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Literature and Sense of Place in UK

Landscape Strategy

ABSTRACT

The European Landscape Convention treats public perception and participation as essential to the integration of landscape within policy-making. Yet critiques of the implementation of the Convention in the UK through expert-led landscape character assessment (LCA) suggest that incorporation of public perception has been minimal and that the democratic potential of the Convention remains largely unrealised. This article examines the problematic role of perception in LCA and looks at examples where literature has been used to achieve a limited accommodation between subjective and objective modes of landscape characterisation. It argues for an expansion of this approach in the interests of public engagement, discussing landscape projects where participants have been supported to produce their own creative writing in order to cultivate not just landscape 'literacy' but a sense of connection with and stewardship of places.

KEY WORDS

Introduction

In his foreword to the 2009 *Peak District National Park Authority Landscape Strategy*, a quote from Park Authority member representative for natural beauty Christopher Pennell frames the recently completed Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the National Park as a shift between two fundamentally different modes of landscape 'articulation':

> No longer would the beauty of the Peak District's landscapes remain unarticulated, other than in poetry and art; now the glorious variety of the national park's landscapes are systematically identified, described and mapped. (Peak District National Park Authority and Countryscape, 2009, p. 3)

To a large degree, Pennell's judgement is apt. The Peak District LCA is at the cutting edge of a discipline which has enabled great leaps forward in comprehensive scientific mapping of the UK's landscapes (Warnock & Griffiths 2015; Butler, 2016). But a previous article for this journal has explored one dimension missing from the Peak District Landscape Character Assessment's articulation of the beauty and variety of this landscape: the vertical dimension of subterranean caves (Edwards 2017). And in this one I want to dig more deeply into the practice of Landscape Character Assessment itself as an instrument of landscape strategy. I will be investigating the relationship between literature and LCA that Pennell alludes to, and asking whether, rather than one systematic and objective approach displacing a partial and subjective one, the two could fertilise one another, with significant benefits for both kinds of practice -scientific and creative. I'll be arguing that the biggest benefit for LCA of this cross-fertilisation would be in the engagement of the public's interest in its processes and products, and in landscape itself. Literature, I think, has something to offer to a genuinely participatory approach to LCA.

Landscape Characterisation and Public Participation: A Democratic Deficit?

At the heart of the 2000 European Landscape Convention which LCA, as practised over the past decade, is designed to implement, is a famous definition of landscape as an entity inherently mediated by human perception:

> "Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. (Council of Europe, 2000, p. 2)

And the corollary of this definition of landscape is the 'active role' assigned by the convention to the public in the characterisation of landscape:

> All action taken to define, implement and monitor landscape policies should be preceded and accompanied by procedures for participation by members of the public and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim of enabling them to play an active role in formulating, implementing and monitoring landscape quality objectives. (Council of Europe, 2000, p. 3)

Accordingly, public participation was a central element in the guidance prepared by Carys Swanwick and published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Heritage in 2002, with a topic paper dedicated to the various ways in which it could be implemented (Swanwick & Land Use Consultants 2002; Swanwick, Bingham & Parfitt, 2002). But Swanwick notes in the 2002 guidance paper that the participatory approach is relatively undeveloped (2002, p. 15). And recent critiques of LCA have suggested that this is still the case. These critiques, published in a series of articles in the journal Landscape Research, have responded to the 'felt need of a number of university-based scholars and scholarly professionals to reconsider the future of landscape characterisation in the light of changing ideas of landscape, especially under the democratising influence of the ELC' (Olwig, Dalglish, Fairclough & Herring, 2016, p. 171). A 2014 article by Andrew Butler and Ulla Berglund, which examines 52 UK LCAs produced between 2007 and 2011, finds that only 28 (a little over half) make any use of 'stakeholder involvement' (Butler and Berglund, 2014, p. 229). 14 of these (just over a quarter) engage with local community groups, rather than just specific interest groups. And amongst these 14, only nine consider the perceptions these local people have of their landscape to any extent. Why does this matter? Butler and Berglund argue that the ELC is an opportunity for a democratic and inclusive approach to government in which rights and responsibilities in relationship to landscape are shared.

> The ELC points to landscape as an arena for democratic governance, spreading the rights and at the same time the responsibility for the landscape to all actors, developing partnerships as opposed to imposing an 'elitist' landscape (CoE, 2000a, 2008; Scott, 2011). (Butler and Berglund, 2014, p. 222)

So far, this may largely be a missed opportunity: a 'democratic deficit'. As a result, there's a danger that the public at large -even if they're aware of the processes and products of LCA, and the influence they may have over their lives- are likely to feel excluded and disengaged from these processes and products. They'll

struggle to recognise 'their' landscape in each LCA, and planning decisions based on it will feel like things done to, rather than for, or better still with them.

