

North of Here:

Imagining the Human and Other-Than-Human
in Late-Upper Palaeolithic Britain

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in Late-Upper Palaeolithic Britain

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Abstract

What were the cosmogonies, mythologies, rituals and ontological beliefs of the Late-Upper Palaeolithic peoples who returned to the ‘British’ peninsula when the ice sheets began to retreat, some 15,000 years ago? More specifically, can we come to understand how they conceived of place, landscape and the natural world? Those working within the field of archaeology are rightly circumspect, but artistic practitioners, I suggest, are not bound in the same way by material evidence, and can consequently venture more freely. What, therefore, can speculative creative writing say about the deep past, and how can it bridge the gulf of time between us and our ancestral selves?

North of Here is a ‘Creative Geographies: Writing Place’ project in the form of a long poem; a dialogic and visionary narrative that imbricates both ancient and contemporary ways of being. Drawing on environmental science, archaeology and the anthropology of circumpolar Indigenous cultures, it explores the human and other-than-human in terms of shared *personhood*, and the values of *respect* and *reciprocity* that govern non-hierarchical ‘social universes’. In particular, it examines consent-seeking and transgression in hunting, and the role of ‘special’ animals such as the bear in cosmogonic beliefs.

This thesis will document the evolution of my interest in landscape and other-than-human studies leading up to this PhD project. It will primarily contextualise the poem itself within anthropological and mythological literature, and therefore argue that the creative writer can meaningfully engage with cross-disciplinary subject matter. Moreover, in light of the so-called ‘creative turn’ in the humanities, it will suggest ways in which creative writers can contribute to interdisciplinary knowledge exchange.

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1. Introduction

When contemplating place, landscape and the natural world, it is the *present* that immediately and necessarily occupies the writer's attention. But the question of *how* to communicate what is before our eyes is not without complication. In my first book, *Landings* (2009), I address what I see as the difficulty of even the simplest acts of documentation:

How to begin writing this down? Shall it be a simple inventory? A list of parts.
Names. Dates. Genealogies. Sound begetting sound. Endless melody.

If I were to say – a robin sings in the trees across the field from this coppice –
would that be enough? Could you flesh things out from such a meagre outline?
Or should I describe its song? Onomatopoeia. But the bird has long fallen silent
before the words begin to form.

(Skelton 2009: 17)

The initial question of 'how to begin' sets the stage for the text to become a place for testing the facility of language itself to communicate, and the immediate problem that *Landings* poses is how to translate the continual flow of experience *into* writing. Each act of attention creates a time-lag, a necessary space to allow the words to form, but life has already moved on, and the 'bird has long fallen silent'. By bringing the act of writing into the world that the words themselves are attempting to convey, *Landings* highlights the gestation involved in the whole process – the thinking time, the effort, and the redundancy inherent in acts of creation.

To problematise matters further, there is never a single, simple sequence of actions requiring documentation, but a 'constant polyphony', a seemingly infinite number of co-existing, concurrently occurring events:

Distant hum of motorway traffic.

Delicate rattle of leaf against branch.

Everything in between.

(2009: 17)

The ‘everything in between’ could be an apt subtitle for *Landings*, as, over the course of the ten years from its initial publication, the book swelled from 96 to 326 pages in its attempts to ‘come to terms with the sheer volume of experience’ (Skelton 2019: 153). There is an urgent, obsessional desire to record, to amass an archive or ‘word-hoard’ (2019: 151).

But this desire itself is informed by a growing understanding that the *present* is nothing if not the accumulation of many *past presents*. Anything that has weight also has a concomitant temporal burden. The land’s depth of soil is the result of millennia of pedogenic accumulation since the last ice age. Coming to terms with what is *before* our eyes inevitably requires a comprehension of what has *gone before*. Understanding becomes historical, archaeological, ecological, geological. To look *at* the present is to look *into* the past.

The question of how far back to look is a critical one, and is at the very heart of *North of Here*. Each layer of history, of strata, can reveal new insights, rupturing pre-conceived ideas and promoting new avenues of thought. As far as *Landings* is concerned, my gaze stretched back eight centuries to the year 1202, and the Norse-Irish toponym: *Andelevesarewe*. The first recorded name for the *here-and-now* of the land beneath my feet. But even this was not enough, and there were questions that remained unanswered:

Over these last few years I’ve slowly made my passage through this landscape.

Limned the edges of its streams and rivers, followed the contours of its hills,

the eaves of its woods. And to what purpose? With whom am I colluding? Who are my guides? What name did this place have before records began?

(2019: 36)

In 2015, the academic Martyn Hudson evaluated *Landings* in a paper for *Landscapes* journal, wherein he wrote:

The *Landings* sequence is important because of its multiple orders of art and documentation but also because few artistic projects are so deeply situated in localities for such sustained periods of time. Anglezarke¹ and Skelton himself now have their inventory of the traces and lines that history has deposited on and within them. The *Landings* ‘sequence’ itself is a line, and a passage, mapping a route to the future, in terms of both new understandings of the artistic relationship to landscape and of the lines of human identity.

(Hudson 2015: 76)

Hudson perceptively observes how the work, in its cataloguing of ‘traces’, becomes entangled in the process of time itself. He suggests that the act of writing necessitates a process of deposition *within* the individual that is analogous to those at work within the greater landscape. The writer is not separate from their subject; indeed, they *become* it. Hudson goes on to argue that the entirety of my ‘corpus refigures the relationship between artistic practice and the detritus of the land and of the lives lived upon it’ (2015: 73), and, indeed, many of my subsequent written works have arisen out of, or extended, the *Landings* ‘looking back’ project. These include books such as *Moor Glisk* (2012) and *Limnology* (2012), as well as numerous pamphlets and editions such as *Rill* (2012), *Become a Ford* (2013), and *Evidence of Capillary Beauty Dismantled* (2013).²

In 2009, following the publication of the first edition of *Landings*, I embarked

¹ Anglezarke is the name of a region of the West Pennine Moors.

² All of these are collected in *The Pale Ladder: Selected Poems & Texts 2009-14* (2016).

upon a collaborative project with the Canadian poet Autumn Richardson. In its entirety it comprises a series of pamphlets, musical recordings, artworks and artefacts, and, like *Landings*, it too is focused on a specific territory: the Furness Fells of south-west Cumbria. These various editions were published through our own Corbel Stone Press over the course of nearly half a decade, and were later collected into a single volume, *Memorious Earth* (2015). Key among the pamphlets is *Relics* (2013), a collection of visual poems that draw upon palynological studies of Cumbria's deep past, detailing the tree genera that began to repopulate the glacier-scoured uplands after the ice retreated. This form of *looking back* is different than that performed in *Landings*. It is concerned with absence: the bare slopes of the present-day Cumbrian uplands no longer feature forests of birch, oak or pine. *Relics'* cataloguing of archaic names for each tree is 'a form of salvage; a dredging of the linguistic record for traces of these lost genera' (Richardson and Skelton 2015: 9). In a similar way another pamphlet, *Wolf Notes* (2010), explores local toponyms as a means of preserving ecological data, highlighting the schism between what *is* and what once *was*; a narrative of environmental degradation:

Harter Fell, a memory;

the hill bereft of deer.

Birker Fell, an echo;

the hill absented by birch.

Ulpha Fell, a reproach;

the hill silenced of wolves.

(2015: 33)

As evidenced in the title of the work, the wolf became for us a totemic presence – a symbol for all those species 'silenced' by the hand of humankind. Both *Relics* and *Wolf*

Notes are therefore elegies, but they are also, implicitly, projects of translation and resuscitation. They essay a form of textual repopulation; the ghost-presences of these lost plants and animals become a little more tangible through our acts of testimony. If *Landings* is characterised by an abiding interest in human orientations towards landscape, then *Memorious Earth*, influenced by Autumn's background as an environmental campaigner, represents a broadening of scope to incorporate the other-than-human. As a consequence, over the ensuing years leading up to this programme of PhD study, human-animal inter-relations began to occupy an increasingly central position in my work.

In 2014 we were approached by Nick Rogers, curator of Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, to stage a retrospective of our Cumbrian work. During our discussions with Nick I expressed an interest in the archive of the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry, which is attached to Abbot Hall, and I was duly granted permission to view the collection and make an artistic response to it. There were many agricultural implements in the collection, and among them were various devices of 'control', such as traps, brands, muzzles, collars and spurs. I found the latent violence that seemed to adhere to these objects both repellent and fascinating, and, whilst researching the subject further, I read about the existence of the so-called 'fox screw'. This device 'was used in the Lake District for screwing into a fox which had taken refuge in a "borran" or under a heap of stones' (Cowper 1899: 272). Further research into the treatment of foxes and other animals revealed an endemic history of institutionalised persecution:

Rewards were given by the churchwardens for the destruction of foxes; the heads of these *ferae naturae* being stuck up on church gates. Rewards for the destruction of ravens were likewise given by churchwardens.

(Stockdale 1872: 573)

In many respects this came as no surprise; both Autumn and I had already read about the persecution and extirpation of wolves in the UK whilst researching *Wolf Notes*. Nevertheless, whilst writing *Landings*, I had become aware of historical contexts in which the natural world was treated more respectfully:

In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated.

(White 1967: 1205)

My act of *looking back* at the cultural landscape of the north of England therefore became infused with a desire to discover if there were any local parallels to the classical Greek and Roman attitudes identified by White. During the course of this research I came across references to three ‘Indigenous’ British deities: Belatucadrus, Cocidius and Condatis (Fairless 1984: 224). Of these, the Celtic scholar Anne Ross suggested that the first two could ‘equally qualify for identification with the horned god of the north’ (Ross 1974: 213). These, in turn, are part of a complex of Celtic figures of worship that include a ‘stag god’, a ‘bull-horned god’, and a ‘horned goddess’ – all entities whose godhood is in some way bound up in their very animal attributes. *Animality* is in some sense divine. It is therefore significant that Ross identifies these Celtic gods and goddesses as being ‘demoted to demons and monsters by the early Church’ (Ross 1974: 190). The sole deity of the Christian religion was remade in our own human image, and we were cut loose from the animal. According to White, in the wake of this demonisation of the other-than-human, ‘the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature

crumbled' (White 1967: 1205), and we might therefore see as a corollary the subsequent persecution of animals such as wolves, bears, lynx and foxes. Indeed, in the case of the latter, the position of the Church in mandating at least some of that persecution is clear for all to see (Stockdale 1872: 573).

The contrast between Celtic attitudes of reverence for animals such as the stag (Green 1992: 230-1) and the recent historical persecution of foxes would seem to suggest fundamentally opposed values, but these are not like-for-like comparisons. Indeed, the Celts also hunted foxes and made use of their fur (1992: 54), and I can find no evidence that there was ever a fox cult. Nevertheless, Miranda Green makes the more general assertion that:

to an extent, the more "civilized" a society becomes the worse is its attitude to animals. In its strictest sense, civilization means "city-living" and it is true that the further removed one is from the natural world, the smaller may be one's sensitivity to it. Thus Keith Thomas, speaking of early modern England, comments that "human civilization indeed was virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature".

(Green 1992: 239)

Although Green does not say as much, there is a certain *evolutionary* approach to the history of culture implicit in the notion of societies becoming 'more' civilised. Similar ideas, such as those in which increasing social stratification gives 'rise to hierarchical religions involving priest castes' have been criticised by Timothy Insoll as being too simplistic (Insoll 2004: 45). Nevertheless, it must be generally true that the ancient inhabitants of Britain lived in closer proximity to the natural world than many of their modern counterparts. Indeed, in the absence of agriculture, industrialisation and large-scale built environments, we must surely ask whether the concept of distinct 'human'

and ‘natural’ spheres of existence were even relevant.

When thinking about relationships with the land and its other-than-human forms of life, the question as to what kinds of knowing existed beyond the threshold of written history becomes compelling. Moreover, what happens when the artistic practitioner looks into that occluded *prehistoric* domain that is the usual preserve of archaeologists? What can creative practice contribute to discourses about the deep past, and how do such discourses relate to the *present* that is our first concern when we contemplate place, landscape and the natural world?

In his book *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, Ronald Hutton dedicates just sixteen of his 397 pages to the period ‘30,000 to 5,000 BC’ (Hutton 1998: v). The brevity of his summary reveals an evident paucity of material for discussion from such a remote period of prehistory. When contemplating the inhumations of the Late-Upper Palaeolithic, Hutton suggests: ‘whatever scenes of ferocity or affection have left these relics, we cannot reconstruct them with any certainty’ (1998: 3). As an academic, and an expert in his field, Hutton is rightly circumspect – but to a creative practitioner such declarations are an enticement. In the eyes of the poet, versed in dealing with ambiguity, this lack of *certainty* becomes a wealth of *possibilities*. Poetry feeds on absence; its words resonate, rather than diminish, in empty space. Speculative, imaginative thinking is drawn into the vacuum prompted by the reticence of conventional archaeological practice. Creative writing presents itself as a parallel form of enquiry; a complementary and coextensive methodology. The results of such endeavours are not *reconstructions*, but *reimaginings*. They are the shadows cast on archaeology’s cave walls.

1.1. *North of Here*

How long is the unbroken line that represents the continued human occupation of the ‘British’ land mass? Jacobi and Higham identify a cluster³ of Late-glacial remains in southern Britain as the earliest evidence of a human return after the last ice age. The date range they offer is 14,845–14,705 cal BP (before present) (Jacobi and Higham 2009: 1903).⁴ If humans managed to endure the Younger Dryas cooling period, c. 12,900 to c. 11,700 BP, then it is possible that Britain has been continually occupied for nearly 15,000 years. In some sense, notwithstanding the many subsequent movements of peoples to-and-from this region of Europe, the dates Jacobi and Higham propose may represent a *beginning*; a starting point for thinking about human attitudes to the natural world in a specific, albeit broadly defined, place.

This, then, sets the scene for the following programme of PhD research. *North of Here* presents a new body of creative writing in the form of a long poem that attempts to enter the landscape of Late-glacial Britain. It concerns itself with the people of the Late-Upper Palaeolithic; how they conceived of the natural world, and how this conception was incorporated into their cosmogonies, mythologies, beliefs and rituals. Needless to say, given the trajectory of my previous work, it is particularly interested in how humans perceived, and related to, other-than-human life.

Archaeologists are necessarily bound by material evidence in the inferences they can make about the deep past (Bailey 2017: 249), but artistic practitioners, being less constrained, can venture more freely. *North of Here* therefore asks: what can speculative creative writing say about prehistory, and how can it bridge the gulf of time between us and our ancestral selves? It is my aim to show that poetic practice in particular can shed a certain *imaginative* light on Late-glacial Britain, and, in so doing, reflect that light

³ Gough’s Cave, Sun Hole Cave, and Aveline’s Hole, Somerset; Pixies’ Hole, Devon.

⁴ Cal = calibrated radiocarbon dating. For a discussion, see the Glossary (§A2.).

back onto contemporary attitudes towards the natural world.

In attempting this task, I have necessarily drawn upon cross-disciplinary research from the fields of environmental science, archaeology and anthropology. Despite the comparative freedom that I identify as the privilege of artistic practitioners, the act of imagining *must* still be grounded in knowledge and credible theory if the creative writer is to *think* plausibly about the past. When approaching this programme of PhD research, I set aside 12-18 months to assimilate the necessary information required to proceed any further. Specifically, expertise from the aforementioned disciplines provided help with:

1. visualising the physical geography and ecology of prehistoric Britain
2. identifying and understanding ancient sites of relevance
3. providing the most appropriate contemporary and historical analogies for the lifeways of those peoples who returned to Britain when the ice sheets began to recede.

This thesis will therefore present a précis of the results of my preliminary research in its opening chapter (§2.) [33]. A fuller account is given in Appendix §A1 [321]. Inevitably, this work incorporates some of the specialist language that is germane to each discipline, although I have made every attempt to disambiguate where necessary. A glossary of terms is also provided in Appendix §A2 [401]. Following this ‘technical’ discussion, the thesis will then present the creative writing itself (§3.) [41], followed by three chapters that discuss three distinct but interleaved themes of the work: *landscape* (§4.) [127], the *other-than-human* (§5.) [169], and *time* (§6.) [213]. It will conclude with a chapter that reflects on the process of completing this thesis; its scholarly engagement with diverse domains of knowledge; the production of the creative writing; and its relevance to specialist and general thinking about prehistory (§7.) [259].

The thesis is constructed in this way so that it can be seen how the writing *emerges out of* cross-disciplinary research. Environmental, archaeological and anthropological materials therefore represent its *primary* contexts. In the three chapters that follow the creative element of the work, I will demonstrate how the poetry engages with, and moves beyond, knowledge from these domains, thereby making its original contribution to thinking about the past. The final chapter will reflect more broadly on how creative writing interacts with other disciplines, and what contribution it can make to interdisciplinary dialogue.

1.2. Literary Contexts

The body of work begun with *Landings* occurs in the context of a broader movement in British literature over the past twenty years that has two distinct but overlapping themes: *place* and *the natural world*. Key popular exponents of these genres are Robert Macfarlane (*The Wild Places* (2007), *Landmarks* (2015), *Underland* (2019)), Kathleen Jamie (*Findings* (2005), *Sightlines* (2012), *Surfacing* (2019)), Rachel Lichtenstein (*Rodinsky's Room* (1999), *On Brick Lane* (2007), *Estuary* (2016)), and Iain Sinclair (*Rodinsky's Room* (1999), *London Orbital* (2002), *Edge of the Orison* (2005), *Ghost Milk* (2011), *London Overground* (2015), *Black Apples of Gower* (2015)), among others. The writing in these genres is characterised by a highly individual and yet forensic interrogation of locality, often intertwining personal, historic, topographic and ecological themes. Both Macfarlane and Jamie were included in the seminal *Granta* anthology 'The New Nature Writing' (2008), a title that has come to act as an umbrella term for the subsequent resurgence in nature-oriented prose works in the past decade.

This popular rise in place and nature writing has been shadowed in the world of small press publishing. Key imprints are Brian Lewis's Longbarrow Press (2006-

present) and Colin Sackett's Uniformbooks (2011-present). Longbarrow concentrates on poetry 'that explores the intersections of landscape, history and memory', and includes among its stable of writers: Matthew Clegg, Angelina D'Roza, Mark Goodwin, Rob Hindle, Fay Musselwhite, and Peter Riley.⁵ The remit of Uniformbooks is a little wider, focusing on 'visual and literary arts, cultural geography and history, music and bibliographic studies', but its list includes several place- and nature-oriented titles, including *The Book of the Green Man* by Ronald Johnson (2015), *The Regional Book* by David Matless (2015), *A Downland Index* by Angus Carlyle (2016), *Condensations* by Nathan Walker (2017), *Round About Town* by Kevin Boniface (2018), *Printed Landscape* by Colin Sackett (2019) and *An Indifference of Birds* by Richard Smyth (2020).⁶

Corbel Stone Press, established by Autumn Richardson and myself in 2009, is aligned with these small presses in its commitment to publishing 'music, art and writing informed by landscape and nature'.⁷ Robert Macfarlane dedicated a chapter of his book, *Landmarks* (2015), to our life and work in the Cumbrian uplands. In so doing, he very generously situates our books alongside those of writers 'who use words exactly and exactly when describing landscape and natural life', including Nan Shepherd, Roger Deakin, J.A. Baker, Barry Lopez, Richard Jefferies, Jacquetta Hawkes, and John Muir (Macfarlane 2015: 1). Macfarlane's tireless championing of new, and often obscure, work represents a genuine desire to diversify and expand the canon of place and nature writing from its mainstream centre to incorporate its very fringes.

On a modest scale Autumn and I are attempting a similar project through our curation of *Reliquiae*, a literary journal that we have published in eight editions since 2013. Over the course of seven years we have disseminated work from a range of both

5 Source: <https://longbarrowpress.com/about/>. Accessed 13/02/2020.

6 Source: <http://www.colinsackett.co.uk/uniformbooks.php>. Accessed 13/02/2020.

7 Source: <https://www.corbelstonepress.com/>. Accessed 13/02/20.

new and established writers, from the UK and overseas, including Nancy Campbell, Angus Carlyle, Thomas A Clark, Hannah Cooper-Smithson, Tim Cresswell, Kerri ní Dochartaigh, Don Domanski, Alec Finlay, Mark Goodwin, Alyson Hallett, Steffi Lang, Tim Lilburn, Karen Lloyd, Gerry Loose, Jane Lovell, Robert Macfarlane, Wendy Mulford, Peter O’Leary, Oliver Southall, Penelope Shuttle, Jennifer Spector, John Steffler, Nathaniel Tarn and G.C. Waldrep. Our aim is to nurture and celebrate writing that is outward looking and expansive in its appreciation of other-than-human life.

