what we could, but leaving volumes of detritus and possessions of uncertain use and value. Not all could be taken. An aunt, my mother's sister, who lived with us (she needed caring for) refused to pack any of her things. A few weeks later I went back with one of my brothers—at this point my dreams and my memories are almost undistinguishable: the front door had been kicked and the house partly burnt and ransacked. We salvaged what we could. It was difficult to climb the fire-damaged stairs. Some of this certainly took place, I know because I still have a large number of smoke-damaged large-format art books that I recovered (the house had always been full of books).

“Someplace Else Where you May ... Now and Again Want to Be”: Conclusions

Bridging

But it [the bridge] is fine for comings and goings, meetings, partings and long views

And a real connection to someplace else
 Where you may
 In the crazy weathers of struggle
 Now and again want to be.⁵⁶

I drink too much; battle with anxiety and anger. I don't feel properly fitted into the world. I often feel withdrawn, isolated and disconnected, even when with people I know and trust. Looking people (anyone) in the eye is hard. Again, where all this *really* comes from I don't know. But the multiple and then final displacement(s) from the old farm feel very much part of it all. The question of moving again from where we now live is one I never consider. Home is home.

I try to absorb the new home and landscape into my being. I gaze at the vistas of hills and valleys which swing and scroll each time I drive to and from the village, and try to sense and assimilate the shape of the land as I walk. I think it has soaked into me to some extent. I have a great affection for it. I am trying to rebuild a sense of home and belonging, working on our new home (another old farmhouse) using stone and oak (materials that endure over time and bear the marks of time). And rescued objects from the old farm are now seeded through this new home and garden. I love the nearby hill with a single tree atop, which is a local landmark, and the corvid colony that lives close by in the tall trees around the church—hundreds of jackdaws, rooks and crows which animate the sky, whirling around in mad clattering chases—populating the village quiet.

So our new home is not simply impoverished in comparison with the old, but can it ever really be home? Even aspects of this new place are now lost themselves. The new farm underwent some development. Barns that were once full of animals, hay and dust, and penetrated by the arc of diving swallows are now smart houses—troubling echoes of loss.

The Welsh farmhouse now stands as a block of flats in the suburbs that closed around it. I have been to look—been inside it. It can be seen on Google Street View. And where the old farm was can be wandered around virtually, its geography completely erased, apart from a few trees and, strangely, a fragment of garden wall, near where my mother used to sit in the

⁵⁶ Marge Piercy, extract from the poem "Bridging," in *Circles on the Water* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

sun. My body reacts each time I read through this sentence as I struggle to finish the paper. I have started to overlay the new street map onto the old farm map. (Recently I went back and walked some of the ‘old farm’ with friend, colleague, artist Davina Kirkpatrick who is also writing about loss and grief).

This paper is really a component in an ongoing narrative of loss—some short sections of threads which I have tried to weave together. I could have included many different details—other photos, dreams, maps, vistas, details of the farms old and new. I have included what felt right at the time of writing. I hope a glimpse into these entanglements opens up some ways of thinking and feeling about displacement and resulting absences in/of landscape. The threads go on, will do until I die, and after; will live on in our children (the new home is their home landscape); will live on in texts and photos—in ways I can’t really know.

My affective practices of absence/landscape, articulated in memories, writing and photographs old and new, continue to form as I consider all this in “academic” terms. The two are interplaying. This then is, by default, non-representational, and stands at the margins of planned and emergent. My emotive response is shaped by “theory” and literature as well as by the story itself. I am working on the Severn estuary in other ways—writing about its “tidal cultures.”⁵⁷ These are under threat in a number of ways (including a possible Severn barrage). The thought of that fills me with visceral panic. I fear the loss of the tides and the magical landscape they make.

Finally, and perhaps to start a new chapter in all this, I gave an early version of this paper at the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff, in 2011⁵⁸—thus quite local to the scenes outlined above. One person commented at the end that he was familiar with the housing estates which were built where the old farms once were. He went on to say that some of these are now poor areas of the city where migrant workers, asylum seekers and people on welfare live—people who themselves are likely to be living with displacement and loss in various ways. And so,

⁵⁷ Owain Jones, “Lunar-solar Rhythmpatterns: Towards the Material Cultures of Tides,” *Environment and Planning A* 43 (2011): 2285-2303. Owain Jones, “‘The Breath of the Moon’: The Rhythmic and Affective Time-spaces of UK Tides,” in *Geographies of Rhythm*, ed. T. Edensor (Oxford: Ashgate, 2010), 189-203.

⁵⁸ Owain Jones, “Views of (Distant) Bridges. Landscape, Affect and Emotion Memories,” Glamorgan University Media Culture and Journalism research seminar series, December 2011. Thanks to all for the invite and questions.

things—perspectives—change. I, we, keep moving on through time, memory, place, with and without others.

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