So why avoid public participation? What are the risks? The biggest risk is the subjectivity implied by landscape 'perception', and its tension with the scientific aspiration of LCA to generate objective, value-free, reproducible knowledge. Carys Swanwick acknowledges this tension in her 2002 guidance:

> There has been long-standing debate about the role of objectivity and subjectivity in dealing with landscape. The search for supposedly objective approaches has reflected a desire, in some quarters, to remove the element of personal judgement from the process. In Landscape Character Assessment it is accepted that there is a role for subjective inputs, but these must be made in a systematic and transparent way. (Swanwick & Land Use Consultants, 2002, p. 10)

What exactly do we mean by perception in this context? What does a LCA need to incorporate for it to represent LS 'as perceived by people', and how 'systematic and transparent' can this information ever be? The 2009 report *Experiencing Landscapes* commissioned by Natural England in preparation for the updating of England's 159 National Character Area descriptions, looks, through research with public participants, to capture the 'cultural services and experiential qualities of landscape' (Natural England, 2009). In tune with the European Landscape Convention the report acknowledges that 'perceptions' have a key role to play in determining the benefits, or 'cultural services' delivered to people by their Environment. Perceptions, it says, are influenced by the seasons, the weather and the senses. And by the senses they mean not just sight, but:

- sound – the rustle of leaves a babbling brook, birdsong;

- smell – wild flowers, cut hay, the freshness of the air;

- feel – the nature of the surface: smooth, rutted or the feel of wind, rain or sunshine on the skin, and;

- taste – the taste of salt in the air and … the taste of food and drink associated with particular landscapes and localities, such as the rhubarb of Wakefield... (Natural England, 2009, pp. 86-7)

This begins to sound like very unsystematic data. Not everyone eats, or has positive 'associations' with rhubarb, and nothing is more mutable and contingent than the seasons and the weather! Moreover the latest guidance for LCA, prepared by Christine Tudor and published by Natural England in 2014, recommends the inclusion not just of sights, sounds, touch and smells, but of 'cultural associations', history and memories.

And whilst these elements were all present in the earlier guidance, I think it's fair to say that the emphasis on the cultural elements in landscape perception is greater and less qualified in 2014 than in 2002:

> [Cultural associations] may include and relate to art, literature, events, myth, music, people, media, legends and folklore. Research to review wider cultural associations can be undertaken at this Desk Study stage. (Tudor, 2014, p. 33)

It's inevitable that this ramping up of the cultural in landscape characterisation must lead to an acceptance of diversity in the ways in which landscapes are perceived. There will always be some commonality in the cultural associations which influence perceptions of a particular landscape, but there will also be considerable divergence, both at particular points in time, and over time (Butler, 2016, pp. 241-2). And this is as true of the aesthetics of landscape as it is of landscape culture, since the two are causally linked.

Over time, perceptions of particular landscapes and of kinds of landscape shift as changing socio-economic conditions influence changes in cultural values, which in turn influence changes in aesthetic fashions. As the enclosure movement gained pace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, hedgerows and stone walls embodied the imposition of private property and profit over the rights of common use; the eating of men, as Thomas More put it in *Utopia*, by sheep (More, 1965, pp. 46-7). For the past half-century or so they have embodied a cultural and natural legacy –another kind of common wealth- that must be protected from the efficiencies of industrial agriculture that might seek to tear them down. This reversal tells us that there's nothing intrinsic about the aesthetic value of a hedgerow and what it adds to a 'sense of place'. What it means in a landscape and how those who see or live with it feel about it will depend on its place within contemporary and local cultural discourses, and where any individual is positioned on these discursive battlegrounds.

It's easy to see, then, why public participation might be seen as a problematic element in LCA, and one best kept carefully limited. Individual perceptions of what's distinctive and valuable in a landscape will inevitably be various -in tension with one another- and will militate against a systematic, objective, reproducible approach. Moreover such plurality is problematic not just for science, but for policy. As Butler and Berglund comment, contradictory views are most commonly interpreted by the planners whom LCA needs to inform as conflicts to be resolved into 'consensus', by a process of 'engineered consent' (2014, p. 223; see also Butler, 2016, p. 239).