Bridging the gap between the relative obscurity of small press publishing and the mainstream is the Dorset publisher, Little Toller Books (2008-present), whose original ‘singular purpose’ was to ‘revive forgotten and classic books about nature and rural life in the British Isles’.⁸ The success of its ‘Nature Classics Series’ meant that many out-of-print titles by writers such as Adrian Bell, George Ewart Evans, W.H. Hudson, Richard Jefferies, Clare Leighton, Gavin Maxwell and Edward Thomas were accessible to a new audience. In due course it began to commission works from contemporary writers for its ‘Monograph Series’, which, at the time of writing, features books from John Burnside, Tim Dee, Paul Evans, Sophia Kingshill, Seán Lysaght, Oliver Rackham, Fiona Sampson, Marcus Sedgwick, Iain Sinclair and Adam Thorpe. My own book, *Beyond the Fell Wall*, was commissioned in 2012, and appeared in 2015 as the sixth title in the series. It takes as its focus the drystone walls of upland Cumbria in order to make ‘a poetic journey into the inanimate life of a landscape’.⁹

Aside from the company that *Beyond the Fell Wall* keeps, there are a number of works by other authors that share similar concerns, methodologies and aesthetics to my own. Among these are David Matless’s *The Regional Book* (2015), Nathan Walker’s *Condensations* (2017), and J.R. Carpenter’s *An Ocean of Static* (2018). Matless’s

⁸ Source: <https://www.littletoller.co.uk/about-us/>. Accessed 13/02/20.

⁹ Source: hardcover flyleaf, and Source: <https://www.littletoller.co.uk/shop/books/little-toller/beyond-fell-wall-richard-skelton-paperback/>. Accessed 13/02/20.

clipped and condensed prose-works are exercises in looking ‘that encompass fact, digression, memory and reverie’ (Matless 2015: *ifc*). His sensitivity to the Norfolk Broads’ ‘colloquium of voices’ (2015: 8) is similar to my own desire to reflect ‘*other* testimonies’ in *Landings* (Skelton 2019: 157). Both books attempt their own kind of ‘inventories’ of the landscape.¹⁰ Nathan Walker’s flattening of historical fragments into the compressed visual landscapes of *Condensations* reflect a desire to create a ‘linguistic terrain’ that the reader must ‘move across, through, and over’ (Walker 2017: 77). His adventurous, often unreadable, typographical arrangements share a similar aesthetic to the riverine poems of my own *Limnology* (2012). Although their intent is different, both books strive towards the convergence of *real* and *printed* landscapes, in which ‘reading’ is an activity of the eye, as much as it is of the brain. J.R. Carpenter’s book is also an assemblage of voices – of ‘facts, fictions, fragments’ (Carpenter 2018: 10) – and therefore shares ideas and processes with *Landings*, but she assimilates them into an entirely new poetics that imitates the strings, arrays and variables of computer programming, thereby offering the reader multiple variant possibilities for resolving her text into fixed meanings. This very fluidity is entirely appropriate to her subject matter – oceanic ‘voyages undertaken over the past 2,340 years’ (2018: 10).

Notwithstanding the consonances that my past work shares with these contemporary British works of literature,¹¹ I suggest that *North of Here* can be more fruitfully contextualised by looking further afield. As already outlined, a crucial element of the work itself is a concern with ‘cosmogonies, mythologies, [and] rituals’, and I will therefore situate the poem within the broader corpus of mythological literature and theory. This will take the form of a survey of relevant creation mythologies, and a discussion of how *North of Here* conforms with, or diverges from, these literatures (e.g.

¹⁰ ‘Inventories’ is quoted from the inside-front-cover promotional blurb for *The Regional Book*.

¹¹ J.R. Carpenter describes herself as ‘Canadian-born, UK-based’ on her website, <https://luckysoap.com/bio.html>. Accessed 02/03/20.

§4.4., 4.5., 5.7., 6.5.) [140, 156, 201, 225]. Here I would add that my interest in mythology has been stimulated by my work with Autumn Richardson in curating *Reliquiae*. Alongside our contemporary programme, we also seek to excavate nature-oriented world mythology and folklore. We have thus far published songs, charms, poems and narratives from a diverse range of mythological traditions, including Aino, Algonquin, Anglo-Saxon, Armenian, Babylonian, Caribou Eskimo, Celtic, Chipewyan, Egyptian, Enochian, Finnish, Greek, Haida, Indian, Italian, Koryak, Kwakiutl, Mesopotamian, Occitan, Pawnee, Polynesian, Povungnituk Inuit, Mexican, Navaho, Norse and Sumerian. This blending of the contemporary and ancient marks *Reliquiae* as unique in the burgeoning field of nature-oriented journals and magazines. Indeed, it marks out the Corbel Stone Press project as somewhat esoteric to the fields of UK contemporary place and nature writing themselves.

This interest in thematic undercurrents that connect cultures and transcend national boundaries is identified in a recent article by Paul Sheehan, who discusses my work from an ecocritical and zoopoetic perspective alongside that of the American poet W.S. Merwin. Specifically, he identifies my *Landings* and *Moor Glisk* writing as focusing on aspects of ‘the dark side of nature’, a term Sheehan attributes to Merwin’s contemporary, Gary Snyder:

[This is] the side where parasitism, predation, and appetite rule. Life outside the human, diurnal world, says Snyder, is not simply a harmonious union of species and ecosystem: “It is also nocturnal, anaerobic, cannibalistic, microscopic, digestive, fermentative [...] there is a world of nature on the decay side, a world of beings who do rot and decay in the shade” (Snyder 2008, 170).

(Sheehan 2018: 182)

It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that whilst researching contemporary literary

contexts for *North of Here*, I began to look beyond the UK and Europe. I read both Snyder and Merwin, as well as Charles Olson, Nathaniel Tarn and Ronald Johnson. David Hinton's book, *The Wilds of Poetry* (2017), was particularly useful in this regard, as it introduced me to the work of Jerome Rothenberg, and the term 'ethnopoetics'. I subsequently discovered the American journal *Alcheringa*, edited by Rothenberg and Dennis Tedlock, which ran for thirteen issues between 1970 and 1980. The aim of the journal was to provide 'a place where tribal poetry can appear in English translation' (Rothenberg and Tedlock, 1970: 1). Its first edition alone contains English versions of poetries from the Aztec, Bantu, Eskimo, Flathead, Hausa, Kalapuya, K'iche' Maya, Navajo, Paiute, Quechua, Quiche Maya, New Guinea, Osage, Seneca, Serbo-Croatia, Solomon Islands, Teleut, Zuni, and Zutuhil Maya. A key aspiration of the journal was to 'encourage poets to participate actively in the translation of tribal/oral poetry' (1970: 1), and it duly featured translations from numerous contemporary writers, including Gordon Brotherston, Barbara Einzig, Clayton Eshleman, Michael Harner, Dell Hymes, Kenneth Kensinger, James Koller, Robert Laughlin, Harris Lenowitz, W.S. Merwin, Howard A. Norman, Simon Ortiz, Armand Schwerner, Charles Simic, Herbert Spinden, Nathaniel Tarn, Barbara Tedlock, Gerald Weiss, Susanne Wenger and Louis Zukofsky.

By the time *Alcheringa* was first published, Rothenberg had already edited the influential anthology, *Technicians of the Sacred* (1967), subsequently revised and expanded, and comprising 'a range of poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania' (Rothenberg 2017: iii). One of his aims in gathering this work was to recuperate the word 'primitive'; to dispel its negative connotations by asserting that 'primitive means complex', and to recontextualise Indigenous oral culture *as poetry* (2017: xxx). Rothenberg went on to found *New Wilderness Letter*, which ran for twelve issues between 1977 and 1984, and which continued the ethnopoetic project by

publishing the work of contemporary writers exploring ‘the wilderness of language & mind, time & space’ (Rothenberg 1978: *Ifc*). Volume 2 No 7 (1979) featured a piece by the American poet Clayton Eshleman, entitled ‘Placements’, in which he makes the following ‘statement’:

As species disappear, the paleolithic [sic] grows on us; as living animals disappear, the first outlines become more dear, not as reflections of a day world, but as the primal contours of psyche, the shaping of the underworld, at the point Hades was an animal. The new wilderness is thus the spectral realm created by the going out of animal life and the coming in of these primary outlines. Our tragedy is to search further and further back for a common non-racial trunk in which the animal is not separated out of the human while we destroy the turf on which we actually stand.

(Eshleman 1979: 22)

These rather enigmatic lines led me to research Eshleman’s work further – not least because of his interest in looking back to the Palaeolithic in order to answer questions about the nature of being *human* and *animal*; an interest that is central to *North of Here*. I subsequently discovered that Eshleman spent many years studying the Late-Upper Palaeolithic caves of southern France. The result of that enterprise became *Juniper Fuse* (2003), a book of ‘poetry, prose poetry, essays, lectures, notes, dreams, and visual reproductions’ (Eshleman 2003: xvi). It is the project of a poet who sought to acquire the necessary cross-disciplinary knowledge in order to make imaginative inferences about the deep past. Given that his undertaking so closely matches my own, *Juniper Fuse*, I therefore suggest, not only represents a vital literary context for my own endeavours, but is more relevant to *North of Here* than the bulk of contemporary British place and nature writing. Put simply, no one else, to my knowledge, is focused on the

deep past in quite the same way.

The other writer whose work I will discuss in detail in relation to *North of Here* is John Haines. Also American, it is Haines's personal biography that affords his work special relevance. He lived for a number of years as a hunter and trapper in the Alaskan wilderness. His experiences of animal life, and, crucially, of killing, are evoked in his first collection, *Winter News* (1966). Haines lived a life that is simply not possible in Britain, due to our small size, lack of 'wilderness', and different faunal ecology. The sense of remove that he experienced from the modern world – and the concomitant immersion in the world of animals; of blood and scent – is impossible to replicate in the present-day British Isles. To my knowledge, there are no contemporary British poets or writers who have experienced such a visceral entanglement with the natural world. Haines's life as a hunter – although different from that of Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers – nevertheless preserves something of a more intimate inter-relation between humans and animals. *Winter News* therefore represents a vital literary context for *North of Here*.

1.3. Summary

This PhD thesis will look at the ancient past of the north of England, and reimagine aspects of the cultures of those peoples who returned to the 'British' peninsula after the ice began to retreat. It has provenance in my own individual, collaborate and editorial work, although it extends the reach and mythological dimension of that work significantly. Although it arises out of the resurgent fields of UK writing about place and nature, it has, I suggest, more in common with the late-twentieth-century ethnopoetic movement in American poetry, and with the work of Clayton Eshleman in particular. In order to perform its acts of imaginative speculation, it draws deeply upon environmental science, archaeology and anthropology. In so doing, I will argue that the

research conducted synthesises cross-disciplinary material to make an original contribution to knowledge. Moreover, I will demonstrate how the poem itself transcends the self-limiting strictures of archaeological discourse through its creative envisionings, and suggest ways in which poetry might meaningfully contribute towards thinking about the past.

In Book Five of *Paterson* (1958), William Carlos Williams writes, ‘Anything is good material for poetry. Anything.’ (Williams 1983: 225). In its specific context, the poet was writing about ordinary life in a mid-twentieth century New Jersey town. Accordingly, *Paterson* incorporates letters, conversations, signage, notes, reports and advertisements into its poetic matrix. *North of Here* takes Williams’s manifesto at its word, but focuses upon a subject that is quite extraordinary: the *ordinary* life of the Late-Upper Palaeolithic peoples of Britain, some 15,000 years ago. At the time of its writing, Williams’s work was radical in its democratisation of poetry through the appropriation of ‘unpoetic’ forms. Along with the work of Eshleman, this thesis is engaged in an equally radical project: expanding poetry’s frame of reference beyond the common corpus and into specialist domains of knowledge. In so doing, it dissolves the boundaries of those disciplines, and invites the general reader to think about issues that are normally the preserve of experts. What discourse might arise from a more democratised orientation towards the act of *looking back*? If more of us drew upon past ontologies in analysing our attitudes towards the other-than-human, how might this in turn impact upon the ways in which we behave towards, and safeguard, the natural world?

2. *Preliminary Research (Digest)*

The following discussion provides a brief outline of key concepts and contexts derived from my preliminary research in the fields of environmental science, archaeology and anthropology. This outline is necessarily brief, and for the most part I have therefore largely omitted direct quotations, references and citations. A fuller, more nuanced and substantiated account is provided in Appendix A [Error: Reference source not found].

As already alluded to, my time-zone of interest is the period of climatic warming that marked the transition out of the last glaciation. Records taken from Greenlandic ice-cores show this warm period as commencing c. 14,700 BP. Prior to this, the landscape of northern Britain is thought to have been a *glacial desert*, and only a limited arctic fauna could have survived here, if, indeed, any animals subsisted at all (§A1.3.) [325]. The first *biome* to emerge was a *tundra* of grasses, sedges and docks, which gradually incorporated shrubs such as artemisias and dwarf birch, followed by larger shrubs such as juniper, and then small trees like silver birch and willow (§A1.2.) [323]. Key animals of this period, as identified in the fossil assemblage of Gough's Cave, Somerset, were deer, tarpan (a prehistoric horse), mammoth and reindeer. The number of such Late-Upper Palaeolithic (hereafter LUP) sites is not many, and the population density may have been as little as 0.006 to 0.02 persons per km². A key site is the Creswell Crags complex in England's Midlands, which contains the most northerly example of LUP cave art, along with an enigmatic carving of a masked 'humanoid' figure on woolly rhinoceros bone. There is some debate, however, as to who or what it actually represents (§A1.4.) [327]. A critical find in northern England is the so-called 'Poulton Elk' (*Alces alces*), dated to 14,920 – 13,783 cal BP (§A1.5.) [332]. The skeleton shows several marks made by hard-edged objects, and one barbed point was found in situ. The common interpretation of the find is that the animal was injured by human hunters, but

ultimately evaded them, only to die in marsh water.

To gain some understanding of how LUP peoples might have related to animals such as the Poulton Elk, the researcher has little alternative but to turn to ethnographic analogy – examining the beliefs of peoples in the historic period who had broadly comparable lifeways. Specifically, it is therefore appropriate to look at *hunter-gatherer* groups who have occupied not dissimilar landscapes to those of Late-glacial Britain, such as peoples from the circumpolar regions of the arctic and subarctic: Siberia, Greenland, northern Canada and Alaska (§A1.6.) [335].

This practice is not without its problems, chief among them being the inherent prejudices of the people writing those very ethnographies (primarily white, male Europeans), and the corrupting influence of non-Indigenous ideology on the subjects of study themselves (the so-called ‘missionizing effect’). Even if these were not issues, there is also the ethical difficulty implicit in such an endeavour, as it suggests equivalencies between cultures separated by vast tracts of time and characterises modern hunter-gatherers as mere Palaeolithic relics. Moreover, to look at circumpolar cultures as if they are a largely homogenous grouping with unified and uniform ideas about the world is, in the words of Catherine Albanese, ‘to do violence to the subjective sensibility of different peoples’ (Albanese *in* Connors 2000: 140). In short, such an enterprise risks stereotyping the subjects of its study.

Nevertheless, whilst paying full heed to such considerations, there are undoubtedly *some* general concepts that could be said to be near universals. The first and most important of these is the idea of *personhood* (§A1.7.) [338] – the quality of being that encompasses sentience, individuality and intentionality. Crucially, personhood is not limited to humanity, but may encompass animals, natural phenomena such as the sun, trees or the wind, apparently inanimate ‘objects’ (to our rationalist-

materialist perceptions) such as stones, and certain non-corporeal phenomena; what we might call ‘spirits’. The quality of *being a person* is therefore not dictated by external appearance, and indeed, in such a paradigm the inner core of sentient life is thought to be essentially identical – all persons share the same kind of interiority – a belief that posits an essentially egalitarian outlook on life. The world comprises a society of sentient beings, all of whom are inwardly similar, or identical, but who make use of different outward forms. The words ‘make use’ here are critical, as, in some cases, persons are able to adopt different forms according to their needs. Metamorphosis and therianthropy are therefore key tropes in many Indigenous folktales and sacred narratives.

A deeper understanding of these concepts can be obtained by realising that corporeal ‘reality’ and the worlds of dream and altered states of consciousness are held to be inextricably inter-related in many Indigenous ontologies (§A1.7.) [338]. Dream and visionary encounters with other-than-human persons form a crucial component of *lived* reality, and it is often (but not solely) through such altered states that two-way inter-species communication takes place.

This observance of a bi-directional interaction between humans and others is important, because it introduces another key concept in circumpolar lifeways; that of *reciprocity*. In order for a non-hierarchical universe to function, all constituent members have mutual behavioural obligations. Strict rules of conduct must be followed in the treatment of others, a process through which *respect* is demonstrated and order maintained. Much of this is oriented around the act of hunting, the killing of animals, and the treatment of their mortal remains. In some instances, such as those of the Inuit of Quebec (§A1.10.) [368], acknowledgement of the animal’s consent to be killed is vital in hunter-hunted dynamics. The concept of consensual killing (§A1.11.) [373] may

seem alien, but the ‘animic’ ontology of such circumpolar peoples is predicated on an underlying belief in reincarnation. Death is not an end, as each animal is returned to the world reclothed in flesh. Moreover, this bodily reincarnation is accompanied by a continuity of memory, such that each animal remembers how it was previously treated by hunters. Tied up in this metaphysical construct is the idea of ‘latent sentence’, whereby the consciousness of an animal endures after it has been killed, so that it can observe how its carcass is treated by human hunters (§A1.8.) [351]. This has led to the development of elaborate taboos and rituals surrounding the butchery and eating of animal bodies. Those who treat prey animal corpses with respect are thought to better ensure that the animals will consent to their subsequent re-killing when they return to life. Critical in such dynamics is the practice of ‘ritual discard’ – the intentional deposition of skeletal matter into soil or water; a final demonstration of courtesy through which corporeal remains are interred in a ritually delimited space, away from contaminants and the purview of scavenging animals.

This involvement of the land and water in human-animal inter-relations raises another important issue: the land itself is not merely an inert backdrop or stage for the action of persons. In Indigenous ontologies the earth, or parts of it, is considered alive, and may be thought of as an other-than-human person, or as containing other-than-human spirits, forces or agencies (§A1.9.) [362]. The way in which these ideas manifest are varied and – to our Western understanding – may seem vague or paradoxical, but this difficulty may simply reflect the failure of our own language and intellectual paradigms to come to terms with an essentially different kind of metaphysics. Fundamentally, it is an expression of a way of being in the world that is contingent on ideas of interconnectedness, of relatedness and similarity.

In many circumpolar cultures, such as the Ojibwa, Naskapi and Yukaghir, the

inter-relation between humans and animals is mediated and complicated by the perceived existence of an entity known as the Master of the Animals (§A1.9., A1.10.) [362, 368]. The role of such a figure ranges from a vaguely defined spiritual protector and intermediary to a powerful entity who seems to control the animals in their charge. In the case of the latter, human dealings with this entity are deemed to be crucial in ensuring a good hunt, as it is thought that the Animal Master will allocate sufficient animals to a worthy and respectful hunter over the course of a season. In such contexts, the life and sentience of an individual animal itself seems secondary to its overall master spirit, and, indeed, in some cultures, it would appear that it is the Animal Master who is considered a person, rather than the animal.

Here it is worth acknowledging Albanese's cautionary note about the diversity of Indigenous beliefs (Albanese *in* Connors 2000: 140). Although animal mastery may be prevalent across circumpolar cultures, the form it takes – even within a singular group – varies, and so generalisations are extremely difficult. Among the Eskimo of Alaska and Chukotka, for example, personhood itself is not the *de jure* property of certain species or entities, but is actively constructed through social engagement (§A1.8.) [351]. Even humanness must be actively performed, lest identities merge and unwanted transformation happens. In such cultures, the acknowledgement of an inner metaphysical sameness can lead to a certain existential anxiety.

The egalitarian social relationships between humans and others in an essentially non-hierarchical circumpolar world are further complicated by the especial treatment of certain animal species. Foremost among them is the bear, through the widespread practice known as *bear ceremonialism* (§A1.12.) [374]. This complex of behaviours includes the ritualised killing of a bear, prefaced by a formalised and deliberately respectful spoken address, and followed by various post-mortem ceremonies and

customs. Again, it may seem alien to kill an animal that is held in special regard, but it can be understood as part of a broader animic ontology in which death-giving is perceived, not as an ending, but as an essential recuperative and regenerative act, thereby continuing the circular flow of life and power in the social universe (§A1.11.) [373].

The degree of esteem in which the bear is held has led to the ascription of various terms, including reverence, veneration and even worship (§A1.13.) [378]. But these terms are problematic, because they are imported from a theistic paradigm that is essentially hierarchical. As already discussed, *respect* is the mechanism that integrates persons in a circumpolar world – an essentially egalitarian model of interaction between equals. It therefore follows that even gods, when they are present, are generally characterised quite differently than the infallible and omnipotent deities of Judeo-Christian theology. The Raven of the Koyukon people, for example, is perceived as something of a whimsical trickster who nevertheless possesses undeniable creative power (§A1.9.) [362].

Indeed, it is more useful to think about the various actors within circumpolar worlds – humans, animals, entities, spirits, heroes, deities – as persons who are fundamentally similar, but who exercise varying degrees of power. And this power itself is seen to be entropic – not fixed or given, but always moving among persons, and contingent on the proper demonstrations of respect and reciprocity. Those who wield power are not set apart from the rest; they too have obligations and commitments to social unity. A quotidian example of this can be seen in the sharing of food following a successful hunt. The act of sharing such a great gift is crucial in demonstrating a hunter's magnanimity and good character to the dead animal, and therefore proving his worthiness to continue to receive the gift of the animal's life in futurity.

Whenever a hunter transgresses in their adherence to the strict rules of conduct with regard to other-than-humans, songs, offerings and propitiations are made. Should these fail, a ritual specialist, or shaman, is often necessary (§A1.8.) [351]. Implicit in the shamanic world-view is the idea that every person has their spiritual component residing in an alternate plane in the ‘tiered universe’. Crucially, this spirit-world requires an intermediary – a human capable of trance or visionary dreams – who can voyage between worlds in order to effect changes in the physical realm. In the world of the Koyukon, for example, a shaman might make a dream-visit to ‘animal-houses’ in order to negotiate with animal spirits (or their representatives), so that the equilibrium can be restored (§A1.9.) [362]. In some circumstances, the shaman does not choose his or her profession, but is pursued in dreams and visions by animal spirits that, in due course, become their allies and helpers in non-corporeal reality. The process of a shaman’s psychical initiation can therefore take the form of a hunt, followed the butchery of their visionary body, before its ultimate reassembly into that of a fully fledged shaman (§A1.16.) [389]. This, of course, is a parallel of the hunter-hunted dynamic between humans and animals on the corporeal plane, and reflects how these two realities are inextricably linked and co-dependent.

The question of how applicable any of the aforementioned ideas are to LUP peoples is incredibly complex, and, ultimately, is unknowable. Nevertheless, there are some clues in the archaeological record that might support their relevance when reimagining prehistoric lifeways. The ritual discard of butchered bones, and even complete skeletons, for example, is well-attested (§A1.1.) [321] (Chatterton 2006: 104; Jordan, 2006: 94). Similarly, the preservation of artefacts made from animal remains by prehistoric Arctic hunters suggests that the performance of ‘intersubjective relationships’ between humans and animals has ‘significant time-depth’ (§A1.8.) [351]

(Hill 2011: 412-3). With regard to specific species, the special regard that humans had for the bear has been inferred from fossil assemblages dating to c. 26,000 BP in Belgian caves (§A1.15.) [384] (Germonpré & Hämäläinen 2007: 21). The idea of a prevalent LUP proto-shamanism has also been argued by specialists (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988), based in part on the occurrence of painted and incised marks in LUP caves that resemble the ‘entoptic’ phenomena that subjects experience when undergoing altered states of consciousness (§A1.16) [389].

While such correlations may not constitute sufficient ‘proof’ for archaeologists to assert without equivocation, they present a series of landmarks for the creative practitioner in what is otherwise an uncharted domain. The evident lacunae – the whitespaces on the map – do not present themselves as problems for the poet. Rather, they are enticements; places into which the poetic imagination is quickly and readily drawn. Nevertheless, it is critical to understand that, had the map been completely blank, then such an act of creative imagining would have been impossible, or at least, pointless. In the arctic, a landmark – no matter how distant – is a point of reference that can prevent snow-blindness. Materials – no matter how small – are needed to conjure with. And so, my initial period of research into the fields of environmental science, archaeology and anthropology has been critical to the success of this endeavour. Moreover, irregardless of its value as an authentic reimagining of the past, *North of Here* is an example of how creative practice can meaningfully and productively engage with other domains of knowledge and expertise.

3. North of Here

Towards a Deep Mythography of Britain

foreword

that this line appears new & complete & full formed & clear &
perfectly distinct is an illusion a lie a betrayal a trick of the
light that it has been cast down & broken & gathered &
mended is nearer the truth that it is an arbitrary juncture in
the process of endless reassembly is as good a definition as
any as good bad indifferent as any

begin

where do i begin

father

grandfather

ancestor

begin here

four & a half decades ago

the bones cast

a name given

yours

this body

this clot of muscles & blood

skin & nerves

but surely there were other forms

other faces of the dice

how far can you cast your mind back

as far as that hill ridge

or the next

begin with cold

a burning cold

tell me where the cold lives

north of here

the far back of hills

nival rivers

cryotic soils

& what is it

this cold

it comes & it goes

a huge white animal

an unceasing hunger

but there are other forms

other faces

whatever form it takes

it is always the same

do not cast yourself in its way

it will take you to your death

& to my beginning

that also

dark

& when i look around i see darkness
a great darkness reaching beyond sight

& in that darkness other voices
heard & not heard

come to me little one
are you cold
i will wrap you in these skins
come

& when i look down i see my fathers hands
& he his fathers hands
& so on & so on
down the long human chain

father
grandfather
ancestor

do not follow
whatever form it takes

come to me little one

help me

i cannot hold on

i am falling

come to me

& so on & so on

this clot of words letters glyphs

this

cast

to cast the mind back

six hundred generations

bones muscles blood

terminal pleistocene

ice veins

debris tails

boulder lobes

little one

dreamer

can you cast your mind back

to before you were

islanded

do you remember it

your death

& rebirth

your skin burning

& the form of a great bear

ursos arctos ursa major

its thirst screams echoing the hills

mother

grandmother

ancestor

come to me little one

i am cold

you have slept these long years these long long years

burning

what did you dream of

all those millennia under the ice

i dreamed a woman

a woman singing

gently singing cradle songs

& carrying a sliver of ice

a blade so sharp it could cleave the world

but she bathed me cleaned me

wrapped me in these skins

& i slept

i have slept these long years

am i awake

am i dreaming

& what did you see

what did you see as you looked into her eyes

i cannot tell

all i remember

is that voice

that melody

& all the while the stars overhead

wheeling turning

about the pole or post

that holds the sky aloft

& such a long time

that even the fixed star itself

ceded to another

& so on & so on

other forms always the same

each moving around

the great precessional gyre

waiting its turn

some twenty six millennia

to ascend

again

eight stars
 eight ages
 eight true directions

α umi alpha ursae minoris or polaris
 γ cep gamma cephei or errai
 α cep alpha cephei or alderamin
 α cygni alpha cygni or deneb
 δ cyg delta cygni
 α lyr alpha lyrae or vega
 τ her tau herculis
 α dra alpha draconis or thuban

again & again & again

little bear

dear one
 did you lick your paws in the stadial night
 curled in your hibernal nest deep beneath the ice
 as polaris gave way to errai to alderamin to deneb
 each shining bright & true above you
 watching over your sleep

I cannot tell

little bear

dear one

did you feel their lights rain down upon you

in the long cold winter

did deneb the luminous one

awaken you with its bluewhite radiance

& did you not feel it

a great blade about your neck

am i awake

am i dreaming

she has left

me

dreaming

her thirst screams

echoing the hills

& who is this

who is it that comes from the south

to wash in my nival rivers

the blood from their hands

dream

how do i begin

mother

grandmother

ancestor

teach me how to see

begin with dream

with what comes to you in the dark

nothing

but this clot of images sounds senses

none senses

but was there language there

something spoken

did i hear it right

wake up

it seemed to say with words made of silence

wake up

& the night & the day will bleed

am

i

awake

a blade so sharp it could cleave the world

am

i

dreaming

last winter whilst on medication for chronic pain i began to have
visions in the darkness at the edge of sleep
a kind of phosphorescence hovering in the room above me
muted at first but unfurling growing in detail
alive

effects on the brain & central nervous system

tiredness headache weakness confusion disturbed
concentration disorientation delusions hallucinations elevated
mood & hyperactivity excitement anxiety restlessness
drowsiness dream & sleep disturbances numbness pins &
needles loss of coordination uncontrolled shaking abnormal
muscle movements slurred speech coma & fits

& the more i looked the more real they became
stark visions of limbs faces eyes impossible anatomies
suspended for minutes at a time in the silent darkness

& at first i was scared heart racing chest aching but as the
dark of winter deepened i began to accept them & welcome
them
like family

delusions

hallucinations

family

dream & sleep disturbances

family

what did you dream of
all those millennia
under the ice

all the men of my family gathered at the edge of the sea waiting & i
am standing behind the others higher up & set apart
& i see them four of them great bodies risen from the lowest
stratum of ocean
& my father with the great scar at his back stepping forward
into the waters
& the nearest of the four rising & wrapping its many arms
around him
taking him into its embrace
& all the while deneb raining down its bluewhite light upon
us

& all the men of my family
at the edge of sleep
putting down their masks
their arms around each other

& no roads no paths to follow no pilgrimage routes no drove ways
tracks or passes nothing but the scour of retreating ice
nothing but gougemarks new riverbeds the edges of
floodwaters moraines screes eskers drumlins

& the ancestral world forgotten even unto itself & the new &
alien & unknown

& planes of rupture uncontrolled shaking the slow restlessness of
soil the slurred speech of moss lichen artemisia
& eventually scrub willow birch even pine
eventually the green fulness of life

& a figure in those trees wearing strange skins glimpsed through
the branches
looking looking

this clot of skin & nerves
rhizomes hyphae

& in that thin copse of trees the nests of birds long fledged long
vanished
& were they ever here i ask
looking at the empty sky
is it even possible i ask
that thing called flight

wheeling turning

& in that thin copse of trees a handful of deer
a handful of deer & the curve of the earth & the light low
shimmering dusk
& they scatter the deer but one holds its ground looks at me
stares me down
& it is a deer & not a deer something other we both know it
but i can say no more
& i am already running
running down the light low shimmering dusk

why am i always running
always running
even in dream
am i not yet ready
am i still afraid

mother i am still afraid

but it comes again nonetheless
from a low bank of hills its pelt greywhite mottled with
darker colour shifting as if in mist
& its mask luminous impenetrable

but too quickly it is gone & i am left in unknowing

& yet for that moment when we held each others gaze
yes in that dark unfathomable instant
we both shared the same plume of blood

am i awake

am i bleeding

& of all those people

five hundred generations ago
who answered the call of the retreating ice
north
to a land beyond the limits of the known
why have so few been found

what untold lineages are there in the karst
in the suffocating embrace of peat
in caves as yet undiscovered

what did they think

could their minds have held a land in the memory during
those thousands of years of absence when it was lost to ice

the passing of water from hand to hand
down the long human chain

it is unthinkable surely

five hundred generations

but was there language there
something spoken
did i hear it right

remember this it said
there is nothing primeval nothing primordial nothing original
nothing first there is only now it said the circuitry of life ever
repeating & the you of then is just like the you of now & the
you of then is looking front & back side to side up & down &
just like you with a fist of narrow answers

to look back at a past that itself looks back
to look back at the past that looks back at the past that looks
back

& the circuitry of life ever repeating

& their faces are turned away & they are looking towards the
horizon & to the hills & out to sea

& how to face the horizon when the horizon is everywhere &
all directions
& all directions simultaneous

& how to know their faces when i see them & when i see
them they are wearing masks

& the look of me looking at you & the look of you looking at me to
& fro to & fro
endless endless

& what if the figure you saw in the trees wearing strange skins
glimpsed through the branches what if it was me all along
looking for you across the great gulf of time

& the horror that is our knowledge of what has already passed &
what has already passed an unendurable suffering

& the horror that is our knowledge of what is to come & what
is to come an insurmountable trial

& when i look down i see my fathers hands & he his fathers hands
& so on & so on down the long human chain

help me
i cannot

& in the fading dusk something made me look made me look
back up the darkening road & on the horizon an eye opening
a great scar in the gathering clouds & as i stood it turned the
colour of fire & the moon emerged & rose waxing gibbous
only a day from full & my eyes straining & my heart
straining to hold that luminous mask aloft & when it was
fully clear of the earth it seemed to fall then rise falling rising
pulsing rapidly & this flickering this squirming this atomic
dance seemed to speak to be a form of language

let go it said
we are both made of fire

bones muscles blood
& the ice so cold it burned

but what did they think
unthink think
unthink

heart racing chest aching

& there in the dark beyond dark
it comes it comes again

an eye opening closing
a form of language
flickering

think of an other way it said
think of this for example
of the possibility of sacredness in all things
the shimmer of life itself it said
the firedance of atoms

burning flickering

& if you follow this way remember this it said
that animal has its own life & plant has its own life & stone
has its own life & hill has its own life & cloud has its own
life & river has its own life & path has its own life & star has
its own life & above has its own life & below has its own life

& these lives are nothing if not inextricable
& these lives are nothing if not inseparable
& in that very affinity these lives are nothing less than equal
& in that very affinity these lives are nothing more than equal
& these lives are aspects of each other therefore
& these lives are part of the same whole therefore
& life is nothing less & nothing more than singular therefore

& life is everywhere therefore
& nowhere is there that is not life therefore
& the world alive & thinking & feeling
& the world is consciousness experiencing itself endlessly &
as if for the first time
& the world is the self reflecting self
the self reflecting
self

eyes straining heart straining

& in this way words too are their own selves it said
known unto themselves & hermetic
& alive not lying on the page & dead on the mortuary slab for
you to make your incision
& in each encounter they sing resonant echoing in your skull
long after their reading & were singing long before you came
& will sing long after you leave

if only you would listen
& hear your own self sung into being

yes i said
alive
i have heard their lulling drone
felt them gather me like pollen

but who have you been running from it said
what has been hunting you
all the long years of your life

i cannot remember

you do not want to know it said
you do not want to know
what you have forgotten

yes i said
yes yes

then follow
it said

& so we climb up through the roots of the hill & up its winding
stairs & at times so steep we are upside down but gravity has
no power here at the innards of the earth
& there are days when the only sounds are the footsteps of
my guide & always ahead of me & out of sight
& then the stairs vanish & all of a sudden & we are at a
narrow chamber in the roof of the hill & so very high & it is
sloping steeply down to a large fissure through which the
wind is blowing
& i edge towards it no turning back nothing to be done & the
ground like grease & i look down through that chasm in the
rock & i see we are at the apex of a vast dome & the earth
within the hill a sickening distance & rivers & lakes &
marshes below so small so far away

& climb down inside it says
climb down inside
this is how we fly

& i woke to find my body strange unto myself
the limbs not quite fitting together as they had before the
joints extendable beyond their usual range & now i could fold
my hand into the smallest point & fit my carcass into the
narrowest crevice & something in my face had changed the
eyes perhaps more sunken back into the skull the teeth more
jutting & across my shoulders a great scar the skin charcoal
black & i was burning & have never stopped burning

& no images no sensations in the memory but something
carried in the cells the knowledge of great violence yes my
own utter destruction
a disarticulation & rearticulation
& a blade so sharp it could cleave the world

& i saw myself & was myself & i saw myself & was myself
& i saw myself & was myself & i saw myself & was myself

the self reflecting self

wake

tiredness headache weakness confusion

in the early not quite morning
before the light bleaches all memory
i go again looking for them
those warm bodies of the unconscious

but the cave mouth is deserted
the hearth already cold
& a wind is moving wildly through what they have left
a scavenger like me

i cannot hope to truly know them then
cannot see their faces hear their language
but perhaps i can infer something of their lives
reconstructed in this scatter of discarded stone
yes find in the shape of absence
the thing itself

other forms other faces

they are not lost to me entirely then
& as i leave the cave the wind cuts its melody from the fluted
rocks
there are other shatter marks more elusive than flint it seems
to say
& there scratched in ochre & low to the ground i see a figure
wearing the mask of a deer
looking back at me
with blazing eyes

cast your mind back

the self reflecting self

& as day slowly dawns at my window a visitant circling rousing its

feathers

a plume of language if only i knew it

& i kneel close a foot or less between us between my slack

body & this taut wildness this wildness like a torrent

& it circles closer & i am afraid i am not afraid i gently raise

my hand & flatten it palm outwards on the glass

& it moves away at first

flight instinct

genetic memory

but then it circles back comes close starts to pick gently at the

seams between my fingers

unpicking reality

& a deep wave of sadness overwhelms me

& a deep wave of hope

am i awake

uncontrolled shaking

am i dreaming

abnormal muscle movements

why have you come visitant

what is it that you must say

you have slept these long years these long long years

anxiety

restlessness

& i walk far & without direction

as if to shake off a sleep that has lasted much too long

at some point i notice a small brown bird

it seems to wait until i draw near & then flies a little further

again & again a circuit of meaning

& the message i infer parcelled in this knot of form &

movement is

follow

but am i wrong to look for signs symbols portents in the

flights of birds the postures of animals

do i not deny them their selfhood their autonomy

& yet in the end is not my satellite self drawn by their very

gravity

their bright & burning spheres

& i can do nothing but

follow

do not follow

whatever form it takes

later

at some point between night & day i walk again
sirius is ascending in the south east
bright ascending
a humped line through betelgeuse to capella
crooked line
the great bear ursa major rising to the north
bright rising
& vega the luminous the beautiful one is bright through the
haze to the north west
bright through

the world has discarded its mask of light
its day disguise

i have put down my mask i am alone unburdened
i see more fully the world thicker fuller more ripe in its true
dark form
this aching realm of darkness is alive in its silence alive in its
sounds
alive

a fox barks from across the fields
calls to me from across the fields of mist
i too have put down my mask

i want to answer that call
to answer it in this my true form
but i am afraid
this my truth
afraid

later the return of day & a spasm of blue to the north east
pale blue

through the mist the earth & its true station is revealed
we are moving towards an abyss of light
a pale emptiness the ground underfoot a promontory leading
into that pale light
a nothingness
pale

the fox calls to me from the failing black
the fading black

says there is a way to reside within this ache of darkness
beneath the earth
calls me
a way
but i have put on my mask
away

why am i always turning away
why am i still afraid

numbness

disorientation

it

& no turning back nothing to be done

can you not feel it it said

pointing to the sky

can you not feel it moving through you

it is spilling within you

pushing against your blood

& you are human & you are animal & you are plant & you
are stone & you are hill & you are cloud & you are river &
you are path & you are star & you are above & you are below

& the boundedness of your body is a lie

your bounded mind a lie

your identity a lie

& let us not make distinctions when we talk of identity

when we talk of itness

when we talk of it

& when you use the sacred word it

let it mean the shimmer of life in all things

animate or inanimate

beyond the meagre confines of masculinity or femininity

of him her he she

& your i as you see it is but a part of it

& any other term is but a division of it

is but an anagram of it

a reassembly

a reflection

an echo

of it

yes i said

yes

yes

& remember this it said

the boundlessness of the world means that you are never
alone

there are always presences

always inherences

things beyond sight

& each of your actions or inactions is storied in the world

& your being is the assembly of your doing & not doing &

your thinking & not thinking & nothing more than this

your life a series of encounters with the visible & invisible

& on the road before sunrise i found a hare newly dead but not

quite gone its corpse still warm its blood pooled around a
great scar at its back

& though dead it seemed to be holding on

but for what i could not say

& there in a thin copse of trees nearby i sensed a figure

a figure sensed through the branches

looking looking

& i picked up the body & i laid it in the heather

thinking of the long low embrace of soil

the many hands of grasses

& as i stood there i felt its lifelihood fade
& when i looked up the figure was gone
away through the branches & not looking back
& the sun just coming up
just passing over the horizon

before

& what was there before the flood i said
ice it said

& before the archipelago i said
the dogger umbilicus it said

& before the wildwood
the plain & the age of grasses

& before albion
europa

& what was there before metallurgy i said
the science of flint it said

& before patriarchy i said
union it said

& before husbandry
reciprocity & the hunt

& before standing stones
the axis mundi

& before chambered tombs
the hollow beneath the earth

& what was there before father sun i said
the fixed star & its bluewhite radiance it said

& before mother earth i said
the slow restlessness of soil it said

& before polytheism
the plant & animal & mineral other

& before monotheism
the gaze of a deer

& before god & the devil
nival rivers

& what was there before worship i said
respect it said

& before reverence i said
respect it said

& before sacrifice
respect

sorrow

& life is everywhere & nowhere is there that is not life

but how to make my way through the world i said
when each step impinges upon an other
when each action displaces or absorbs an other
when everything must eat & be eaten

& how to hold that knowledge in the mind & not be
paralysed by horror fear anxiety

did i take from you unnecessarily
did i not give of myself when it was my time

yes it said
horror but also joy
horror & joy commingled
everything commingling
endlessly dissolving & resolving
moving to & fro to & fro
everything contingent on one another
touching one another
piercing one another

i cannot hold on

let go it said
& you will see that you are held

i cannot
i am afraid
i am still afraid

& so turn away it said

& forget & find solace in that forgetting

& rather than bleed afresh each day grow that skin which you
think contains you separates you identifies you

& that very forgetting will allow you to move through the
world without feeling

but i do not want this i said

i do not want this numbness

then consider this it said

there are ways other than forgetting

& the simplest of these is sorrow

& in its expression you are returned to the world

& the world is returned to you

& the corollary of this sorrow is gratitude

this is a world of sorrow i said

yes it said

yes

yes

stranger

am i still who i think i am

you who know me would say so

but you have not seen what i have seen

& so i must seek out an other

& i walk far & without direction

as if to shake off a fear that has lasted much too long

& there ahead of me a figure

a figure on all fours standing waiting

stranger

may i come to you

as i am wearing a kindred skin

a skin given to me by my mother

& the one who gave it to her

is returned to the soil

is returned to the waters

as i will return to the soil

as i will return to the waters

& i wear it in deference & in sorrow

& i wear it like life

so that i might come to you

so that you might come to me

stranger

show your face to me your true face

show yourself as i show myself

look i have put down my mask

& i will put down these points if you put down those points
the time is not right for killing

show yourself therefore stranger
as i you so you me

& we shall be known to each other

& you put down your points
& you put down your mask
& we stand together prone

& at first i am scared heart racing chest aching

& the look of me looking at you
& the look of you looking at me
to & fro to & fro