Literature And The Subjective In Landscape Perception: From inspiration as cultural service to landscap-*ing*

Unsurprisingly, then, even in the few instances where extensive consultation with local communities has taken place at the beginning of a LCA project, there's generally little sign of subjective perceptions of landscape in the finished product. What we do find, here and there, is an authority given to 'artistic and literary perceptions' of a given area: alluded to here in the Thames Valley National Character Area (NCA) profile:

Cultural Services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

> ▪ **Sense of place/inspiration**: A sense of place is supported by the presence of water throughout the area, in the form of the River Thames and its tributaries... The landscape… [has] inspired great artists such as J M W Turner and Joshua Reynolds, as well as poets including Alexander Pope… . (Natural England, 2015, p. 12)

And quoted from here and throughout in the Derbyshire LCA

> *"Little flowery fields of every shape and size, square fields, triangles, fish-shaped fields with odd corners, rhomboids, bounded by green hedgerows and black walls, linked arms and ran up hill and down dale, round the folded hills out of sight into countless valleys beyond where the sun set."*
> *p16 Alison Uttley 'The Country Child' (p16 Alison Uttley 'The Country Child') Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent, CHARACTER AREA 50. An undulating, well-wooded, pastoral landscape on rising ground between the Derbyshire Coalfield and the Peak District.* (Derbyshire County Council, 2014, 3.1, p. 2)

The thinking behind the inclusion of these literary excerpts in landscape characterisations is explained Natural England Report 'Experiencing Landscapes'. Artistic 'inspiration' is one of a list of 'cultural services' provided by landscapes which the report analyses in its interviews with members of the public. The research examines eight cultural services:

- a sense of history (or heritage);

- a sense of place (identity, home);

- inspiration (stimulus);

- calm (relaxation, tranquillity);

- leisure and activities (recreation);

- spiritual;

- learning (education), and;

- escapism (getting away from it all). (Natural England, 2009, p. 4)

The NCA profiles for which this NE research was preparation systematically record examples of 'great' literary representations of the area in question under a rubric which rolls up together the two cultural services 'inspiration' and 'sense of place'.

> Cultural Services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)
>
> > ▪ **Sense of place/inspiration**: A sense of place is supported by the presence of water throughout the area, in the form of the River Thames and its tributaries... The landscape… [has] inspired great artists such as J M W Turner and Joshua Reynolds, as well as poets including Alexander Pope…. (Natural England, 2015, p. 12)

The relationship primarily implied in this model of inspiration as cultural service is a passive, one-way relationship, whereby the physical characteristics of the landscape which can be objectively described (its morphology, ecology, etc.) are perceived by these writers and inspire their representations. There's no discussion or interpretation of these excerpts which might explain what political views, personal experiences, aesthetic tastes etc. these writers brought *to* the landscape -they're presented as self-evident products *of* the landscape. This assumption is confirmed in the 2014 LCA guidance, which suggests the use of literary quotation specifically in 'celebratory' accounts of a landscape to demonstrate 'consistency' over time in the way this landscape has been perceived and valued.

> Landscape descriptions, especially when the emphasis is on celebrating the landscape [rather than informing planning] should where possible also be informed by how the landscape has been described / portrayed in art, photography, literature, music and other media... quotations from poetry… can show depth of feeling about a particular landscape and consistency of description over time. (Tudor, 2014, p. 51)

Consistency implies the one-way nature of inspiration: whoever and whenever the artist, the representation inspired will be broadly the same, if the landscape is the same. Nonetheless, there are traces in the NCA

profiles of another kind of relationship between literature and landscape. The C18 poet Alexander Pope is described in the Thames Valley NCA profile not just as having been inspired by the beauty of this landscape, but as having given birth to 'a radical new way of perceiving beauty in the landscape'.

> Inspired by the Thames and, notably, by the view from Richmond Hill, a radical new way of perceiving beauty in the landscape was born. Alexander Pope's garden at Twickenham claims to be the origin of the English Landscape movement… . (Natural England, 2015, p. 10)

Similarly NCA 91, for Yardley Whittlewood, describes another C18 poet, William Cowper, who lived in and wrote about this regional landscape, as having changed, in his writing, 'the direction of nature poetry'.