& who do you see when you look at me
& what do you see when you look at me

we are alike you & i it says
we are alike

& you feel it just as i do
in the spaces between your joints

hunted

yes

this slack body
& a river moving through me
its edges beyond reach
always beyond reach

you have opened your body & you have opened your self so that
others may be spared
but you will suffer because of this

you will suffer as we suffer

i am burning & have never stopped burning

this is a path of suffering
& so now we are known you & i
now we are known to each other

joined by this suffering

& so let us go our separate ways on this day
on this day let us go

but on another day
one of us will die

& i am already running
running down the light low shimmering dusk

land

& deneb gives way to delta cygni to vega

& those people who returned five hundred generations ago
to this north born peninsula
how did they greet a land made new
still writhing amniotic

when life is the endless to & fro of knowing
how did they make their way across an unknown terrain

& what good would i be
a man of four & a half decades
a man with youth behind him
with too much fear to carry & senses blunted by the years
a weight to further slow their movement
a useless burden to be shed

& no roads no paths to follow no pilgrimage routes no drove ways
tracks or passes

nothing but the hoof prints of the animal other

& the living language of the soil

i am the deers tail
i am the elks tail
i am the reindeers tail
i am the tarpans tail

other forms other faces
always the same

& i follow them wherever they are headed
 & i follow them even until death

& the world alive & thinking & feeling

great northern plain
 as you have made their way
 so make mine

& not one but many
 each the same
 each different
 no self but in the other
 no other except the self

hill valley hollow
 as they must consume the blood & fat of your body
 so i must consume them

& the fixed star above us the same & the great bear rising &
falling & the dark skys river always flowing & the pleiades
above us the same

& when i am done i will return their bones to you so that you
may in turn consume them & return them to the world
complete & full formed through a hole of your making

muscles & blood
 skin & nerves

river pool bog

i know you can make the tarpan fall
can mire the deer & elk
can drown the reindeer in its crossing

but then you must wait for some scavenger or the slow
ravages of time to divest the bones of their fleshy casings
whereas i can return them to you before they are cold

i am the bears tooth
i am the felids tooth
i am the hawks tooth
i am the wolfs tooth

as you have made their way
so make mine

& so each movement north a conversation each step a negotiation
an uncovering of ancestral ties long forgotten

yes it said

speech gesture dream vision
a giving & receiving
a to & fro

but remember this it said
there is nothing primeval nothing primordial

there was no great journey
no cardinal encounter with the inchoate

nothing but the slow restlessness of soil
the slurred speech of moss lichen artemisia

the north rewritten in greens & browns
& storied by warm bodies
a line at a time
a life at a time

& a hundred thousand lives & a hundred thousand deaths
 & the screams of women as they birthed the human world
anew over & over

& their blood & the emmenagogue earth

& their birth screams echoing the hills
 & the fires doused

& who is this
 who is it that comes from the south
 to wash in my nival rivers
 the blood from their hands

teacher

& yet for that moment when we held each others gaze

& those people

five hundred generations ago
who left the refuges of the south
& followed the dwindling herds northwards

was there an other among you

was there one of your group who was not of your own
one who walks on all fours & with teeth for a name

& did such a one teach you to be with animals
to be with yourselves

& were you wilded by its company
made new
again & again
by the look of it
looking at you

the self reflecting

self

cave

& how to know their faces when i see them
& when i see them they are wearing masks

how far can you cast your mind back

to a cave south of here & the single shattered rib bone of an
 animal that did not return to the north when the ice retreated
 & to a figure scratched thereon
 on the lower quarter of bone
 a figure of vaguely human shape
 no more than five centimetres in height
 its penis erect & its face pointed

its face pointed as if wearing a mask
 its face pointed like that of a bear

& this the only carved figure of vaguely human shape found
 as yet on the entire peninsula
 found as yet in a form that can be held in the hand

a bone carried northwards from the great steppes
 a bone scratched with a shape that is both human & not
 human
 a relic of a time before
 the journey north

& to think that those who are relict to us had their own relics
 to look back at a past that itself looks back

anthropomorph
 therianthrope
 dancing between the shape of one thing & the shape of
 another

will you speak
 what is it that you must say

who do you see when you look at me
what do you see when you look at me

dancer

yes

yes

& yes will you speak
will you say something
of the past

for instance
which of your lines came first
which cut which incision
that on its own begged another & another
until they made a face a body a figure a world
a story of creation

& how do those lines connect & pierce one another
so that they make a face a body a figure a world
a story of creation

& do they know of each other
accept each other
welcome each other

& do they know that they make a face a body a figure a world
& acknowledge thereby their place in the story of life

a story of creation

that is ongoing in each & every moment
endless endless

or is it simply enough to acknowledge
proximity & union

that our lines connect & pierce one another
in a great picture that we cannot see

& so these marks i leave here
legible now but for how long

& the words they make
are they my own
did i write them

for i have felt them gather me like pollen
or collect on my surfaces like dew
move through me like mist or wildfire

& so is something else speaking us
writing us
as it passes among us
are we landforms that have mistaken weather for thought
for selfhood

& these words endlessly assembled disassembled
reassembled

& these bodies endlessly assembled disassembled
reassembled

& the slow restlessness of soil

story

there is a one who was before us

though not the first

there is a one who was before us

though not one of us

it is the one whose sacred body was divided

the one whose tears became the oceans

the one whose bones became the mountains

the one whose muscles became the soil

the one whose skin became the tundra

the one whose hairs became the grasses

the one whose veins became the rivers

the one whose hands became the creatures of the earth

the one whose tail became the creatures of the sky

the one whose feet became the creatures of the sea

& this is the one who is your father

the one who is truly your ancestor

the one whose true name is tabu

& the upright spear that pierces its skull

& although not the first

& who threw it no one knows

that spear through its skull is the pole or post that holds the

sky aloft that keeps the sky's tent from falling

though not the first & only just for now

& so sleep little one sleep
though you are dead & your body transformed beyond
reckoning
a disarticulation & rearticulation

& so sleep little one sleep
so that we might live still

am i awake
am i dreaming

she has left
me
dreaming

& each year we will find a stranger to mark in your memory

one who sleeps in the winter
one abandoned by its mother

& we will retell the story of your transformation on its body
& give it the life after life after life after life

& dismember & remember

this clot of stories fables myths
this

flight

mother

grandmother

ancestor

you who have travelled beyond the limits of the known

you who have flown with the animal others

among the stars above the earth

among the stars beneath the earth

help me

begin with dream

with the world within the world

with the world behind the world

with the world beyond the world

everything begins there

will you come with me

will you come with me

i will find it & i will send it to you

but remember this

our human form is but a covering

is but a borrowing

our shapes are not our own

& we ride in her song so far so very far that the stars themselves
begin to shift
& deneb gives way to delta cygni to vega
& we fly to the very fixed star itself & i see a star no more
but the opening of a cave & a vast tundra laid out beyond & a
great wind is blowing & a burning cold in the bones

wait here she says
wait here
& she is gone

& i lie in the mouth of the cave for what seems like millennia
& i lie in the mouth of the cave until the time is right
& it comes to me at last & it comes to me at last
& it is a woman & not a woman something other we both
know it but i can say no more
& her skin soft & warm beneath furs & the touch of it & the
touch of it
& she wraps her arms around me
taking me into her embrace
moving me to & fro
& i want to yield to her
& i want to yield

& at the last moment she puts down her mask

& i see its antlers
& i see its jutting teeth

& i hear these words in the air between us
i will be quickness itself my dear one
i will be quickness itself

& it is suddenly dark all around us

& i try to turn away in fear but i am held & i cannot move

& our eyes & our eyes & our eyes & our eyes

& i try to scream but i cannot

& i feel the edge of a blade

& i feel its point

piercing penetrating rupturing my skin

mother

grandmother

ancestor

when i return you are standing over me

singing shaking

the whole tent shaking

& when i look down i see blood in my hands

hunt

what are the things that matter when movement is life & stillness is
what comes after
when those who carry nothing but their flesh are ahead of us
& we who follow must pretend to the same condition
when thought itself has weight & must be shed at the banks
of every river
these words i leave here to make way for their silence
these words i leave here to read their marks in the soil

help me
mother
grandmother
ancestor

you who have ascended the dark above the earth
you who have descended the dark below the earth
what do you see

i see it do you not see it
it has hunted us in our dreams
it has haunted us in our dreams
& it has maimed us killed us time over time

but it returned us to life & we were made new & stronger &
when we awoke the gift of death not looked for & the gift of
life not looked for
was ours

help me

father

grandfather

ancestor

why must i show myself at the last

why must i put down my mask

there are other ways other beliefs

but ours is the way of knowing my dear one

ours the way of knowing

& the mask may help you may bring you close

but in the last moment you must show yourself

you must show the other that you have met before

& then ask

even killing is a negotiation

each movement a conversation

a giving & receiving

a to & fro

& as the great northern plain is open

so must you be

this is our way

help me

mother

grandmother

ancestor

you who have ascended the dark above the earth

you who have descended the dark below the earth

help me see

is it the right time

help me see

is it the right time

look into its eyes & ask my little one

& you will be told if it is the right time

father

grandfather

ancestor

i will hunt it in the world beyond the world & you will hunt it

in the world of flesh & together we will make it & together

we will make it right

so let us go our separate ways

& you burn the bones saved for this purpose

for the task of augury for the premonitory act

& you cast them on the ground & you read the marks

appearing there & they point to the west & to the lowlands

& you set off through the hills

& i must engorge myself & empty myself
& i must discover myself & discard myself
assemble disassemble assemble disassemble

& i am standing in the river
the great river the dark river
& its edges are within me
& its edges are beyond reach

& i can feel my stomach acid rising
& a sweat is covering my skin

& i put on the mask saved for this purpose
& the act of likening is upon me
& the act of likening is here

& i begin my song & i begin my song
& i sing & i sing & i sing & i sing

i am human i am animal i am plant i am stone i am hill i am
cloud i am river i am path i am star i am above i am below

i am the land & the ice that formed it
i am the great bear & the little bear
i am the mother & the father

ask my dear little one just ask

i am running to you as a stream is running downhill
our meeting is inevitable
wait therefore
my mind is open & restful

i am falling to you as a leaf is falling to earth
our meeting is inevitable
wait therefore
my mind is open & restful

i am sinking to you as a stone is sinking in water
our meeting is inevitable
wait therefore
my mind is open & restful

i am coming to you to give you your death
& this death is not your ending
this death is your beginning
wait therefore
let your mind be open & restful

i the human i the animal i the plant i the stone
i the blade found at the heart of the flint
i the fire of its transformation
i the strike that shaped it made it
i the shattered sound of its becoming
i the sinew that bound it to the shaft

a blade so sharp it could cleave the world

i the slope that stands between us
i the slope that hides us from each other
i the slope that offers this vantage

i the plain that joins us together
i the plain that narrows our distance
i the plain that renders this moment

& i have tracked you for what seems like millennia
& i have tracked you until the time is right
& it comes to this & it comes to this

anxiety restlessness

& there ahead a thin copse of willow alder birch & the reeds &
rushes of marshes behind & the ground underfoot so soft so
wet so shifting

& in that thin copse of trees a handful of deer
a handful of deer & the curve of the earth & the light low
shimmering dusk

& they scatter the deer but one holds its ground looks at me
stares me down
& it is a deer & not a deer something other we both know it
but i can say no more

i see you
it says with words made of silence
i see you do you not see me

& i see it & i see it wears my skin & i see it wears my blood & its
eyes are the eyes of my father & its eyes are the eyes of my
mother & my hands are shaking & my legs are shaking & my
mind is shaking

& i put down my mask
& i show myself
& i hear these words in my mouth as if from a stranger
i will be quickness itself my dear one
i will be quickness itself

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the waters
& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the soil
so that you may come again & give yourself again
trust me you know it is so
so tell me
is it the right time
is it the right time

will you kill me it asks
will you kill me
will you kill yourself

& it turns to leave but my hand is raised in hunger & in desire & in
fear & too late the shaft leaves my grip too late the blade
finds its mark & i see a great scar at its back a bloody eye
opening looking back at me looking back

& it turns & bares its jutting teeth & screams
& it stumbles into the waters its legs buckling shaking & the
reeds & rushes wrapping their many arms around it
taking it into their embrace

& i fall to my knees & i fall & i fall i am fallen

& our blood & our lives & our blood & our lives & our blood
& our lives & our blood & our lives

the self reflecting
self

& in the world of flesh
in the world of echoes
my father & the deer
the deer & my father
& their meeting inevitable
this moment inevitable

& no way to tell him
no way to let him know
that the time was not right
that the time is not right

& the deer looking back at him the deer looking back with
vacant eyes & he slides the blade between its ribs
& gives it the gift of death not looked for
the gift of life

& it screams & it screams & it screams & it screams

echo

& many petitions of sorrow made ever after
 & many reparations sought
 & many offerings made unto nival rivers
 & many rituals called into being
 & so on & so on
the passing of blood from hand to hand
down the long human chain

& that scream echoing the far back of hills
that scream echoing & not diminishing but resounding &
resonating & amplifying down the years
a curse sung across the great gulf of time

will you kill me it asked
 will you kill me
 will you kill yourself

& when i look back at those events in oneiric memory
 i watch the spear leave my hand & head towards the deer
 & the spear heading towards it heading towards it heading
 towards it heading towards it
 & the spear heading towards me heading towards me heading
 towards me heading towards me
 & i fall to my knees & i fall

planes of rupture

uncontrolled shaking

erectus

afarensis

ancestor

is the deers cry but an echo of our own
a blood memory surfacing with each wound inflicted
for so many deaths have you received not looked for
so many sharp & narrow lives

but at what point in our lineage did we return transformed
when did the night & the day bleed together
from which wound did the killer in us emerge

& is this the true curse
this the darkness from which we cannot run
that we wear the mask of both the hunted & the hunter
that we have seen the life lived on both sides

each life the same

each life different

i am the life that lives on life

i am the destroyer

but something carried in the cells the knowledge of great
violence yes my own utter destruction

i am the destroyed

& in that moment of death
is there surrender
is there acceptance
are we reconciled at the last

for i have suffered & give only that which was given to me

& there at the blade edge of life i see a figure
a figure skinned in ochre & wearing the mask of a deer
looking back at me
with blazing eyes

burning flickering

was there language there
something spoken
did i hear it right

remember this it said

in the moment of your death
the knowing will come to you at last

the knowing that you have died innumerable times
& given death innumerable times
& returned innumerable times

& the joy in knowing that there is no end
& the horror in knowing that there is no end

& the circuitry of life ever repeating

& all the people you have known it said
& all the people who have known you
each human animal plant stone
each hill cloud river word
echoing commingling

this clot of life
this clot of being

am i awake
am i dreaming

& the vast immeasurable dark above the earth
& the vast immeasurable dark beneath the earth

marks

these marks i leave here

legible now but for how long

& of all those people

five hundred generations ago

who answered the call of the retreating ice

north

to a land beyond the limits of the known

why have so few been found

what have they left us that we can interpret as language

but we have exhumed their bones from the familial earth

from the long low embrace of soil

& we think that we have wisdom

yet all i see is a darkness

a darkness reaching beyond sight

& there in the trees figures wearing strange skins glimpsed

through the branches

looking looking

& their knowing that we have died innumerable times

& given death innumerable times

& returned innumerable times

& the circuitry of life ever repeating

& they turn away from us
their forms

fading

help me
i cannot hold on
i am falling

hold on

& when i look down i see my fathers hands & he his fathers hands
& so on & so on down the long human chain

& our hands holding on to each other in that vast
immeasurable dark holding on to each other

& our hands holding on to each other
our hands holding on in that vast immeasurable dark holding
on

& that vast immeasurable dark holding on

again

& climb down inside
climb down inside

& we climbed through the air for what seemed like millennia & we
climbed through the air until the time was right & then my
guide took my hand & spoke to me & said

do you not hear them
listen they are coming

& inside the hill i remember it now yes inside the hill i
remember

i heard the clicking of innumerable hooves & the sounds of a
herd vast beyond telling & look my guide said to me look
you must open your eyes & i opened my eyes & what i saw
was a great gathering of people yes a herd of people who
looked just like me but i did not know them yes just like me
but strangers & they turned & looked & they turned & looked
& some looked with eyes of joy & some looked with eyes of
horror & some spoke with voices of kindness & some spoke
with voices of anger & i felt their many hands upon me & i
felt their many lives upon me

& from nowhere & all directions simultaneous a great wind
began to blow & somewhere up above it all a voice a
womans voice gently singing

& i turned to my guide in fear
& i turned to my guide & wept

mother
father
ancestor

yes this is where you begin it said
this where you begin
again

& yes
what mask
what covering
will you wear the next time
when you pass through here
through the hole in the earth i have made for you

& how will you greet the world
how greet the world anew
when you are made new
still writhing amniotic

as polaris gives way to errai to alderamin to deneb

afterword

so many erasures so many deletions so many effacings so many
extinctions so many wipings out so many annihilations so
many occlusions so many obscurations so many coverings so
many suffocations so many burials so many maskings so
many eclipses so many blottings so many overwritings so
many obfuscations so many shroudings so many secretings so
many hidings so many suppressions so many cover ups so
many hush jobs so many smoke screens so many hoaxes so
many decoys so many con games so many scams

3.1. Notes

[***grandfather***] In certain Indigenous world-views, such as those of the Ojibwa, the term *grandfather* is not only applied to humans, but also to ‘spiritual beings’ who are considered other-than-human persons (Hallowell, 1975: 144).

[***six hundred generations***] Here a generation is equated to 30 years. *North of Here* therefore begins 18,000 years ago, as the ice began to recede after the Last Glacial Maximum (§A1.) [321].

[***little one***] The land of Britain is mythologically conceived of as a little bear, in contradistinction to the great bear, its mother, or cold itself.

[***precessional gyre***] i.e. axial precession. The gradual shift in an astronomical body’s rotational axis. For the earth, this cycle takes approximately 25,772 years. The terrestrial effect of this is the appearance of a cycle of different ‘pole’ stars (§A1.19.) [397].

[***deneb***] As Britain began to emerge from the Last Glacial Maximum, c. 18,000 BP, Deneb would have been the pole star.

[***birds long fledged***] According to Joan Halifax, ‘fledgling’ shamans were metaphysically nurtured in nests high in the ‘World Tree’ (Halifax 1979: 17).

[***five hundred generations***] i.e. 15,000 years ago.

[***a disarticulation & rearticulation***] The dismemberment and reassembly of bodies, both human and animal, is a recurrent theme in circumpolar cultures. For its relevance in shamanic initiation, see Piers Vitebsky, ‘Shamanism’ (Vitebsky 2000: 60). For the significance of reassembly to reincarnation in the ritual deposition of animal remains, see Tim Ingold, ‘Hunting, sacrifice and domestication’ (Ingold 1986: 246–7).

[***dogger umbilicus***] Doggerland, a low region that connected Britain to continental

Europe. It was flooded c. 8,500 BP. For a chronological context, see Paul Preston, ‘The Mesolithic Period’ (Preston 2008: 24).

[*europa*] Referring to the greater European continent, rather than the Greek mythical figure.

[*the axis mundi*] The axis of the world. Here more strictly relating to the world pillar or pole, which in certain circumpolar world-views is thought to hold up the sky and keep it from falling. See Åke Hultkrantz, ‘A new look at the world pillar in Arctic and sub-Arctic religions’ (Hultkrantz 1996: 31–50).

[*mother earth*] Here specifically referencing the concept of a maternal goddess important to later agricultural peoples as responsible for the bounty of the earth, rather than the primordial earth mother depicted in some creation myths as joined in sexual union with ‘father heaven’. See E.J. Michael Witzel, *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies* (Witzel 2012: 128–131).

[*tarpan*] An ancient species of wild horse.

[*great northern plain*] An area combining the modern-day West Lancashire Coastal Plain and The Fylde.

[*walks on all fours*] ‘Based on substantial archaeological and genetic evidence, a Late Upper Paleolithic (ca. 16,000 BP) timing for dog domestication is generally accepted.’ (Perri 2016: 1).

[*a cave south of here*] Pin Hole Cave, Derbyshire. In 1928 A.L. Armstrong discovered the carving of ‘a masked human figure in the act of dancing a ceremonial dance’ on a fragment of woolly rhinoceros rib bone (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) (Armstrong 1929: 27–29).

[*an animal that did not return*] According to Jacobi *et. al.*, the woolly rhinoceros became extinct in Britain after c. 35,000 BP (Jacobi *et. al.* 2009). It seems most plausible to me that the item was brought to Creswell Crags as an already carved artefact, given that it would be unusual for a traveller to carry an unadorned bone hundreds of miles north from the greater European continent.

[*the one whose sacred body was divided*] ‘The carving up of the primordial giant may represent a very old stage of (Laurasian) mythology, going back to Stone Age hunter times.’ (Witzel 2012: 120). In this example, the giant is a bear.

[*ask*] For a discussion of consensual killing, see Tim Ingold, ‘Totemism, animism and the depiction of animals’ (Ingold 2011a: 121) (§A1.11.) [373].

[*it stumbles into the waters*] This encounter is modelled on the discovery of an ancient elk (*Alces alces*) at High Furlong, Poulton, Lancashire. See Hallam, *et al.*, ‘The Remains of a Late Glacial Elk Associated with Barbed Points from High Furlong, Near Blackpool, Lancashire’ (Hallam *et. al.* 1973: 100–128).

4. Landscape

In the following three chapters I will reflect on a number of distinct but interconnected themes that have emerged out of *North of Here*. I will commence by examining the concept of a living landscape and find surprising analogues for such ideas in the *systems paradigm* of soil ecology and the *vibrant materialist* theory of contemporary philosophical thought. I will then consider the particular aliveness of the land of *North of Here* in the context of the all-seeing world of the Koyukon, and reflect on notions of indigeneity when an environment is conceptualised in social terms. Subsequently, I will discuss the mythic dimension of the poem, and examine the idea of an embodied land in the context of world mythology. Specifically, I will evaluate the *dismemberment of the Primordial Giant* as a LUP creation myth, and reflect on possible alternatives. The discussion will conclude with a reflection on the shamanic landscapes of the poem, and its eschewal of geographical specificity. In this and the chapters that follow, I will reference the appropriate section of Appendix A when discussing material covered in depth by my preliminary research. Page numbers in [square brackets] are direct references to material within this thesis.

4.1. The Living Land

North of Here depicts a landscape emerging from the Last Glacial Maximum (hereafter LGM) (§A1.) [321] using the highly specific language of glaciology: ‘ice veins / debris tails / boulder lobes’ [48]. The choice of these three phrases, drawn from *Glacial Deposits in Great Britain and Ireland* by Ehlers *et. al.* (1991), is significant in the use of bodily imagery; a strategy not uncommon in the language of landscape description, even within the natural sciences. Consider, for example, *rock face*; *head land*; *body* of water, *foot* of a mountain, etc. The use of such figurative language in *North of Here* may

seem to retread an already over-familiar path, but its intent is to hold such metaphors to account; and to collapse them, thereby announcing a key theme of the text: *the land is living*. On its own, this is not a radical assertion. Even within the dispassionate, technical discourse of environmental science, the apparently inert substance that the layperson might refer to as *soil* is characterised in terms of ‘communities’ of microscopic ‘organisms’ that are ‘extremely complex’ (Phillipson 1971: xi). The use of the word *communities* in such a context – undoubtedly to convey the observance that various small- and micro-organisms tangibly interact – nevertheless has the effect of humanising and socialising other-than-human life. Here, the objective, rational-materialist approach of modern science is at odds with the inherently subjective proclivities of language itself. Scientific writing often strives to disentangle itself from the humanising orientations of commonplace idioms, but, as has just been shown, even the highly gnomic terminology of glaciology is not immune. The American poet Gary Snyder seizes on such entanglements in order to unambiguously assert their full implications:

Ecologists talk about the ecologies of oak communities, of pine communities.
They *are* communities.

(Snyder 1969: 108)

With regard to *soil*, delving a little deeper into ecological definitions, scientists clearly distinguish between *living* and *dead* (or inert) matter; both of which constitute soil. Or rather, communities of small- and micro-organisms are described as *living in* soil, which is analogous to human communities *living in* the built environment. Depending on emphasis, or questions of scale, soil can therefore be perceived of as inert, living, or an assembly of the living and the dead.

This indeterminacy is equally valid when thinking about *land*, which the *Oxford*

English Dictionary defines as ‘the solid portion of the earth’s surface, as opposed to sea, water’.¹² At this larger scale, I suggest that we no longer think of the microscopic constituents of soil, and assign to it the general status of being *inert*, along with inorganic elements such as stone and metal. In terms of how the *OED* defines it, *land* can be thought of as being chiefly comprised of these elements, soil, stone, and metal ores, and as such they constitute the inert, lumpen ‘neutral space’, critiqued by McFadyen (§A1.1.) [321], in which the action of agential beings takes place (McFadyen 2006: 121). This apparently simple, dichotomous relationship between the static, *dead* land and the *living* animals who move through it is bridged by the role of plants, who are both *of* the earth, *in* the earth, and *on* it. We generally perceive plants as possessing the attributes of both the inert and living: largely fixed, insensitive, and with no individuated agency, and yet also undeniably alive and capable of extremely slow, limited movements and certain prescribed intentionalities or reactive abilities. Due to their apparent fixity, we often perceive plants as part of the landscape; indeed, we conflate them with *the environment*, despite the fact that an environment is ‘the physical surroundings or conditions in which a person or other organism lives’.¹³ Plants have their own environments, even as they are themselves environments to others. There is a kind of unacknowledged reciprocity built into such categorisations.

Of course, the question of movement and stasis is ultimately one of scale. On a truly microscopic level, all matter is composed of atoms whose sub-atomic particles are in a state of constant flux, and yet we rarely think about the *individual* life of these fleeting bodies:

the shimmer of life itself it said

the firedance of atoms

[62]

¹² <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/105432>. Accessed 15/03/2020.

¹³ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63089>. Accessed 15/03/2020.

As with the unseen organisms of soil, they are readily contextualised as part of something larger and more cohesive. The vibration of life at the atomic level doesn't register with us because our bodies are so much larger, and this equally obtains for bodies that are so much larger than our own. In our daily lives – earthquakes notwithstanding – we generally fail to perceive the regular motions of landforms, of tectonic plates, of the planetary orbit of the earth itself, and in turn our movements across the land over days, months and years is nothing in the context of geological epochs – less than a quantum perturbation. Indeed, I'm reminded here of a passage from my own book, *Beyond the Fell Wall*:

Imagine your span of years, in relation to that of the wall, as like that of a bee to your own. Think of this as you watch a train of bees leave its cavernous depths, immersed in their own unknowable, deep existence.

(Skelton 2015: 64)

Questions of scale, and of orders of being, are therefore relevant when thinking about the living status of land; seeming to cut across intuited definitions of *liveness* that are contingent on our quotidian perceptions of motion (and therefore agency). The microscope and telescope have done much to destabilise such easy categorisations; granting us a kind of second sight that allows us to see beyond, or through, apparent inertia, revealing a vibrant interior or exterior.

This knowledge of the animacy of *everything*, even the apparently inanimate, is central to *North of Here*:

& when you use the sacred word it
let it mean the shimmer of life in all things
animate or inanimate

‘Shimmer’ here recalls the ‘pulsing ... flickering ... squirming’ motion of the moon [61], and its assertion that ‘we are both made of fire’ [61]. In turn this ‘fire’ hermetically alludes to the *heat* that travels up the shaman’s spinal column during trance; corresponding to their movement up the shamanic tree as they pass between worlds (Witzel 2012: 387). Needless to say, trance can be attained by dancing (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988: 202, Witzel 2012: 386), and the poem itself can therefore be seen to be engaged in a ‘firedance’ [62] in order to produce its shamanic vision.

Returning momentarily to soil once more, ecological science views the natural world through the paradigm of *systems*, and so soil is quantitatively assessed for its ‘total metabolism’ and ‘energy flow’ (Macfadyen 1971: 1). These terms treat the living and inert component matter as part of an inextricably enmeshed whole; the living feed on the dead and in turn become the dead for other living things to feed upon. Everything is contingent and co-dependent. Contemporary philosophical thought has drawn upon such ecological observations in developing theories of *vibrant materiality* (Bennett 2010: 94). Bennett, for example, draws on research into vegetable mould by Darwin, the latter who observed how earthworms transform decaying organic matter into material that enables seedlings to grow, which in turn ‘makes an earth hospitable to humans’ (2010: 95). Thus, for Bennett, ‘worms participate in heterogeneous assemblages in which agency has no single locus, no mastermind, but is distributed across a swarm of various and variegated vibrant materialities’ (2010: 96). Bennett argues that ‘multiple kinds of actants’ in possession of varying degrees of autonomy – of life and inertia – converge to create systems that precipitate ‘not-fully-predictable encounters’ (2010: 97). Such ideas do much to destabilise the enduring Platonic categorical distinctions between *animal*, *vegetable* and *mineral* just discussed, and especially those hierarchical theistic systems of classification such as ‘The Great Chain of Being’ (Lovejoy 1936), which

stratify life from the lowest to the highest. Instead, vibrant materialism seeks to show how matter has the ability to participate in larger systems whose outcomes have agency, and the appearance of self-governing intentionality.

These inherently *social* contemporary theories – derived as they are from scientific observation – dovetail surprisingly with the ‘social universes’ of circumpolar Indigenous peoples (§A1.13.) [378]. They shed slant light on Ojibwa notions of animacy with respect to stones, for example (§A1.7.) [338], and also onto the ‘relational thinking’ of Eskimos as discussed by Hill (2011) (§A1.8.) [351]. Unlike the absolute Platonic categories of animal, vegetable and mineral, *personhood* is a potentiality that is acquired through social interaction. Individuals are thus drawn into personhood by participating in society, regardless of whether they are human or animal. In an analogous way the *lifelihood* of soil, stone or metal – of *land* – could be conceptualised not as a pre-determined quality, but instead as resulting from those inextricable interactions that are produced within earthly (eco-)systems.

But what does this lifelihood connote? Does it confer *being*, *sentience*, *consciousness*? In *North of Here*, it most certainly does: ‘& the world alive & thinking & feeling’ [63]. *The world* in question is not simply the *human-world*, but a conjoining of all things that are simultaneously distinct and yet irrevocably connected:

... animal has its own life & plant has its own life & stone
has its own life & hill has its own life & cloud has its own
life & river has its own life & path has its own life & star has
its own life & above has its own life & below has its own life

& these lives are nothing if not inextricable

& these lives are nothing if not inseparable

& in that very affinity these lives are nothing less than equal

& in that very affinity these lives are nothing more than equal

& these lives are aspects of each other therefore

& these lives are part of the same whole therefore

[63]

Here the meaning of the word *life* is atomised; broken down into its constituent elements, or ‘aspects’, before it is reassembled. The terminological problem of what ‘life’ extends to is therefore explicitly addressed. The delineation of examples (stone, hill, cloud, river) is emphatically *not* a hierarchical chain but a series of equivalences. In this context, the ensuing use of the word *world* refers to the inextricable whole. Taken on its own, the phrase ‘& the world alive & thinking & feeling’ might simply be resolved as the *human sphere* – as employed in such terms as *world* politics or *world* war – but this interpretation is made impossible by the preceding context. In this way, the text itself enacts the imbricated nature of lifehood that is under scrutiny. Meaning arises from the poem in the same way that agency arises from Bennett’s assemblages, or circumpolar social universes. It is a collaborative effort, and, in this instance at least, could be said to be counter-poetic; it seeks to reduce ambiguity by strictly defining the terms on which it operates. This involves a negation of the indeterminacy that poetic texts usually exploit in order to explore a multiplicity of meanings. Nevertheless, that act of negation is actually an *expansion* of the frame of reference of a particular word as it is commonly understood. Verbosity, normally the antithesis of poetry’s economy, thereby becomes poetic through its repetitive syntax. The lines’ rhythm and cadence become mantric, chant-like – paralleling the movements that facilitate shamanic trance.

4.2. *The Seeing Land*

But what are the implications that result from this definition of life? In my book, *The Look Away*, the narrator, after a series of encounters with other-than-human agencies, asks:

Can it be that the world of things is not dull, inert, unfeeling?

(Skelton 2018a: 76)

This concern – this fear – resurfaces in *North of Here*:

but how to make my way through the world i said

when each step impinges upon an other

when each action displaces or absorbs an other

when everything must eat & be eaten

[81]

This is the fear of a twenty-first-century narrator trying to come to terms with what is framed as a crucial Palaeolithic ontological tenet: the world is alive; there is no ‘neutral space’; there is nothing inert that does not feel and observe our presence, and our interactions with *it*. Like the Koyukon conception of reality described by Richard K. Nelson (§A1.9.) [362], this is ‘a world that watches’ (Nelson 1986: 14), and, also like that of the Koyukon, this is a world of intangible presences:

& remember this it said

the boundlessness of the world means that you are never

alone

there are always presences

always inherences

things beyond sight

& each of your actions or inactions is storied in the world &
 your being is the assembly of your doing & not doing & your
 thinking & not thinking & nothing more than this

your life a series of encounters with the visible & invisible

[74]

LUP peoples' encounters with the land are therefore characterised as exchanges between persons, and indeed 'each movement north' is described as 'a conversation', 'each step' is 'a negotiation [...] / a giving and receiving / a to & fro' [89]. These exchanges are partially petitions, but they are also reminders of reciprocal obligations (§A1.7.) [338]:

hill valley hollow

as they must consume the blood & fat of your body

so i must consume them

[...]

& when i am done i will return their bones to you so that you

may in turn consume them & return them to the world

complete & full formed through a hole of your making

[88]

Here the land is included with those that 'must eat & be eaten' [81], and, in turn, it has the obligation to regenerate the carcasses of the dead. These words occur when the hunter is moving through the landscape asking for safe passage:

great northern plain

as you have made their way

so make mine

[88]

The language here hovers somewhere between a request and a demand. Despite the apparent disparity in power (§A1.13.) [378] between a human and the ‘great northern plain’, there is a sense of expectancy; it is the expression of a mutually beneficial common bond. Nevertheless, its performance is necessary in the maintenance of this mutual accountability, and it reaffirms the inclusion of landscape – as an other-than-human person – within a system of social interactions. Crucially, this interaction itself is contextualised within the north-moving journey of hunter-gatherers returning to Britain from the larger European continent. To continue the bodily metaphor, this is a land just reborn from ice [48], ‘still writhing amniotic’ [87]; a pathless, alien world that is ‘forgotten even unto itself’ [56]. Nevertheless, it is still a (social-)world that is governed by pre-existing rules of conduct, and the *unknown* can become *known* through the performance of rehearsed forms of greeting [88].

4.3. *The Land in Memory*

This formulation required a considerable leap of imagining, as, to my knowledge, there are no circumpolar Indigenous groups who have – within their collective memories – performed a migration similar to those of the Late-glacial Euro-British peoples. The *Kk’adonts’idnee* (‘Distant Time’) stories of the Koyukon (§A1.9.) [362], or the sacred narratives of the Ojibwa (§A1.7.) [338], for example, describe peoples who are deeply embedded in, and intimately familiar with, their ‘native’ landscape over a period of centuries, if not millennia. They occupy a reasonably fixed – and known – landscape. It is peopled and mythologised. As such, there are therefore no resources for the creative writer to draw upon in conceptualising how ancient migrations to ‘new’ lands were conceived and thought about.

A key question within *North of Here* therefore revolves around the longevity of

place-memory:

could their minds have held a land in the memory during
those thousands of years of absence when it was lost to ice

[59]

Is this also a question of indigeneity, of belonging, of *home*? As with perceptions of inertia and animacy, I think issues of scale are paramount here. Oppenheimer asserts that LUP ‘pioneers were mounting intermittent or seasonal recolonizations’ of largely abandoned geographies (Oppenheimer 2007: 118), and furthermore that, as the Late-glacial climate ameliorated, ‘pioneer hunters chose to return to just those places they had taken refuge from’ (2007: 119). He qualifies his claim by citing a study by Martin Richards (2000) that analysed contemporary mitochondrial DNA in Europe and found that 51% of all extant female lines are derived from LUP migrations (2007: 122). But surely the many ‘thousands of years’ over which such migrations occurred stretches to breaking point the idea that there was a *conscious* return to previous homeland:

the passing of water from hand to hand
down the long human chain

it is unthinkable surely

[59]

In an earlier version of the text, I conceived of Late-glacial Britain as ‘a territory beyond the limits of the known’, but subsequently changed *territory* to *land*, because of the geo-political connotations of the former; notions of colonialism, nationhood and ownership. In my view, these concepts do not apply to highly mobile LUP hunter-gatherers who perceived landscape as living and sentient. This is not to discount tribal territoriality in hunter-gather cultures, but such issues are of an entirely different order than those of

contemporary nation states. Of course these nationalistic connotations are still latent in the word *land* – think *England*, *Ireland*, *Scotland* – but, to my mind at least, *land* is more neutral than *territory*. Referring to the *Oxford English Dictionary* again, the primary meaning of *land* is ‘the solid portion of the earth’s surface’, whereas *territory* is ‘the land or district lying round a city or town and under its jurisdiction’.¹⁴

These anxieties over landscape terminology serve to highlight how I have been careful to contextualise the LUP ‘recolonisation’ of Late-glacial ‘Britain’ in a way that is distinct from politically charged and ethically complex notions of indigeneity, nationhood, land-ownership and freedom of movement. This is not to avoid such discussions, but rather to assert that they do not apply in any significant way to such a distant period in pre-history. In doing so, I have tried to show, like Pettitt *et al.* (2012) (§A1.15.) [384], that the LUP culture in Late-glacial Britain is an extension of a broader European (Magdalenian) culture:

& what was there before the flood i said

ice it said

& before the archipelago i said

the dogger umbilicus it said

& before the wildwood

the plain & the age of grasses

& before albion

europa

[76]

¹⁴ <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/199601>. Accessed 15/03/20.

Here the body of Britain is still umbilically attached to its mainland mother, and the fabled island of Albion, as described by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136) and later mythologised by Blake in his *Vala, or the Four Zoas* (c. 1800), is a distant fable. This, then, is a different kind of landscape, and notions of indigeneity are not rooted or ‘islanded’ [48] – they are not the index of a demarcated area or homeland. Nor are they a consequence of ownership; of racial or cultural birthright or heritage. Instead, they are ‘ancestral ties’ to – as has already been demonstrated – an *other-than-human person*:

& this is the one who is your father
 the one who is truly your ancestor
 the one whose true name is tabu

[98]

This is a crucial distinction, as, without it, the idea of a *fatherland* might imply any number of pernicious, nationalistic connotations. But, by collapsing the bodily metaphor, and proposing that LUP peoples conceived of land as a living entity, the idea of an ancestral bond takes on another meaning. Compare this, for example, with Ojibwa views on personhood, in which a mythical hero, a celestial body, or even an aspect of the weather, can be considered an ancestor (§A1.7.) [338]. In the words of Hallowell, ‘I was told of a woman who claimed that [the] North Wind was the father of one of her children’ (Hallowell 1975: 157).

In answer to the question posed in the text, the ‘land beyond the limits of the known’ is not ‘held in the memory’ for countless millennia [59]. Rather, there are cycles of knowing and unknowing, remembering and forgetting, that evoke a sense of instability; an endless circling between these two states. Nothing is ever newly known but simply remembered; nothing is ever unknown but simply forgotten. The journey

north is therefore characterised as an act of ancestral remembering – not in the sense of recalling lost information, but in reaffirming social bonds. This may not be immediately apparent to the individual, as the land in which they find themselves may appear new, but over the course of those interactions, as social duties are performed over and over, a story develops and a sense of relation – of renewed kinship – emerges:

the north rewritten [...]

& storied by warm bodies

a line at a time

a life at a time

[90]

This kind of active *affective*, rather than static *substantive*, thinking (Witherspoon 1977: 88), is embodied in Indigenous values such as those of the Navajo. ‘True’ or ‘real’ kinship is not considered merely an index of ‘common substance’, but is the reflection of a bond between different persons who observe a behavioural code (1977: 88). In a social universe, familial bonds are not taken for granted, they are endlessly renewed and maintained.

4.4. The Mythic Land/Body

A key research concern when beginning *North of Here* was the possibility of reimagining the mythological and cosmogonic aspects of the LUP culture of Britain. In attempting to do so, I have allowed anthropological discussions to guide me, but have not sought further points of reference from Indigenous literatures themselves. My reason in doing so has been to facilitate the creative writing’s emergence from a direct engagement with what Hallowell terms *ethno-metaphysics*¹⁵ (Hallowell 1975: 143)

¹⁵ i.e. the ontological ideas of a culture expressed directly, rather than through specific narratives or myths.

(§A1.7.) [338], whilst leaving sufficient imaginative space to think freely, away from the risk of potential direct influence. To draw directly upon the specifics of North American Native mythology, narrative and legend, for example – with its heroes and tricksters, animals and spirits – might result in little more than pastiche. Moreover, these very narratives are part of a time-honoured oral tradition that constitutes a key aspect of cultural and spiritual identity; in many cases they are considered sacred. As such, their direct relevance – in their cultural specificity – to the geographically and temporally distant Late-glacial of Britain is moot. But even if this were not the case, there is an undeniable ethical line that I feel I cannot cross. Not only do I risk implying that Indigenous culture has not changed since the Palaeolithic (*sensu* Jordan 2006: 87) (§A1.6.) [335], I also risk the charge of appropriating and exploiting a culture that my own – white European – sought to extinguish, through missionary work and later persecution.

Those poets who do draw upon Native beliefs, generally do so with necessary tact and care. Gary Snyder, for instance, fully acknowledges his indebtedness to a ‘Mohawk prayer’ in his ‘Prayer for the Great Family’:

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day –
and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing, light-changing leaf
and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind
and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain
in our minds so be it.

(Snyder 1969: 24)

Here Snyder is redeploying a set of ontological beliefs, rather than co-opting sacred

mythic narrative. Moreover, the poem itself is contextualised within a collection that contains several essays, one of which, 'The Wilderness' makes a plea for 'a new definition of humanism and a new definition of democracy that would include the nonhuman' (1969: 106), and which cites Indigenous beliefs as an example of what American public policy should strive towards.

In a different way, Ted Hughes plays upon various aspects of Aboriginal trickster mythology for his *Crow* series of poems:

Man's and woman's bodies lay without souls,
Dully gaping, foolishly staring, inert
On the flowers of Eden.
God pondered.

The problem was so great, it dragged him asleep.