> The poet and hymn writer William Cowper lived at Olney in the 18th century. He walked the woods and changed the direction of nature poetry by writing about everyday life and the English countryside. Wordsworth particularly admired his poem 'Yardley Oak', a tribute to a veteran landmark tree on Yardley Chase. (Natural England, 2013, p. 11)

What's being tangentially acknowledged here would be regarded as a given by many historians of landscape art or literature. Representations of landscape don't just record an individual's passive perception of a landscape, they are themselves 'landscape-*ings*', which in certain, influential instances have the power to change the way many people view particular and general landscape characteristics. It's very much a two-way relationship. There are, of course, many other examples of literature and literary movements which have inaugurated a 'radical new way of perceiving beauty in the landscape' through their imaginative landscapings. Most recently, books like Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts' *Edgelands* have encouraged and helped the reader to look differently at landscapes intermediate between the rural and the urban which sit uncomfortably within traditional aesthetic categories (Farley & Symmons Roberts, 2011). This call for a new appreciation and revaluation of edgelands landscapes has been echoed in later works of fiction and creative nonfiction, and through these books and the new ways of seeing they foster, new attitudes are born. Perhaps the best known example of this is the attitude to wild and unpopulated landscape before and after Wordsworth and his fellow Romantic poets. The Romantics and their descendants didn't 'discover' the inherent value of a landscape like the Kinder Plateaux in the Peak District: they made this landscape valuable. In a smaller way, the poet W.H. Auden did the same for the limestone regions of the Peak and Pennines. And Cowper was not simply inspired by the same qualities that any scientist would find

in a particularly fine 'specimen' tree; he invested the oak tree with richly layered symbolism, imbued with the politics of his time (Fulford, 1995).

In these instances literature is not made by landscape, but makes it: it is one powerful determinant of what any of us, from geographers to the general public, find distinctive and valuable. Allowing more space for subjectivity and therefore plurality in Landscape characterisation would help to address what I view as key requirements for people to engage with landscape and with landscape planning strategy. People certainly need the scientific knowledge that LCA has always presented. But they also need to connect with a landscape through their senses, values and emotions. They need not just to find something, but to bring something with them. And to do that they need to have a purpose within this landscape which structures their attention to it. These things together give them access to the landscape in the richest sense.

Theorising Writing And Place. From description to performance and assemblage.

My re-thinking of the role of perception and the subjective in landscape characterisation is in tune with changes in the theoretical underpinnings of a cluster of disciplines, from architecture to geography, concerned with space and place. As geographer Tim Cresswell has described, there are distinctive traditions of thought running across these disciplines which define place very differently (Cresswell, 2015). Cresswell divides these into three overarching categories (p. 56). The first, descriptive or ideographic approach, typical of most regional geography, seeks to capture the 'distinctiveness and particularity' of places by describing them. This approach has been influenced by American geographer Carl O. Sauer's belief in the need to characterise and thereby rescue regional distinctiveness, both cultural and natural, from increasing mass production and mobility (pp. 32-3). The second, social constructionist approach, influenced by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, characterises individual places as the products of wider social processes, such as those of capitalism, colonialism or patriarchy (pp. 65-6). The third, phenomenological approach, influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is more interested in defining essential aspects of human experience in terms of their intrinsic embodied-ness and placed-ness than it is in characterising individual places (p. 35).

Landscape Character Assessment, and other forms of geographic practice which inform policy and practice in place management, is an iteration of the ideographic tradition in twentieth-century regional

geography, and has been implemented within a UK context where the focus of strategy has traditionally been on 'landscape as a visual phenomenon, with emphasis on the preservation of a rural idyll' (Butler, 2016, p. 242). Even in 'best practice' examples, such as the Peak District LCA, aspects of the landscape associated with economic and leisure activity are subordinated to those associated with nature and historic culture, and the natural processes and cultural practices are reduced to 'surface representation', as recorded from the 'outside' by a landscape professional acting as a 'vicarious insider' (Butler, 2016, p. 248). The challenge posed in recent critiques; a challenge which this article extends, suggests that such crucial mechanisms through which decisions are informed about what matters and what can be done in the places in which people live, could afford to learn from other ways of thinking place than the descriptive, in order to produce accounts of places which are more recognisable and meaningful; more accessible to their inhabitants and users. The major gain from a move in these other directions is an understanding of place not as a static and coherently distinctive configuration of physical and cultural characteristics; not as settled and singular, but as multiplicitous, mobile and ever-changing; structured over time according to the shifting imperatives of dominant groups and institutions, but also performed creatively by individuals.

Some influential versions of phenomenological thought, as characterised in Cresswell's account, whilst they make place more human-centred, retain a relatively static conception of 'sense of place'. Christian Norberg-Schulz regards it as a primary responsibility of architects to investigate and determine the 'genius loci' of each place with which they work, defined as the particular configuration of natural, human and symbolic characteristics, in order to 'deepen the aura' of place so that those who live within it can share an experience of locatedness (Cresswell, 2015, p. 130). But other phenomenological place-thinkers have defined 'the essential experiential character of place' in terms of mobility; the distinctive configurations of everyday, habitual movement (p. 63). Both humanistic geographer David Seamon and urbanist Jane Jacobs have characterised these configurations as ballet, Jacobs in a memorable 1961 account of the roller skaters, playing children, shopkeepers and fire engines of Hudson Street in Lower Manhattan (p. 64). Social constructivist thinkers like Allan Pred have urged an understanding of such mobility as a performance constrained by "dominant institutional projects", but they share the phenomenologist's desire to move beyond definitions of place 'in terms of fixed visible and measurable attributes', in favour of an attention to the iterative processes and practices through which physical settings are created, used and changed (p. 67).

This move away from the fixity characteristic of descriptive, ideographic accounts of place has been attended by a move away from the coherent and singular sense of place, particularly in the work of geographer Doreen Massey. In her book *For Space*, Massey describes the 'throwntogetherness' of place and characterises places as 'gatherings of stories' (Cresswell, 2015, p. 104). She argues that a '"progressive sense of place"' must '"confront the challenge of the negotiation of multiplicity. The sheer fact of having to get on together; the fact that you cannot (even should you want to…) "purify" spaces/places."' A recent turn in geographic and architectural theory, influenced by the poststructuralist philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, has characterised such gatherings as 'assemblages' (p. 52). Places, as viewed through the lens of assemblage theory, are distinctive configurations of elements thrown together by chance, wherein the elements should be expected to change without violating any higher or natural order.

Massey's striking metaphor of spatial 'purification' alerts us to the dangers inherent in the conventional understanding of 'genius loci', or 'sense of place'. The attempt to define something singular and coherent itself involves an act of purification, as elements extraneous to the definition are ignored or identified as superfluous. Once the definition has been achieved, purification can be enacted through policy and practice, as superfluous elements are removed or forbidden. Rather than seeking to purify or 'reduce' it, Massey suggests that a progressive version of the geographer's attempt to capture sense of place should 'negotiate' the inherent 'multiplicity' or 'throwntogetherness' of place, which she characterises as 'gatherings of stories that make space specific' (Cresswell, 2015, p. 104). Jess Edwards begins a recent article on subterranean landscapes in the Derbyshire Peak District with a poster from a Visit Derbyshire advertising campaign (Edwards, 2017). The poster presents the area explicitly as an 'assemblage' -a collage of disparate parts. In Massey's terms, this incoherence is a truer embodiment of sense of place than one which seeks to reduce the landscape to singular coherence. The Peak District is a contingent assemblage of elements thrown together by histories of settlement, farming, industry and leisure. Its character is inseparable from the structural influences of social and economic change not just on work within its landscapes, but on the development of the great cities that border it, from whom its visitors flock, and whose characteristic demographics and rhythms thereby define it. It's also inseparable from the structural influences of the legislation which defined and maintains the national park. And its identity as a place is performed not only by the everyday practices of those who live and work within it, but also the thousands of

daytrippers who perform a daily ballet of intersecting movements as climbers, walkers, cyclists, cavers, etc. An attempt to characterise it which leaves out these social and performative dimensions is inevitably, to a degree, an act of purification.

Unsurprisingly, one strategy which has been advocated to avoid purification, and instead to negotiate such 'assemblages', or 'gatherings of stories' is to capture and reiterate such stories through narrative. As Tim Cresswell describes, there has been an 'increased willingness' in recent years amongst geographers influenced by phenomenology and assemblage theory to use creative writing as a way of recreating the throwntogetherness of specific places, so that the work of literature and social scientific geography have begun to mesh and overlap (pp. 56-7). When the poet Jean Sprackland maps the coastline of Liverpool Bay through a year of reiterative walks and re-told stories, she's doing something similar to the social historian and writer on architecture and urban planning Ken Worpole, when he writes about Essex and East Anglia (Sprackland, 2013; Worpole 2010, 2013). These are no longer cleanly different articulations of landscapes. To be a geographer, in this version of the work, might be to be an anthologist and reader of existing narratives, but also a an enabler, writer and co-creator of new ones. And to bring to this process of assemblage and creation a critical awareness of the external structures and pressures, as well as the physical conditions within which such narrative performances can take place. Just as each individual narrative is a performance of place; so is each geographic assemblage of narratives. Whilst a geography like this can't achieve a fixed, coherent and singular 'sense of place', it can aspire to produce one which is more relevant to, and more representative and inclusive of the diverse experiences of those who currently live in a particular place. Moreover it can open up a field of possibility -of stories which can be interpreted, contested and supplemented by their readers. If one person can tell a story which is explicitly personal and partial about a place, then so can another. This is dramatically different, and I would argue fundamentally more democratic than the scientific view of landscape taken by an anonymous expert observer, which appears to be the final word.