Crow laughed.
He bit the Worm, God's only son,
Into two writhing halves.

He stuffed into man the tail half
With the wounded end hanging out.

He stuffed the head half headfirst into woman
And it crept in deeper and up
To peer out through her eyes
Calling to its tail-half to join up quickly, quickly

Because O it was painful.

Man awoke being dragged across the grass.

Woman awoke to see him coming.

Neither knew what had happened.

God went on sleeping.

Crow went on laughing.

(Hughes 2003 (1970): 215-6)

The character of Crow is somewhat reminiscent of the aforementioned Koyukon mythological figure Raven, who acts whimsically and sometimes antagonistically towards humanity (§A1.9.) [362]. But Hughes's trickster is radically resituated alongside a 'God' who is ineffectual in the role of omniscient creator. Hughes's feat of imaginative syncretism is such that he manages to recombine various mythic sources – including Aboriginal, Judeo-Christian, Greek, Arabic, and Anglo-Saxon – into a contemporary setting of rockets (2003: 219), skyscrapers (2003: 230) and Life Insurance policies (2003: 213). The result is a work that transcends its *many* sources, and, in so doing, arguably safeguards Hughes from accusations of appropriation. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to discover how twenty-first-century Indigenous poets feel about his drawing on trickster mythology. Heid E. Erdrich, who edited a recent 'Native Poets' volume of *Poetry* magazine, avers that 'poetry by Native writers is not all tales of magic animal woo-woo that some non-Natives have come to expect' (Erdrich 2018). She suggests that the complexity and diversity at the core of contemporary Indigenous writing might account for why 'editors and readers seem to prefer poetry written about Native Americans to poems *by us*'. Moreover, she is unequivocal in her condemnation of 'poets who present themselves as Native' but who

are not, in order to draw upon Native mythology. Clearly, Hughes made no such representations, but this does not absolve him from scrutiny, and his work may be re-evaluated in due course.

For my own purposes, although I have respectfully eschewed engaging directly with Indigenous literatures in the creative phase of *North of Here*, they nevertheless provide a very important subsequent context for the work, because they constitute an authentic mythological and cosmogonic system that embodies the ontological tenets examined in the ethnographic literature. It therefore follows that a discussion of the relevant material will serve as a useful means for comparison with *North of Here*, through which various consonances and dissonances can be brought into focus.

In thinking about Britain during the LGM, and with reference to a living, bodily landscape, I conceived of the image of a bear, sleeping far below the ice sheets, whose mother is *cold* itself, ‘a huge white animal’ [45], ‘a great bear’ [48]:

little bear

dear one

did you lick your paws in the stadial night

curled in your hibernal nest deep beneath the ice

[51]

Given that many species of bear hibernate, this animal therefore lends itself more readily than others to such an image, but there are other factors which undoubtedly prompted this idea. Key among them are the possibility of proto-bear-ceremonialism in LUP Europe (§A1.12., A1.15.) [374, 384], and, connected with this, Stephen Aldhouse-Green’s suggestion that hibernating bears themselves could have been influential in evoking in Palaeolithic peoples ‘a mystical perception’ of landscape (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 233). It is as if – in the act of hibernating – the bear *becomes* the sleeping

landscape, and when it wakes, the landscape wakes from winter. It seems plausible that the ritual waking and killing of the bear in its ‘hibernal nest’ could have been conceived of as an act of regeneration; a human petition to end the yearly cycle of cold. In this ontological context, simply waking the bear is not enough. As has already been demonstrated, killing in ‘animic’ metaphysics is a recuperative act, essential to the flow of power and energy (§A1.11.) [373]. The yearly act of killing the hibernating bear thus, on a mythological level, corresponds with the emergence of the landscape of Britain from the ice. It is the re-enactment of a creation myth. Here sleep is conflated with death: ‘sleep little one sleep / though you are dead’ [99], but, as is made clear elsewhere [74, 107], death itself is not an ending.

In all hunting cultures the slain animal is necessarily dismembered in order to be eaten, and this obtains even for ‘special’ creatures such as the bear (Hallowell 1926: 14-15, 69). The cosmogonic equivalent of this in *North of Here* is therefore the division of the *world-bear’s* body into the constituent parts of the world:

it is the one whose sacred body was divided
 the one whose tears became the oceans
 the one whose bones became the mountains
 the one whose muscles became the soil
 the one whose skin became the tundra
 the one whose hairs became the grasses
 the one whose veins became the rivers
 the one whose hands became the creatures of the earth
 the one whose tail became the creatures of the sky
 the one whose feet became the creatures of the sea

According to Witzel, the division of the ‘Primordial Giant’ is a mythic archetype that is present in India (*Purusa*), China (*Pangu*), Scandinavia (*Ymir*), and many other countries (Witzel 2012: 117-9). Of these the Eddic version is the most well-known:

From Ymir’s flesh the earth was created,
 from the sweat the sea;
 from the bones the mountains; from the hairs the trees,
 from the skull, Heaven.

(2012: 118)

The metrical unevenness of these lines is accounted for by the original Icelandic alliterative form:

Ór Ymis holdi vas jörð of sköpuð,
 en ór sveita sær,
 björg ór beinum, baðmt ór hári
 en ór hausi himinn.

(Bray 1908: 18-19)

On the whole, the patterning is broadly similar to *North of Here*, particularly in the repetitive syntax ‘*from the x the y*’ (‘*x ór y*’). Nevertheless, there is a concision and economy achieved through the omission of the verb ‘created’ in all subsequent lines. This has the effect of emphasising what effectively appears to be a single moment of creation with several linked consequences. In my own text the unnamed subject and the verb ‘became’ are reiterated with each line. The emphasis here is on several cuts; several creations; several moments of *becoming*. By according each dismemberment its own line, my text enacts the equivalency between ‘all things’ [62] that is so critical in a respectful, non-hierarchical world. Despite the apparent circumlocution, there is no wastage; to trim would be disrespectful. The overall effect of the lines is therefore

reminiscent of a ritualised roll call or invocation, rather than a piece of narration.

This patterning in *North of Here* is, however, strongly consonant with the ‘Wuyun Linianji’ version of the Pangu myth from China:

Pangu was the first human in the world and he transformed his body when he was dying. His breath became the wind and the cloud; his voices became the thunder; his head, arms and legs became the four poles and five mountains; his blood became the rivers; his tendons and vessels became landforms; his muscles became the earth in fields; his hair and beards became celestial bodies; his skin became grasses and woods; his teeth and bones became metals and stones; his marrow became the pearls and jade; his sweat became the rain; the parasites on his body were inspired by the wind and became the multitude (Dong 167, Ma 20).

(Jaeseo 2011: 102)

The prose form admits slight variations, but on the whole, the ‘*his x became y*’ syntax is maintained throughout. The effect is quite similar, therefore, although there is more rhythmic parity between each line in my version, which, when combined with the line-by-line iteration, more emphatically delineates the aforementioned sense of equivalency. By contrast, the ‘Wuyun Linianji’ version is more uneven in its syllable count, and its use of semi-colons almost seeks to join the dismembered parts back together. These are minor points, however, and it would be difficult to make any assertions as to the genuine differences between the two texts.

Far from problematic, I see such close affinity in form and content between both of these variants of the Primordial Giant myth and my own as a validation of my creative methods. The text was written out of a deep engagement with the environmental and anthropological data that my preliminary research uncovered. In

creating a mythic narrative I did not expect to conceive of something entirely unprecedented. Creation myths in particular deal with the fundamental questions of existence; they attempt to imaginatively infer order, meaning and agency from the world of experience. As such, their forms must be suitably fundamental – following Jung they could be described as archetypal; resulting from ‘common, universal features of the human mind’ (Witzel 2012: 12). To a certain extent, thinking *mythically* is therefore an exercise in plausibility and authenticity, rather than originality. That my own thinking should lead to pre-existing themes is not only to be expected, but welcomed. Witzel himself avers that:

The carving up of the Primordial Giant may represent a very old stage of mythology, going back to Stone Age hunter times. The giant would then be a reflection of the hunted or killed animals that were carved up in a similar way.

(2012: 120)

To independently arrive at a narrative that a scholar of mythology associates with ‘Stone Age hunter times’ surely corroborates my own mythic thinking, but this does not mean that the Primordial Giant was the only possible outcome from the available data. Indeed, *North of Here* contains an elaboration of this basic mythic type. The hibernation of the world-bear itself is contextualised within the vast tracts of cosmological time and the *precession* of the polar stars (§A1.19.) [397]. The joining of earthly and celestial mythology in the poem is achieved through the symbol of a hunter’s spear, which stands in for the *world pillar*:

& the upright spear that pierces its skull

& although not the first

& who threw it no one knows

that spear through its skull is the pole or post that holds the

sky aloft that keeps the skys tent from falling
 though not the first & only just for now

[98]

It is therefore possible to see this proposed LUP mythology as a melding of two mythological strands: the World-Prop and, as already discussed, the Primordial Giant. The World-Prop itself can be seen as a development of what Witzel calls the Father Heaven, Mother Earth type, in which two primordial beings are conjoined in eternal sexual union. In order to create a habitable space between them, a prop is needed to prise them apart (2012: 128) (§A1.19.) [397]. In many shamanic cultures a tree often serves this function (§A1.18.) [395], although it is usually conceived within a tripartite cosmogony consisting of an upper, middle and lower world (Vasilevich 1963: 48). Some residue of this layered universe makes its way obliquely into *North of Here*,

& the vast immeasurable dark above the earth

& the vast immeasurable dark beneath the earth

[114]

Again the most well-known example of the World-Tree is the Eddic Ygraddsil, but there are also traces of similar structures in North American myth:

He made three worlds, one above the other, – the sky world, the earth we live on, and the underworld. All are connected by a pole or tree which passes through the middle of each.

(Sproul 1979: 244)

This example from the Salishan and Sahaptin tribes of the Pacific Northwest is the only direct reference I have been able to discover so far in the available literature. Anna Birgitta Rooth, who conducted a study of 300 Native American myths, also found an oblique allusion to it in this South Californian creation story:

Heaven and earth are created as man and woman. They recognize each other in the darkness; they talk.

The earth gives birth to the sacred pointed stones of chipped flint, which are placed for inspection on the end of the sword-shaped staff in the religious ceremonials.

(Rooth 1957: 501)

In a note Rooth comments that there is a variation of this narrative in which ‘the staff is erected as a world pillar’ (1957: 501), but she makes no further mention of this mythic element in any of her further analysis. In her study she categorises 83% of North American myths into eight basic types:

1. Earth-Diver
2. World-Parent
3. Emergence
4. Spider
5. Fighting or Robbery
6. Ymir [i.e. giant]
7. Two Creators and their contests
8. Blind Brother

(1957: 498)

As per Witzel, Rooth situates the World-Tree/Pillar motif within the World-Parent (i.e. Father Heaven, Mother Earth) myth, and, due to its confinement to the Pacific Northwest in her study, she proposes a ‘genetic relationship’ with the Pacific Island countries. However the worldwide distribution of this motif is much broader, and – significantly for *North of Here* – Uno Holmberg avers that ‘relics of a similar belief are to be found among most peoples of the Northern Hemisphere’ (Holmberg 1927: 333).

Stith Thompson's compendious 1929 survey would also seem to corroborate Holmberg, with traces found in North America among the Woodland Iroquois, Seneca, Wyandot, Mohawk, Northeast Woodland area, Delaware and Southeast Cherokee (Thompson 1929: 286). Witzel also confirms that 'a pole or a pillar appears in many mythologies as the representation of the world-tree, especially in northern Eurasia' (Witzel 2012: 134), which lends weight to Hultkrantz's thesis that the world-pillar emerges as a dominant motif in more northerly cultures, due to the 'vastness of the open sky in the desolate Arctic regions' (Hultkrantz 1996: 36) (§A1.19.) [397].

As for the occurrence of a Ymir-type myth in North America, the evidence is scant. Rooth describes a 'dead giant' or 'dead man or woman' in a small distribution around Lake Ontario in the East, and Washington State in the West, but I can find no extant examples. Thompson doesn't even allow for the Primordial Giant in his inventory of North American creation myths, but he does list two possibly connected types. The first is the Earth Mother, which he attributes to the 'culture area' called the Plateau, and specifically to the Thompson, Okanagon, Tahltan and Tlingit peoples. The only contemporary version I have been able to uncover is from the Okanagon:

The earth was once a human being. Old One made her out of a woman. 'You will be the mother of all people,' he said.

Earth is alive yet, but she has been changed. The soil is her flesh, the rocks are her bones, the wind is her breath, trees and grass are her hair. She lives spread out, and we live on her. When she moves, we have an earthquake.

(Erdoes & Ortiz 1984: 14)

Is it possible that the Earth Mother is a modified form of the World-Parent myth in which Father Sky – and therefore the need for a prop – has been effaced? Or is it more similar to the Primordial Giant? The death of the giant is certainly contrasted here with

the living-but-transformed status of the mother, and yet her very transformation is textually similar to the bodily dismemberments previously discussed. In *North of Here*, the death of the world-bear is not an ordinary death:

& so sleep little one sleep
though you are dead & your body transformed beyond
reckoning
a disarticulation & rearticulation

& so sleep little one sleep
so that we might live still

[99]

I suggest that the anxiety displayed here over the world-bear awaking is of a similar order to one that might exist for those who live in fear of *motherly* earthquakes. But in *North of Here*, there is a double paranoia; a separate, perhaps more primary, fear that the ‘skys tent’ [99] might fall. The awakening of the world-bear will thus not only precipitate earthquakes, but also the collapse of the sky by dislodging the spear that props up the heavens.

Similar anxieties can be found in North American creation narratives, such as this Cherokee myth:

The earth is a great island floating in a sea of water, and suspended at each of the four cardinal points by a cord hanging down from the sky vault, which is of solid rock. When the world grows old and worn out, the people will die and the cords will break and let the earth sink down into the ocean, and all will be water again. The Indians are afraid of this.

(Sproul 1979: 254)

The suspended island earth can be seen as an inversion of the ‘skys tent’, with cords instead of a prop. A concern with the centre is contrasted with the four cardinal points. Nevertheless, there is, I would argue, a similar concern with balance and equilibrium. The universe is perceived as unstable; tending towards entropy. The White Mountain Apache have a similar myth in which four collaborative creatures secure the earth via its compass points:

Four people started to work upon the earth. When they set it up, the wind blew it off again. It was weak like an old woman. They talked together about the earth among themselves. ‘What shall we do about this earth, my friends? We don’t know what to do about it.’ The one person said, ‘Pull it from four different sides.’ They did this, and the piece they pulled out on each side they made like a foot. After they did this the earth stood alright.

(1979: 259)

The creators then go on to secure the four points with individually coloured canes covered with metal thorns. This last detail has consonances with Holmberg’s description of a Lapp (Saami) ritual simulacrum of the world pillar in the form of ‘a very high square log with its lower end stuck in the ground’ and an ‘iron nail’ at its top (Holmberg 1927: 222). Given the probable genetic origin of some North American populations in Eurasia (Reich *et al.* 2012: 370) (§A1.15.) [384], it is possible that there is a continuity in culture between the two, including creation myths (Bierhorst 1985: 7). Could the coloured canes be seen as transformed world pillars, albeit staking the earth, rather than supporting the sky? The anxiety evinced by the Cherokee over a sinking earth is paralleled by the Saami fear of the sky falling:

Turi relates that the Lapps believe the Boahje-naste (‘north nail’, ‘north star’) to support the sky, and that when Arcturus, supposed to be an archer, shoots

down the Boahje-naste with his arrow on the last day, the heavens will fall,
crushing the earth and setting fire to everything.

(Holmberg 1927: 221)

There is an oblique correspondence here between the arrow of Arcturus and the unknown hunter's spear in *North of Here*. Although I did read excerpts of Holmberg in my preliminary research, I was not aware of this particular passage whilst writing the poetry. I did, however, directly draw on his observation of the sky being conceived of as tent:

The sky having thus been regarded as a kind of tent-roof, which, stretched from a great post or pillar, covered the earth [...] This conception of the sky as a kind of roof, is, without doubt, of extreme age and the product of an extremely early culture.

(1927: 336)

My reason for doing so was to facilitate an analogy between the shamanic tent and a celestial one:

when i return you are standing over me
singing shaking
the whole tent shaking

[102]

Having just journeyed to the polar star, the 'whole tent' has the added meaning of 'the entire heavens' as conceived of in *North of Here*'s cosmological system. This journey to the cave within the star and its 'vast tundra laid out beyond' has a similarly slant connection with Eurasian world-pillar mythology:

Another line of thought combines the polar star and world pillar with the sky god (high god) (Schmidt 1935: 67ff). As Harva puts it, the god receives his

place at the mightiest star, the polar star; or, as among the Chuckchee, the high god is the god of the polar star (Harva 1922/23: 6).

(Hultkrantz 1996: 41)

I have already argued against the need for hierarchies within LUP ontologies (§2.) [33] (§A1.13.) [378], and so a ‘high god’ has no place within *North of Here*, but there is a connection nonetheless with this idea of the polar star as the seat of an other-than-human entity. In my own narrative, the world within the star is the inverse of ordinary reality, in which the human is pursued by a deer wearing a human mask [101]. Hultkrantz goes on to assert that the polar star as a home for deities is not limited to Siberia, but has analogues in North America; in the mythologies of the Tanaina and Hare Indians of Alaska and the Northwest Territories (Hultkrantz 1996: 41). He also relates the occurrence of a polar star that shines above a world-tree in the myths of the Siouan people of Nebraska (1996: 41).

In summary then, there are consonances between the mythic elements outlined in *North of Here* and some of those of the North American, Scandinavian, Chinese, and Siberian regions. The evidence is admittedly scant, which might support the idea that these themes are themselves ancient and have therefore become modified or replaced over time. Witzel in particular connects the dividing of the Primordial Giant with Palaeolithic hunter cultures (Witzel 2012: 120), which might suggest subsequent shifts as agrarian and pastoral concerns became more crucial in later cultures. Equally, it might suggest that such themes were relatively minor to begin with, in comparison to others, and it therefore makes sense to examine some of these others for the contexts they might provide for *North of Here*.

4.5. *Earth-Diver*

Thompson presents two North American alternatives to the Primordial Giant – in addition to the Earth Mother, already discussed, he identifies the Earth-Turtle, as occurring among the Delaware, Iroquois and Huron (Thompson 1929: 279). Again there is little direct evidence of this particular type – Thompson simply uses the shorthand ‘earth from turtle’s back’ (1929: 279) in referencing it. This characterisation alone would seem to place it somewhere between the Giant and the Mother; a transformation of some sort being necessary to make earth *from* the reptile’s shell. However, Rockwell (1991) identifies no such transformation in the Munsee-Mahican creation myth from Ontario. In this version, a supreme being ‘put earth on the back of the Great Turtle’, who then rose out of the primordial ocean, whereupon the ‘World Tree’ grew out of the earth upon its back (Rockwell 1991: 165). According to Rockwell, the World Tree ‘supported the sky, connected the layers of the universe, regenerated the earth periodically and faithfully, and provided a means of communication with the supreme being’ (1991: 166). Notably, the Gary Snyder collection in which the aforementioned ‘Prayer for the Great Family’ and ‘The Wilderness’ appear is called *Turtle Island*, which he alludes to in the poem ‘What Happened Here Before’:

Turtle Island swims
in the ocean-sky swirl-void
biting its tail while the worlds go
on-and-off
winking

(Snyder 1969: 80)

Thompson associates ‘earth from turtle’s back’ with another myth; ‘the woman who fell from the sky’ (Thompson 1929: 279), which in turn absorbs possibly the most

widespread North American creation story: the *Earth-Diver* (Rooth 1957: 502 (map ii); Thompson 1929: 279). In Rooth's account, a diver (animal, god or man) goes to the bottom of the primordial ocean to bring back some sand in order to create the earth. The diver duly returns, often dead or half-dead, with only a small amount of sand or mud. This material is kneaded or stretched and placed upon the waters, whereupon it grows to its fullest extent. Sometimes it is weak or shaky and requires fastening with pillars or stones at the four corners of the world (Rooth 1957: 498).

Thompson's account of 'the woman who fell from the sky' combines elements of both the Earth-Diver and the Munsee-Mahican Great Turtle. In it, a society of water creatures who live in the primordial ocean decide to help a woman who falls into their world from a hole in the sky:

At last the question arose as to what they should do to provide her with a permanent resting place in this world. Finally it was decided to prepare the earth, on which she would live in future. To do this it was determined that soil from the bottom of the primal sea should be brought up and placed on the broad, firm carapace of the Turtle, where it would increase in size to such an extent that it would accommodate all the creatures that should be produced thereafter. After much discussion the toad was finally persuaded to dive to the bottom of the waters in search of soil. Bravely making the attempt, he succeeded in bringing up soil from the depths of the sea. This was carefully spread over the carapace of the Turtle, and at once both began to grow in size and depth.