If anyone can 'perform' a landscape; can tell their truth about it and express their sense of place, just as they can pick their own route as a walker, cyclist or climber, albeit within the externally imposed constraints of property boundaries and rights of way, then the right to define what matters in that landscape; what's valuable, becomes more widely distributed. This does not imply a relativist free-for-all. Many people

will value the same things that existing regulatory frameworks exist to identify and protect, from architectural remains to distinctive flora and fauna. These are some of the raw materials -the props or instruments- for a distinctive and fulfilling performance of place. The point is that Massey's 'progressive' sense of place resides in the performances, not in the particular set of instruments or props, and that what makes them valuable is not the scientific mapping of them, but the performances themselves. Landscape becomes valuable through these performances.

The emphasis in humanistic geography from the 1970s onward on 'place' rather than 'space', as Tim Cresswell describes, 'expressed an attitude to the world that emphasised subjectivity and experience rather than the cool, hard logic of spatial science' (2015, p. 35). If space is a social construct, as the constructionists insisted, then for these humanistic geographers it was a necessary one -one without which it was impossible to be human (p. 51). In the work of humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, which focuses on the "affective bond between people and place", or "topophilia", place is defined as a "field of care". Where geographers had conventionally treated the 'settlement' as the basic unit of place, Tuan argued that geographers should study the ways in which people made the world their home at a variety of scales, from a country to a favourite chair (p. 39). Malcolm McCullough has described the geo-locating apps that many of us carry around with us on our smart-phones as "technologies of attention", acknowledging that we could regard many longer-established aspects of physical 'architecture and the city', from coffee shops to plazas, in the same way (Cresswell 2015, p. 148). Bringing together Tuan and McCullough I'd like to suggest that writing, like other embodied practices such as climbing or walking, is a technology of attention: a way of constituting a particular place as a field of care. To perform place through writing about it, whether in a city story or a poem about a chair, is to pay attention to it; to express, but also to cultivate care. And the best purpose of policy and practice-oriented geography, or placemaking, is surely that people should not just know but care about the places they live in; even allow themselves to fall in love.

Creative Writing as Performance and Care: Learning to love your landscape, or an imaginative 'right to roam'

I believe literature and creative writing have valuable roles to play in fostering a pluralist and engaged approach to policy and practice-oriented landscape characterisation. We've already heard about the impact that great writers have had in changing and shaping the way people perceive landscape and nature.

Reading published writing about particular landscapes, or landscape in general, helps people to shape their own aesthetic tastes and values: to value the gentle and pastoral or the bleak and wild. It gives them a frame with which to conduct their own landscape-*ing*. But I think literature can also help us to realise the democratic potential in LCA, and it can do this most powerfully where we move beyond the passive 'inspiration as cultural service' model which focuses on the literary 'greats', to a model of participation which licenses peoples' own creativity; supports them to express and value their own sense of place; and thereby helps them to experience care for it. Creative writing on, and better still *in* a landscape, might or might not be stimulated by existing great writing, but its main objective is to give the writer a purpose in the landscape, and through this purposeful activity to focus their attention on its characteristics, and on their own perception of these characteristics, through the senses, emotions, memories and associations that it stimulates. The ultimate objective is to foster a sense of ownership and access -a kind of imaginative 'right to roam'.

The notion of landscape as inspiration that I've described in LCAs suggests a Romantic notion of the relationship between landscape and an individual, whose act of creation is solitary. Writer and teacher David Morley argues that writing is often, rather, an 'act of community' (Morley, 2007, p. 235). Writing is inherently communal, he suggests, in its address to, or attempt to create an audience, but in any case many writers engage directly with specific communities as part of their professional work, by choice or by necessity (p. 235, p. 237):

> Some writers are drawn to community writing because this is simply the milieu put of which they
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> work. Leaving their physical community would mean killing their reason for writing, and being
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> dishonest as artists and as human beings. In some cultures, the idea of a writer *not* being of a
>
> community would be simply bizarre, since the writer is the carrier of their community's story
>
> through history and times of change: its maker of tales, its memory-banker, its time traveller.
>
> However, some people work as writers in a community because, unless they are very lucky or very
>
> ruthless, many find themselves needing to. … A freelance writer can only earn so much by their
>
> writing, and working in schools and the community will allow you to earn time for your writing.
>
> However, teaching community writing will feed you, in more ways than you might expect, including

your own creative work… Community writing makes you stay in touch with different audiences; it keeps your feet on the ground and your head in the world. (pp. 237-8)