(Thompson 1929: 14-15)

In this version it is notable that *both* the turtle and the embryonic soil-earth grow in size, such that the turtle *becomes* a giant, thereby supporting the newly formed world upon its

back. Here the turtle therefore stands in for the four world-pillars or stones that support the new earth in Rooth's account. The turtle is, in effect, both Primordial Giant and World-Prop combined. Is it possible, therefore, that the Earth-Diver myth contains the transformed elements of an earlier, Palaeolithic creation story that portrays the world as a giant body? If so, the *subtractive*, destructive aspects of bodily dismemberment are transformed into the *additive*, creative aspects of pedogenesis. Such a transformation, which focuses on the fecundity of soil might suggest an increasing cultural pre-occupation with vegetation; with the agrarian activities that began to take precedence in the Neolithic, about 6,000 BP. With respect to *North of Here*, such a hypothesis is attractive, as it attributes primogeniture to the Primordial Giant myth, but, notwithstanding Witzel's assertions, there can be no way to comparatively date these two mythologies. Proponents of the theory that myths such as the Earth-Diver spread to North America through the Late-glacial population diffusion from the Old World (Bierhorst 1985: 7) are guided by its widespread occurrence across Eurasia and Fenno-Scandinavia. Holmberg's extensive discussion of the myth (Holmberg 1927: 317-25) in these regions is replete with examples of diver birds, but he makes no mention of a turtle or any other aquatic proxy-giant. Neither does he discuss the need to secure the newly formed earth, which is often simply characterised as a floating island.

This would seem to confirm the Earth-Diver as a distinct myth, rather than a subsequent adaptation and transformation of the Primordial Giant. Moreover, its comparative abundance in a great variety of forms confirms it as a supremely versatile and adaptable creation story. It therefore has just as much validity for Late-glacial Britain as the Primordial Giant, and it might be worth speculating how it could have been adapted in *North of Here*. But this question presupposes my adopting a different methodology: the researching of appropriate mythologies and then a programme of

literary experimentation with each type. As already discussed, I opted to synthesise a *North of Here* myth from the data resulting from my preliminary environmental and anthropological research only. In my view, any exposure to *story*, no matter how simple or generic, might have precipitated undue influence. Admittedly, I could be guilty of hubris in supposing that I could generate a viable LUP cosmogonic narrative without first immersing myself in the relevant mythic material, but I suggest that the preliminary research *is* sufficient to enable such an enterprise. If the purpose of myth is to address some of the most fundamental moral and social issues that pertain to a culture, then a society predicated on hunting must on some level deal with the act of killing. Of course, it is not necessarily the case that such dealings must be transacted through its *creation* myth, but in *North of Here* it is.

The context that the Earth-Diver presents for *North of Here* may therefore seem largely dissonant – it is a valid alternative mythology not explored – but the role of soil as a fecund power is actually a recurrent counter-theme throughout the text. Depending on the variant, the soil of the Earth-Diver myth is either a seemingly primordial substance that mysteriously multiplies (Thompson 1929: 15), or as something more inert that is manipulated by the agency by others:

The land grew and grew as she [Skywoman] danced her thanks, from the dab of mud on Turtle's back until the whole earth was made. Not by Skywoman alone, but from the alchemy of all the animal's gifts coupled with her deep gratitude.

(Kimmerer 2013: 4)

This 'alchemy' removes the potency from the soil itself; its ability to multiply is emphatically a consequence of external 'gifts'. But in *North of Here*, the soil is innately possessed of a 'restlessness' [56], and also, critically, a 'long low embrace' [74] and a

‘living language’ [87]. Similarly, moss, lichen and artemisia are all described in terms of their ‘slurred speech’ [56], grasses are portrayed as having ‘many hands’ [74], and peat as having a ‘suffocating embrace’ [59]. The animacy at work in *North of Here* is therefore explicitly *not* only the preserve of humans, animals and other tangibly sentient persons. It also extends to what Gary Snyder calls (after the Sioux) the ‘standing people’ (Snyder 1969: 108); to vegetable and mineral persons.

4.6. The Earth Within the Hill

The inverse shamanic reality within the polar star has already been briefly discussed, but there is also another interior landscape: ‘the earth within the hill’ [64]. In characterising this underland realm I drew upon Frank G. Speck’s descriptions of the ‘house’ of Caribou-Man – an ‘enormous cavity’ within a range of mountains (Speck 1935: 82). Caribou-Man is a Naskapi humanoid Animal Master (§A1.10.) [368], who ensures the well-being of the reindeer and grants those very animals only to hunters who have behaved respectfully. According to Speck, the Naskapi believe that the Caribou House and surrounding land is a real-world location that is proscribed on pain of death, and yet it is also an altered dimension where ‘animals are two or three times their ordinary size’ (1935: 82). In this respect it very much corresponds with my conception of the polar star – a real-world cosmological location that nevertheless has an alternate reality embedded within it. Similarly, the world within the hill is found at ‘the innards of the earth’ [64], and, like the polar star, it is a place of shamanic vision; it is a dream-world, a world that is both ‘within’, ‘behind’, and ‘beyond’ the world [100]. As such, it bears only a passing resemblance to reality:

& so we climb up through the roots of the hill & up its winding

stairs & at times so steep we are upside down but gravity has

no power here at the innards of the earth

[64]

This strangeness is a hallmark of visionary landscapes, such as the one described by the shaman Lame Deer as part of his vision quest:

All at once I was way up there with the birds. The hill with the vision pit was way above everything. I could look down even on the stars, and the moon was close to my left side. It seemed as though the earth and stars were moving below me.

(Lame Deer *in* Halifax 1979: 74-5)

Lame Deer's vision came to him during 96 hours of self-isolation, during which he observed that 'blackness was wrapped around me like a velvet cloth' (1979: 73). Notably, sensory deprivation is identified by Lewis-Williams and Dowson as one of the methods of attaining trance (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988: 202) (§A1.16.) [389]. Although I did not subject myself to a similar ordeal, my depiction of the world within the hill is a direct consequence of my own dreaming, as is the subsequent passage in which I describe myself as having awoken 'to find my body strange' [65]. This strangeness of the body is an echo of the strangeness of the hill's interior, whilst also alluding to the process of shamanic initiation; a bodily 'disarticulation & rearticulation' [65] which further echoes that of the Primordial Giant, and of the body of Late-glacial Britain. Everything in the reality of *North of Here* takes on aspects of each other:

everything contingent on one another

touching one another

piercing one another

[81]

In fact, everything in the text is tinged with dream – with 'what comes to you in the

dark' [53] – and, indeed, the passage that is central to *North of Here* is a description of real-world 'visions in the darkness at the edge of sleep', produced as a side-effect of chronic pain medication [55]. These visions of 'impossible anatomies', which are dismissed as 'delusions' or 'hallucinations' by modern rational-materialist science, are nevertheless welcomed 'like family' [55]. It might be remembered that in shamanistic practice, visionary trance may be induced with the aid of psychoactive drugs (§A1.16.) [389], and that dreams and visions are of crucial importance to Indigenous cultures such as the Koyukon and the Ojibwa (§A1.7.) [338]:

Human beings and animals communicate in dreams, a state of consciousness which bridges cosmological dimensions, including objective time and space.

(Morrison 2000: 27)

The bodily, anatomical form that my visions take are implicitly a foreshadowing of the corporeal transformations that the world-bear undergoes, as well as my own subsequent dream-dismemberment. Crucially, this visionary experience provides a foundation for everything that follows, and the list of side-effects from the medical packaging saturate the rest of the text:

tiredness headache weakness confusion disturbed
concentration disorientation delusions hallucinations elevated
mood & hyperactivity excitement anxiety restlessness
drowsiness dream & sleep disturbances numbness pins &
needles loss of coordination uncontrolled shaking abnormal
muscle movements slurred speech coma & fits

[55]

The animacy apportioned to soil ('restlessness'), moss, lichen and artemisia ('slurred speech') is therefore contingent on my 'hallucinations', confirming the landscape of

North of Here as a visionary one; a place where everything is familial, ancestral, alive:

& life is everywhere therefore
 & nowhere is there that is not life therefore
 & the world alive & thinking & feeling
 & the world is consciousness experiencing itself endlessly &
 as if for the first time
 & the world is the self reflecting self
 the self reflecting
 self

[63]

‘Everything’ is imbued with life and selfhood, and consequently dreaming itself follows from ‘thinking & feeling’; it is a condition of sentience. The land that is the world-bear therefore sleeps in its ‘hibernal nest deep beneath the ice’ [51], dreaming of a human figure who is also ‘a great bear’, the embodiment of cold, and who will ultimately carry out the land’s dismemberment. In a not dissimilar way, my own sleep results in a dream of a figure ‘always ahead of me & out of sight’ [64] who leads me to the place of my ‘disarticulation & rearticulation’ [65]. Both of us remember salient features of our dreams, but neither can remember the moment of death-giving itself. Moreover, both of us are connected – or rather disconnected – by ‘a blade so sharp it could cleave the world’ [54, 65]. These moments of forgetting are compounded throughout the text by the way in which the oniric world and the corporeal world elide, resulting is a sense of ambiguity; a *bleeding* of night and day [53]. As a consequence, there is an associated anxiety about *which* reality is prevailing at any particular time. The phrase ‘am i awake’ repeats no fewer than six times throughout the poem, and it is noticeable that critical encounters occur at dusk; a time of neither night nor day, but a mingling of both [50, 52,

58, 68, 99, 114].

4.7. *Here*

Given these uncertainties, it is also worth noticing that the *here* of the poem's title is also suitably ambiguous. The word 'here' is used eleven times in total, but never is it used in conjunction with a geographically specific marker. The only recognisable place-names in the entire text are quasi-mythic and restricted to the section entitled 'Before': *Dogger*(land), the fabled isthmus connecting the peninsula of Britain to the mainland; *Europa*, the greater European continent itself; and *Albion*, the mystical post-flood island of Britain. The only other possible place-name is the suitably ambiguous 'great northern plain' [88]. This eschewal of place-specific language may seem strange for a text that supposedly wishes to examine the importance of landscape to a culture, but the prehistoric culture in question was, as I have argued, different to ours in how they conceived of their environment. This is not to say that a landscape imbued with personhood would have been anonymous – in fact, a land so *peopled* might have been prodigiously named. But how would such names have been conceptualised and realised? In his essay on the Western Apache, Basso describes an oral language system that is inherently verbose and descriptive:

Prompted by a desire to “display thinking” (*nil'įınatsikeęs*), speaking involves the use of language to “depict” (*e'ele*) and “carry” (*yo'áál*) these mental images to the members of an audience, such that they, on “hearing” (*yidits'ag*) and “holding” (*yotâ*) the speaker's words, can “view” (*yinel'įi*) facsimiles of the images in their own minds.¹⁶

(Basso 1988: 108-9)

¹⁶ The written form of Western Apache contains diacritical marks not present in Times New Roman. These renderings are therefore approximations.

Examples of place-names are *tsìbiyi'itin*, 'trail extends into a grove of stick-like trees', and *túzhì yahigai*, 'whiteness spreads out descending to water'. Such toponyms are bound up in 'a subtle and subterranean' complex of historical tales which facilitate a mode of talking called 'speaking with names', whereby the place-name itself conjures a particular story that provides a moral context for subsequent actions. A 'beneficial form of heightened self-awareness' results from this kind of conceptualisation – the deeds of contemporary society are recast within historical narratives using a toponymic shorthand (1988: 106).

For the Navajo, the world 'is a cosmos of motion and process' (Witherspoon 1977: 53), and speech 'embodies the speaker's intentionality, and extends the self beyond the body, to shape a reality coming into being' (Morrison 2000: 34). Their speech therefore 'does not encode realities which might exist independently, objectively apart from itself' (2000: 34). Conversely, for the Wintu, bodily orientations are enmeshed in worldly vectors. *Left* and *right* have no meaning when subsumed within the global system of *north*, *east*, *south* and *west*:

When the Wintu goes up the river, the hills are to the west, the river to the east; and a mosquito bites him on the west arm. When he returns, the hills are still to the west, but when he scratches his mosquito bite, he scratches his east arm.

(Lee in Solnit 2005: 17)

In *North of Here*, corporeal orientations are presented as an intersection of *human-person* and *land-person* activity, such that the language becomes an index of their collaborative entanglement. An expression of locality – of being-in-the-world – is not a series of co-ordinate points or proximity based referents, but a verbose exercise in relational thinking:

i the slope that stands between us
 i the slope that hides us from each other
 i the slope that offers this vantage
 [...]

 i the plain that joins us together
 i the plain that narrows our distance
 i the plain that renders this moment

[108]

The *slope* or the *plain* is not an objective *here*; a neutral space through which actors move. Rather it is brought into a complex and dynamic web of inter-personal relations. It plays a pivotal part in the unfolding drama.

But the absence of objective topographic reference points in *North of Here* is not simply the reflection of an ad-hoc system of relating to the world; it is also a more specific signifier of narrational unknowing. The poem section ‘Begin’ opens with the question: ‘where do i begin’?, and one of the rather enigmatic, convoluted answers is: ‘how far can you cast your mind back?’ [44]. The question of imagining is immediately foregrounded, as is its contingency on performance. The ability of *North of Here* – of the poetic imagination – to bring LUP life into clear focus is immediately cast into doubt, as the object of scrutiny is always ‘north of here’; always beyond grasp. There is a concomitant veil drawn over the entire LUP landscape and its people, such that ‘i cannot hope to truly know them then / cannot see their faces hear their language’ [67], and the poetic enterprise seems to be equated with that of the archaeologist:

but perhaps i can infer something of their lives
 reconstructed in this scatter of discarded stone
 yes find in the shape of absence

the thing itself

[67]

This would seem to be an admittance of defeat. An acknowledgement that the poetic mind is bounded by the same constraints as those engaged in scientific research. But the passage concludes with a moment of profound vision:

& there scratched in ochre & low to the ground i see a figure
wearing the mask of a deer
looking back at me
with blazing eyes

[67]

It is therefore explicitly vision, and only this *blazing* vision, that will enable the casting of the mind back – a descent into the ‘ache of darkness / beneath the earth’ [71]. The nature of this vision entails both horror and joy; disarticulation and rearticulation; forgetting and remembering. As such, the text itself continually pivots between moments of profound clarity and confusion, and the land itself is wreathed in mist [70] or else wearing a ‘mask of light’ [70], which only visionary darkness can remove. *North of Here* is vividly a piece of fraught creation. It is brought into being with great anxiety and uncertainty; it is replete with questions, some of which have no answers, or answers which in turn beget more questions. This is, I think, the only honest way to approach the enterprise of imagining the past; to acknowledge the precariousness of the task at hand; to admit to the possibility of failure, but also to the possibility of revelation.

5. *The Other-Than-Human*

In this chapter I will discuss the agency of the land in the context of spirits, souls, forces and energies in Indigenous ontologies and those of the Classical world. I will then go on to explore the particular agency of the land in *North of Here* with reference to human-animal interactions, before examining the implications of a shared sense of personhood more generally. This, in turn, will lead to a discussion of the use of pronouns in the poem as a way of demonstrating equivalence between various persons, human and other-than-human. The work of poet John Haines will then afford a context for examining how a late-twentieth century writer has explored similar issues. In the light of Haines's work, I will then analyse human-animal interactions in *North of Here*, and particularly notions of consensual death-giving & the prospect of reincarnation. The discussion will conclude with an exploration of the extra-corporeal dimension to human-animal communication in the poem.

5.1. *Land as Other-Than-Human*

North of Here conceives of the land as an *other-than-human person*; a living, sentient body. As such, it has a participatory involvement in the social universe – it is not simply a backdrop; an inanimate stage upon which the action of agential beings takes place. The world is therefore ‘alive & thinking & feeling’ [63], and has a concomitant voice among the panoply of other voices:

& who is this
 who is it that comes from the south
 to wash in my nival rivers
 the blood from their hands

In some ways this voice, with its air of mistrust, its alertness to the possibilities of disrespectful behaviour by humans, calls to mind the Koyukon characterisation of ‘certain landforms’ that ‘must be placated or shown deference’ (Nelson 1986: 26). Such world-views provide a valuable context for thinking about the agency of the land in *North of Here*. According to Nelson, in the Koyukon world ‘elements of the earth and sky are imbued with spirits and consciousness, much in the way of living things’ (1986: 25). The latter phrase, ‘much in the way’ is worth emphasising here, as it imputes similarity, but *not* sameness, to ‘earth and sky’ and ‘living things’. Here, as elsewhere, it is difficult to assess whether this is a Koyukon distinction, or one that arises from the ethnographer’s self-acknowledged Judeo-Christian bias and the difficulties inherent in translating ethno-metaphysical concepts into English.¹⁷ There is an ambiguity in Nelson’s language which may or may not reflect the non-classificatory way in which Koyukon ontology works. On the one hand, Nelson argues that ‘the animal and its spirit are one in the same thing’ (1986: 22), whereas (certain) landforms ‘have special powers’, or are ‘the source’ of a power (1986: 26), which would seem to create a distinction between *spirit* as a personal, animating force, and *power* as an impersonal, residing force. In the case of the latter, we might therefore perceive the land itself as a kind of battery; an inert vessel for numinous energy, which somewhat echoes the way in which ecologists discuss the ‘energy flow’ of soil systems (§4.1.) [127]. However, it is also worth remembering that the *human* body itself is characterised as a vessel for the soul in Neoplatonic and Christian metaphysics (Sipe 2006: 5), which strengthens the idea of the *land-as-body* very much resembling the *human* body. Moreover, Nelson’s assertion that ‘elements of the earth and sky are imbued with spirits and consciousness’ would seem to blur his own distinction between *living-spirit* and *power-residing-in-land*

¹⁷ The difficulties in trying to clarify Koyukon ideas regarding the animacy of landscape are discussed at some length in Appendix A1.9.

(Nelson 1986: 25). It would appear that ontologies which rest on fundamentally non-hierarchical perceptions of the cosmos resist simple classifications of being; they abound in subtlety and paradox.

Nelson himself provides a possible way out of this impasse by discussing spirits in terms of ‘vaguely conceptualized essences that protect the welfare of their material counterparts’ (1986: 21). With regard to land, this idea of a protecting spirit is reflected in the classical Roman concept of the *genii locorum*, the spirits of place:

In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. [...] Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep in placated.

(White 1967: 1205)

The idea of *genii locorum* is therefore useful for thinking about the way in which spirits could be seen as individualised, localised *personifications* of a more widespread and diffuse sentience. Thus spirit and power can possibly be resolved in terms of scale: *spirit* is an intimate, concentrated manifestation of a broader, undifferentiated, abiding *power*. This distinction might explain why Koyukon shamans are able to draw upon *sinh taala*, the general, healing power of the earth, whilst also observing individual rules of conduct with respect to specific landforms.

These issues are approached somewhat differently in *North of Here* – there are no direct references to *spirit*, *soul*, *force* or *energy*, for example. The decision to eschew such overtly spiritual language was a conscious one, as it is difficult to disentangle this kind of terminology from its religious – and specifically theistic – contexts.¹⁸ In trying to characterise the *otherness* of LUP life, I therefore use the words ‘presences’,

¹⁸ The exception would be the word ‘sacred’, for which see the ensuing discussion.

‘inherences’ and ‘things beyond sight’ to evoke the subtleties of a boundless world in which existence comprises a ‘series of encounters with the visible and invisible’ [74], the living and the dead.

This concern with vocabulary and the connotations of certain words – already discussed with reference to *land* and *territory* (§4.3.) [136] – is also evident in my attempts to imaginatively resolve how LUP peoples might have communicated with a sentient landscape that was nevertheless ‘unknown terrain’ [87]. In an earlier draft of the text, I experimented with using the word *entity* as a form of address:

entity

as they must consume your fat

& drink your blood

so I must eat their fat

& drink their blood

On reflection, however, this usage felt unnecessarily contrived and impersonal, and I therefore opted for:

hill valley hollow

as they must consume the blood & fat of your body

so i must consume them

[88]

This change is not merely cosmetic, or one of tone; it collapses the distinction between an entity (which might possibly *reside in* the land) and the land itself. As has been seen with the Koyukon, such conflations are not generally made due to an ontological focus on spirit and power, a focus that is aptly combined in this expression of the Netsilik Eskimos:

The powers that rule the earth and all the animals and the lives of mankind on

earth are the great spirits who live in the sea, on land, out in space and in the Land of the Sky.

(Rasmussen 1931: 224)

In such conceptions, the corporeal world is secondary to the spiritual; the former is tangible and yet transitory, whereas the latter is intangible and eternal. Indeed, Graburn and Strong's generalised discussion of the 'religious ideology' of the 'Eskimos' reveals that 'each person was conceived of as a relatively unimportant physical body inhabited by a number of soul spirits' (Graburn and Strong 1973: 166). This echoes the 'negative theorization of the body' in Neoplatonic and Christian metaphysics, which 'has inevitably led to a denial of the corporeal body, a rejection of flesh, in the Western world' (Sipe 2006: 2). Is the Eskimo conception of an 'unimportant' physical shell a syncretism from Christianity, or does the soul/body dichotomy represent a more universal strand of metaphysical thought? For all their concern with the numinous, the Koyukon perceive the corporeal form as the 'material counterpart' of the spirit (Nelson 1986: 21), which would seem to imply parity. Moreover, the prevailing purpose of the spirit in circumpolar societies appears to be the guardianship of the physical; ensuring proper treatment – and therefore longevity – of the corporeal vessel itself (1986: 21). Crucially, as has been demonstrated, this guardianship extends beyond death, to what both Nelson and Hill characterise as a 'latent sentience' (§A1.8.) [351], which enables other-than-human persons to observe how respectfully their remains are dealt with by humans. This would seem to speak to an inherent value placed on the body as the site of all human and other-than-human bargaining. As such, it is not simply a receptacle for the soul; if it were, then the treatment of a carcass would not figure as prominently as it does in circumpolar world-views.