A number of freelance creative writers and small arts organisations have a developing portfolio of experience in place-based community engagement work. Writer Sarah Butler has complemented her work as a novelist through a series of place-making commissions which 'explore and challenge the relationship between creative writing and place-making' (http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/category/projects/). Some of these projects are recorded on the website of Butler's consultancy, Urban Words, and at her linked website A Place for Words, Butler has curated a showcase of place-making projects by other writers and artists, alongside 'practical tips and suggestions' and 'models of working' (http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/index.php). Butler's websites are a useful toolkit for place professionals and writers interested in working with one another, but they also make a powerful case for the value of such collaborations for the engagement of communities with the preservation, management and development of places. In a section of A Place for Words titled 'A Sense of Place', Butler writes:

> Writers can work with communities to explore and capture the essence of a place, which can in turn inform and influence its physical regeneration. Well planned writing projects can enable people to discover the history of a place, and the relevance of that history to their own lives. They can help people to find their own creative responses to a place and to feel empowered to positively affect and be involved in its future. In doing so, such work helps create and preserve a unique sense of place for new developments, it honours and validates the history of a place, helps bring communities and individuals on board with change, and fosters a sense of ownership and pride which contributes to the continuing success of a place. (http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/sense-of-place.php)

Butler also confronts the challenging issue of plurality in public perceptions of distinctiveness and value, arguing that while writers may not be able to help achieve consensus on a singular and coherent sense of place, they can foster a mutual understanding and appreciation which is just as valuable:

> Creative projects can also pull out and strengthen connections between people, communities and organisations with an interest in a particular place. Such projects can bring people together who

might otherwise have been pitted against each other, or simply unaware or unsure of each other. (http://www.urbanwords.org.uk/aplaceforwords/sense-of-place.php)

I'm not aware yet of LCAs where public consultation has involved creative writing. But there are certainly instances where this has happened as part of Landscape Partnerships. HLF-funded Landscape Partnerships, like Landscape Character Assessments, are designed to realise the objectives of the European Landscape Convention. New Landscape Character Assessments have sometimes been produced as part of Landscape Partnership projects, and other Landscape Partnerships draw on existing LCAs as their frame of reference. Even more than is the case for LCAs, there is considerable variation not just in the kinds of stakeholder relationships and projects established within LPs, but in the ways in which they record and evaluate the outcomes of these projects. As a result, whilst many LPs work with arts organisations, and several that I'm aware of have included creative writing workshops amongst their projects, detail on objectives, methods and outcomes is rare, as are examples of the writing itself, even when it has been published. A striking exception is the 'South Pennines Watershed Landscape' Landscape Partnership. What interests me about this much-lauded landscape project is the centrality to its objectives and activities of creativity, and specifically Creative Writing. The project report references the great writing inspired by the South Pennine moorlands -the novels of the Brontes; the poetry of Ted Hughes- but its primary emphasis is on the encouragement of people 'to develop their own understanding and appreciation of the landscape, and to use it in their creative activity' (Pennine Prospects 2013, p. 14, p. 22).

'Watershed Landscape' appointed three artists and three writers to work with communities and groups, and held over fifty Creative Writing workshops engaging around 2000 people. No less significantly, the project produced creative outputs that reached and continue to reach many, many more. These included:

- Inspired by Landscape: an exhibition which, in the words of the project report, 'sought to bring an urban audience to gain a new understanding of our upland environment'.
- The Stanza Stones Trail: a new 47-mile trail featuring six new site-specific poems commissioned from locally-born poet Simon Armitage by Ilkley Literature Festival and carved in stone.
- The *Stanza stones* anthology: a published collection featuring both Armitage's poems and poems produced by six young writers groups (Armitage, Hall & Londsdale 2013).

Armitage is a poet who has written much about war, and he brings this preoccupation to several of the stanza stone poems, including 'Dew', seeing fuse-wires in the parched grass of late summer and ranks of soldiers in moorland wildfires (p. 10). In the poem 'Beck', his imagery anthropomorphises the dipper, 'dressed for dinner /in a white bib', and zoomorphises the beck itself, comparing it to a 'teardrop/squeezed from a curlew's eye' (p. 12). It's debatable whether these images help those who read Armitage's poetry on the page or in the landscape understand the Pennine ecosystem and the role of water within it -whether they have an educational value in enhancing 'landscape literacy'. I think they do, but that's another discussion. What these images certainly do, however, is offer to their readers ready-made lenses through which to perceive the landscape, and in their very quirkiness, they invite and legitimate an equally personal response -a taking ownership. If a dipper doesn't look like a man in a bib to you, what does it look like?

The poetry produced by the six young writers groups, some of them urban, and from cultural backgrounds under-represented in rural communities and tourism, often documents precisely this struggle to 'take ownership' of the landscape. Zenam Bi, from the Bradford-based Tadeeb International New Writers' Project, asks herself 'Why can't I enjoy the stillness, grasp this beauty?' (p. 68). What she finds in the poem, like several of the other young poets, is escape -a primary 'cultural service' for many of those involved in Natural England's 'Experiencing Landscapes' research. It's the sense of separation from everyday space, time and experience that makes room for a sharpened awareness not just of the landscape, but of perception itself. Where Zenam Bi finds in the Pennine Landscape an escape from, or peeling back of layers of social and cultural expectation, Mairenn Collins, from Sheffield Young Writers, finds escape from networks of communication. As Armitage brings his preoccupations with national warfare to the landscape in his imagery, so Collins brings her personal conflicts, reading struggles to belong, to be noticed, to survive, in the heather and a leaning tree.

Evaluation of a successful Landscape Partnership should show both enhanced physical access to the landscape, often through new and improved trails etc., and enhanced intellectual access, through educational projects which transfer expert knowledge about distinctive physical characteristics and the services they provide. But highly valuable as this expert-led knowledge transfer is, so too, I'd contend, is the cultivation of an imaginative 'right to roam' which allows the public access in the richest sense. This is captured rather beautifully in a respondent's comment from the Watershed Landscape evaluation, which records not just

increased understanding, but a 'falling in love' with the Pennine landscape: "'I have become more romantic about my landscape, more in love with it. Having only moved here in 2004, my deeper understanding makes me feel more rooted here'" (Pennine Prospects, 2013, p. 30). It's hard to imagine a better outcome from a participatory approach to landscape strategy than this.

Conclusion

'Debates about landscape aesthetics', suggests social historian Ken Worpole', 'are now gaining urgency, even if the UK's endorsement of the European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000) in 2006 scarcely caused a ripple in the political press', and a 'growing appreciation of the importance of place now goes to the heart of politics and to issues of popular aesthetics and cultural identity. Yet consensus is hard to find on what is valued and what remains unloved.' (Worpole, 2010, 65). Worpole's essay, which deals with the Essex landscape, is part of a collection in which various authors reflect in poetry and prose on a specific location in the British Isles and on the potential there for what the collection calls 're-enchantment' (Evans and Robson, 2010). The meaning of re-enchantment in the collection is fairly flexible, but it often means a performance of what Yi-Fu Tuan would call 'care'. By drawing on their store of knowledge about a landscape, expanded through the process of researching and writing; by sharing personal stories of encounter with it; and by expressing their own sense of its distinctiveness and value, a writer shows their care for this landscape, and by doing so encourages their reader not just to feel similarly about the same landscape, but to experience their own, distinctive 'falling (back) in love' with the places they live in and go to. In an essay in the same collection on the Isle of Lewis, Robert Macfarlane makes an argument for acts of creative writing as 'tools of responsible placemaking', which

> ...stand not as a competitor to scientific knowledge and ecological analysis, but their supplement and ally. We need to understand how nature proceeds, of course, but we need also to keep enchantment alive in our descriptions of nature... (Macfarlane, 2010, p. 125)

Macfarlane's call for an alliance between art and science in landscape characterisation and placemaking is precisely what this article has tried to imagine. Whilst there is almost universal acknowledgement of the need to engage with diverse lived experiences of landscape, landscape planners, as Andrew Butler

puts it, lack the 'tools for addressing landscape as more than an objective outsider experience of the visual surface' (2016, p. 249). A primary concern of landscape policy and practice must of course be to protect those places long recognised consensually as valuable and 'loved' from degradation. But to recognise the full democratic potential imagined in the European Landscape Convention, policy and practice should surely also aspire to cultivate the care of people for their own place or landscape, wherever they are, and their ability to love and feel connected to it. It should not simply seek to dictate to people *what* matters in a landscape, but should also seek to express *how* it matters to them.

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