Graburn and Strong's highlighting of the abundance of souls within bodies

would seem to complicate these issues even further, but the concept is nevertheless useful for thinking about the land in *North of Here*. In addition to *tangnirk* (existence), *atirk* (name), and *breath-soul* (life), they observe that:

[...] parts of the body, particularly the joints,¹⁹ were said to be inhabited by *inua*, which literally means “its person”. *Inua* were locationally fixed spirits that inhabited not only humans but animals and significant inanimate objects...

(Graburn and Strong 1973: 167)

‘Locationally fixed spirits’ recalls the Roman *genii locorum*, and it is therefore possible to see the *land-body* and *human-body* in the same terms; as the repository of a singular consciousness *and* the site of numerous other localised entities. In *North of Here*, the mistrustful voice of the land [52] therefore speaks to the idea of an individual, presiding sentience, and the enumeration of ‘hill valley hollow’ and ‘river pool bog’ [88] speaks to the spatially discrete multitude. There is undoubtedly paradox here, but, as I have demonstrated, it is fully in keeping with the subtlety and complexity of Indigenous spiritual ideas.

5.2. *Animal*

These complex notions of soul and spirit are exemplified in the following passage from *North of Here*, in which the corpse of a hare is discovered:

& on the road before sunrise i found a hare newly dead but not
quite gone its corpse still warm its blood pooled around a

19 In this reference to joints I can’t help but recall these lines from *North of Here*:

we are alike you & i it says
we are alike

& you feel it just as i do
in the spaces between your joints

great scar at its back

& though dead it seemed to be holding on

but for what i could not say

& there in a thin copse of trees nearby i sensed a figure

a figure sensed through the branches

looking looking

& i picked up the body & i laid it in the heather

thinking of the long low embrace of soil

the many hands of grasses

& as i stood there i felt its lifehood fade

& when i looked up the figure was gone

away through the branches & not looking back

& the sun just coming up

just passing over the horizon

[74]

As with other critical encounters within the poem, this one occurs during a liminal state where night and day ‘bleed’ together [53]. In this passage, the in-betweenness – the blurred diurnal-nocturnal boundary – reflects another blurring; that of life and death. And so the *dead* animal is nevertheless ‘holding on’, recalling the ‘latent sentience’ discussed by Hill and Nelson (§A1.8.) [351]. Crucially, however, there is also ‘a figure’ observing the scene, who then departs following the respectful treatment of the hare’s carcass. The returning of the animal to the earth is an echo of the act of ritual deposition

found in the archaeological record (§A1.4., A1.7.) [327, 338], although in this instance it is not done to maintain reciprocal social obligations, but as a gesture of compassion; an acknowledgement of equality between human and animal. It is also a tacit response to the figure's very watchfulness, and to the idea that every 'action' and 'inaction' is 'storied in the world' [74].

Here, as elsewhere in the text, the earth is characterised as an animate entity capable of an 'embrace', thus recapitulating the sense of parity between *earth-body* and *animal-body* [59, 74, 109, 115]. The placing of the hare in the 'many hands of grasses' is therefore a transfer of care from one agential being to another, rather than a petition for a return, for regeneration, as in the following passage:

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the waters
 & in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the soil so
 that you may come again & give yourself again
 trust me you know it is so

[109]

It is also worth noting that there is a deliberate ambiguity as to the relationship between the figure and the animal's posthumous sentience; are they one-in-the-same (the former a manifestation of the latter), or is the figure a protective entity, a spiritual overseer, a so-called Master of the Animals (§A1.7., A1.8., A1.10.) [338, 351, 368]? There are no answers in the text. The figure itself has only one attribute – its capacity to watch. This lack or blurring of detail allows the figure to elide with others in the text, and particularly others who are also watchful [57, 60, 74, 115]. Each of these entities merge or acquire aspects of each other: they are always 'looking looking', and they are always 'glimpsed' or 'sensed' in a copse of trees. Their lack of substance and individuality imbues them with a dream-like quality. They hover uncertainly on the threshold of

perception, representing moments of leakage between the seen and unseen worlds. The repetitious phrase ‘looking looking’ is partly a foregrounding technique, a means of tangibly generating correspondences in the text, but it is also an index of the proposed *reflective* nature of seeing in the Late Upper Palaeolithic.

In a world in which everything is ‘contingent on one another’ [81], where there are only subjects and not objects, the act of looking is not a solitary, unaccompanied activity; whatever is being looked at also looks back. This reflective LUP reality therefore has its corollary in the echoic quality of the text itself. Words ‘sing resonant’ [63], and are forever ‘echoing commingling’ [114]. In such a world, the process of looking is not temporally discrete and finite but ‘endless endless’ – it is ongoing in each and every moment:

& the look of me looking at you & the look of you looking at me
 to & fro to & fro
 endless endless

[60]

The repetition of ‘looking looking’ (and, indeed, other repetitions such as ‘endless endless’) therefore speaks to this durational aspect of perception; such actions are constantly being re-instantiated, just as social ties are continually being maintained and renewed.

The similarity in the way these various figures are described not only poetically structures their interconnectedness, it also enacts a key ontological tenet; the attribution of *sameness* or *likeness* to all things: in *North of Here*, nothing is categorically distinct. Despite apparent differences in appearance, size and power between human, animal and plant, or stone, cloud and river, they are equal by dint of their entangled co-dependency.

5.3. *Likeness*

This sameness governs all relationships in the text, and is particularly evident in human-animal interactions. In her essay ‘Learning the Grammar of Animacy’ (2013), Robin Wall Kimmerer notes that the English system of pronouns evidences a rupture of separation between the human (*he* or *she*) and the other-than-human (*it*). She argues that this distinction is inherently hierarchical and prejudicial. We speak of *it* with less care and feeling than we do of *him* or *her*. Herself a Native American, she notes how the Potawatomi language does not operate with the same hierarchies, but rather attributes *who*-ness, instead of *what*-ness, to the other-than-human world (Kimmerer 2013: 55-6). In this way, the human and the other are brought onto the same ontological plane, and there is a concomitant equivalence in terms of the implicit regard and respect that these pronouns generate.

When beginning writing *North of Here*, one of the first events that I depicted was a real-life encounter with a fox. I didn’t see the animal, but its high-pitched scream identified it as a vixen. I therefore instinctually used the female third-person pronoun to refer to ‘her’:

a vixen barks from across the fields
 calls to me from across the fields of mist
 i have put down my mask
 i want to go to her go to her in this my true form
 but i am afraid
 this my truth
 go to her
 afraid

However, when I began to think about describing encounters with the other-than-human persons of the British LUP, it became clear to me that sexually identifying them would be problematic. To do so would be to generate a gendered dynamic that would overlay – and possibly complicate – the inter-species interaction that was my main concern. I wanted to solely focus on the paradoxical sameness-otherness of humans and animals. It became apparent that the use of distinctly separate pronouns for humans and animals would enact the *outward* differences of these otherwise similar kinds of *persons*, and that some other mechanism would be needed to balance the use of language; to ensure equivalency between these different signifiers. Indeed, Kimmerer also discusses the problems inherent in the use of he/she in other-than-human contexts:

Our grammar boxes us in by the choice of reducing a nonhuman being to an *it*, or it must be gendered, inappropriately, as a *he* or *she*. Where are our words for the simple existence of another living being?

(Kimmerer 2013: 56)

Motivated by Kimmerer's piece, and aware of the lack of alternative vocabulary, I therefore experimented with redefining 'it' itself in a way that liberated it from its negative connotations:

& when you use the sacred word it
 let it mean the shimmer of life in all things
 animate or inanimate
 beyond the meagre confines of masculinity or femininity
 of him her he she

[73]

Critically, the first-person-pronoun itself – the key identifier of the individual – is recast as an aspect of this 'itness':

& your i as you see it is but a part of it
 & any other term is but a division of it
 is but an anagram of it
 a reassembly
 a reflection
 an echo
 of it

[73]

Individuality itself is therefore subsumed within ‘the shimmer of life in all things’, and consequently the glyph ‘i’ is shown to be a part of the textual assemblage ‘it’. Like the dismemberment of the primordial giant, the singular ‘i’ is cut from the larger pronominal body. It is a division of the whole.

Returning to my depiction of the vixen, I then realised that ‘she’ needed to be resolved into ‘it’, in order to maintain parity throughout the text. The result, however, felt unsatisfactory:

i want to go to it go to it in this my true form
 but i am afraid
 this my truth
 go to it
 afraid

Perhaps it was simply because this portion of the text occurs before the passage in which ‘it’ is examined and redefined. Indeed, in some sense there was no need to restructure this preceding passage, precisely because of its prior position in the poem sequence – but I felt unsatisfied nevertheless. After several revisions, the following shift of emphasis seemed to me to be the best compromise:

i want to answer that call
 to answer it in this my true form
 but i am afraid
 this my truth
 afraid

[70]

This version doesn't quite have the intimacy of 'go to her', with its strange sexual undercurrent, but the change to *answering a call* seems quite potent, nevertheless – particularly as it gestures towards inter-species conversation; to the to-and-fro of speech that occurs later in the poem.

This focus on pronouns – on *things* – would seem to run counter to Ezra Pound's observation that:

A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature [...] neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature [...] The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things ...

(Pound *in* Hinton 2017: 35)

However, as has already been demonstrated, 'it' is expressly equated with the *action* of being alive, 'the shimmer' of existence, 'the firedance of atoms' [62], and so noun and verb are parcelled into a compound construct that is sympathetic to both Pound's philosophy and Kimmerer's observations. In some respects, this process of redefining 'it' represents a radical reinterpretation of grammatical categories, and, like the other redefinitions in the text (§4.1.) [127], it is fundamentally anti-poetic – seeking clarity and focus over ambiguity and allusiveness. This precision is necessary in order to rectify the imbalance that Kimmerer identifies. I would even suggest that the language used in the remaking of 'it' over-compensates for any perceived pejorative connotations that, as

Kimmerer would have it, ‘put[s] a barrier between us [and nature], absolving ourselves of moral responsibility’ (Kimmerer 2013: 57). Hence ‘it’ is shown to have primacy over other – including gendered – pronouns; they derive from it, or are somehow ‘meagre’ in comparison. Whilst I acknowledge that I could be accused of promoting a new kind of hierarchy with this construction, I suggest instead that it simply points to an *undivided* and *undifferentiated* way of referring to the world. It speaks of wholeness and inclusiveness; absorbing other modes into it – or rather, its acts as their source. As such, it might hint at an older way of being the world – one which looks towards commonality and likeness. ‘It’ is therefore sacred precisely because it excludes nothing:

think of an other way it said

think of this for example

of the possibility of sacredness in all things

the shimmer of life itself it said

the firedance of atoms

[62]

Of course such a definition of sacredness is paradoxical to our modern understanding. To define *something* – whatever it might be – necessitates the exclusion of *something else*. But the world of *North of Here* bleeds; its wholeness derives from the unwholeness of its component parts:

& these lives are nothing if not inextricable

& these lives are nothing if not inseparable

[63]

Just as the Ojibwa have no conception of ‘nature’ (§A1.7.) [338], because, for them, there is nothing that is *not* nature, so the *shimmer* of itness suffuses everything, however ‘animate’ or ‘inanimate’ they may seem.

5.4. *The Hunter*

In some ways my characterisation of itness shares a similar sense to the Potawatomi word, ‘*yawe* – the animate *to be*’ (Kimmerer 2013: 56). However, the poem has to work quite hard in making its assertions – something that is perhaps feasible in a long poem such as *North of Here*, but rather impractical in smaller, self-contained works. Other poets have been rather more pragmatic in using the means at their disposal. The American poet John Haines, whose on-the-page encounters with animals are echoes of real-life experiences, affords the kind of equivalence between human and animal that Kimmerer celebrates, even if he uses vocabulary that she might find problematic:

I awoke and stood in the cold
as he slowly circled the camp.
His horns exploded in the brush
with dry trees cracking
and falling; his nostrils flared
as, swollen-necked, smelling
of challenge, he stalked by me.

(Haines, 1993: 16)

Here the bull moose is not only a fellow male, but likewise a hunter; one who circles and stalks. There is a sense of fear and latent violence that is ultimately resolved into ‘wild enchantment’ (1993: 17). For Haines, such encounters can precipitate feelings of wonder and awe that distantly resemble those experienced by circumpolar Indigenous peoples when confronted with *powerful* animals such as the bear (§A1.12.) (374).

Haines’s work provides a vital context for *North of Here* because it is rooted in what John Knott calls ‘elemental activities’ (Knott 2006: 149) – in the hermetic life of a hunter and trapper in the frozen woods of Alaska. In Haines’s own words, it is a life that

‘smells of blood and killed meat’, a life that ‘requires a surrender few of us now are willing to make’ (Haines 1989: xii). His first collection, *Winter News* (1966), emerged from a sustained period of self-imposed isolation from the human world; an immersion in the wilderness of North America that covered him like a ‘kind of spell’ (1993: 1). According to Knott, during this period Haines felt ‘as if nothing had changed since the retreat of the glaciers’ (Knott 2006: 161). As such, Haines’s work represents a contrasting – perhaps even opposing – approach to a subject that is not dissimilar to my own; an approach that is undeniably authentic and credible, and, according to Haines, one that cannot be approximated by other means:

Observation, studies in the field, no matter how acute and exhaustive, cannot replace it, for the experience cannot be reduced to abstractions, formulas, and explanations.

(Haines 1989: xii)

The ‘it’ here is Haines’s raw and immediate experience of the wild as lived by a hunter and trapper. He goes on to relate how his time in the wilderness unveiled an ‘intuitive relation to the world we shared with animals, with everything that exists’, but which is easily and irrevocably lost when we are removed from contact with the natural environment (Haines 1989: xii). For Haines this fundamental layer of reality represents ‘a continuity in human life’ that can be traced back to the ‘primary sources’ of the distant past (Knott 2006: 164-5). I would argue, however, that Haines himself never quite discards his own ‘cultural origins’ (Haines 1981: 6). There are the traces in his work of a conflict between two differing ontologies, which fissures up in his feelings of wonder and awe, and also in the guilt associated with the taking of life:

I am haunted by

the deaths of animals.

(1993: 19)

By contrast, there is no such empathetic feeling in this ‘hymn’ by Igpakuhak, a Copper Eskimo hunter from northern Canada:

Ah, how I crouched
 in my hunter’s hide!
 But scarcely had I
 glimpsed his flanks,
 than my arrow pierced them,
 haunch to haunch.
 And then, beloved reindeer,
 as you pissed there,
 as you fell,
 I was surrounded by great joy!

(Rasmussen/Lowenstein 1973: 57)

The reindeer is ‘beloved’, and yet its death precipitates ‘great joy’, which would seem to suggest that any sense of remorse at the taking of life is outweighed by the gratitude generated from the bequest of the animal’s life-giving meat.

But Haines’s work retains the residue of an implicitly Christian theology that complicates his experience of the wild:²⁰

I looked inside and saw
 an injured bird
 that filled the room.

With a stifled croaking

²⁰ I have inferred Haines’ Christianity from his use of the word ‘God’. This may be an erroneous assumption, but his use of the word certainly implies at least a latent grounding in similar ontological concepts.

it lunged toward the door
 as if held back
 by an invisible chain:

the beak was half eaten away,
 and its heart beat wildly
 under the rumpled feathers.

I sank to my knees –
 a man shown the face of God.

(Haines 1993: 12)

That such a pitiful creature should be emphatically equated with the ‘face of God’ is startling, and, I think, shows Haines wrestling certain religious ethics that he cannot quite ‘turn away’ from, much as he might try (Haines 1981: 6). Indeed, Haines’s intimate and vivid engagement with the lives and deaths of animals in the woods of Alaska has brought him to a position of empathy, such that it challenges doctrinal assumptions about the nature of human and animal being. Hence the bird, as Haines conceives ‘it’, emphatically fills the room, straining against the invisible ontological chains that seek to confine it to mere *animality*. The above poem, ‘House of the Injured’, sees the poet implicitly remembering the biblical idea of a humanity that is made in God’s image – a humanity that has dominion over animals – and he rails against it, saying *this being suffers as much as I suffer; it is as much a God as I am*. Indeed, the bird’s *itness* is crucial here. The man feels a sense of reverence for something *other*, something made greater by its supreme ordeal of pain and ultimate death – and he sinks to his knees. I cannot help but wonder if, in the back of his mind,

there is the reflected image of the crucified Christ figure in this dying animal.

The fundamental difference between Christianity and Eskimo animic metaphysics is that the latter evidences a belief in reincarnation:

When an animal or a person dies, the soul leaves the body and flies to Pinga who then lets the life or the soul rise again in another being, either man or animal.

(Rasmussen 1930: 56)

When reflecting on Haines's remorse at the taking of animal lives, it is therefore important to recognise that such feelings of guilt do not arise in the animic world because death is not considered an ending, but part of an endless cycle – indeed, Tim Ingold describes how killing can be perceived as a regenerative act (§A1.11.) [373]. Of course, Christian belief is centred on the reincarnation of Christ – the sacrificial lamb of God – but this *bodily* return does not obtain for believers; rather it becomes a metaphor for the triumph of the human soul over corporeal death. The brevity of earthly physical existence presages the eternity of the soul's afterlife. In *North of Here*, reincarnation is explicitly made a point of bargaining between human hunters and their animal quarry:

i am coming to you to give you your death

& this death is not your ending

this death is your beginning

[107]

[...]

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the waters

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the soil

so that you may come again & give yourself again trust me

you know it is so

[109]

But for Haines, the taking of other-than-human life is undoubtedly an ending. There is a finality in such exchanges because rebirth – either bodily or spiritually – is not afforded to animals in orthodox Christian doctrine. And yet Haines has experienced an intimate and visceral entanglement with animal life – an entanglement that in some ways conjures affinities with the lives of Palaeolithic hunters. Indeed, Gary Snyder argues that the lives of Stone Age hunters required a deep empathic connection with their prey:

Almost all animals are beautiful and paleolithic hunters were deeply moved by it. To hunt means to use your body and senses to the fullest: to strain your consciousness to feel what the deer are thinking today, this moment; to sit still and let yourself go into the birds and wind while waiting by the game trail.

(Snyder 1999: 54)

In Christian orthodoxy the animal kingdom is a vassal to humanity, and consequently the taking of animal life is not considered a sinful act. But Haines's experiences have blurred the line between the human and animal such that empathy arises, which is in turn followed by guilt.

Of course, as has already been discussed, the blurring of the human and animal is a common feature of circumpolar world-views (§A1.7.) [338], as evinced by this Eskimo poem:

In the very earliest time,
where both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.

Sometimes they were people
 and sometimes animals
 and there was no difference.
 All spoke the same language.
 That was the time when words were like magic.

(Nalungiaq *in* Rothenberg and Rothenberg 1983: 3)

The ‘earliest time’ that this poem references – a time in which there was ‘no difference’ between human and animal – could be the *reflective* world of the British LUP, as conceived of in *North of Here*. In my own interpretation of this ontological likeness, its inevitable consequence is the dissolution of a unique sense of individuality and a pervasive feeling of uncertainty:

& who do you see when you look at me
 & what do you see when you look at me

[84]

The LUP self is ‘self reflecting’ [63, 65, 68, 92, 110] – selfhood is an index of the state of being of others, who are in turn indexes of others, and so on, which can lead to a kind of recursiveness:

& the look of me looking at you & the look of you looking at me to
 & fro to & fro
 endless endless

[60]

The metaphysical world of Late-glacial Britain is therefore a multi-faceted, infinitely refracting mirror. Paradoxically, this sense of self is not individually possessed or defined, but rather a collaborative effort of social construction; a consequence of the world being ‘alive & thinking & feeling’ [63]. The ‘who’ and ‘what’ of existence are

explicitly contingent on one another – as with the Eskimo poem, species identity is not fixed and pre-defined. Corporeal reality is a world of ‘coverings’ [100, 119] that mask fundamental similarities, and the ‘putting down’ of masks [56, 70, 83, 101, 104, 109] is not simply a form of self-revelation, but a performance of mutual acknowledgement, of establishing inner likeness:

& you put down your mask

& we stand together prone

[83]

[...]

we are alike you & i it says

we are alike

[84]

In accordance with the terms of mutuality, it follows that such encounters are acts of *being seen*, as much as they are of *seeing*.

i see you it says with words made of silence

i see you do you not see me

[109]

Uncertainty about *who-ness* and *what-ness* becomes problematic because of the need to differentiate between the hunter and the hunted; the human and the animal. Difference must be established in order to proceed. The mask or covering is therefore simultaneously trivial with regard to the fundamental nature of being, and yet crucial as a means of affording some small measure of difference – enough to allow the transaction of death-giving to take place. But the self-reflecting world, with its endless ‘to & fro’, will not let the oil and water of difference settle for too long, and, in

heightened moments, inner likeness can bleed through the membrane of the skin and suffuse the world of appearances:

& i see it & i see it wears my skin & i see it wears my blood & its
 eyes are the eyes of my father & its eyes are the eyes of my
 mother & my hands are shaking & my legs are shaking & my
 mind is shaking

[109]

Such declarations are not simply an acknowledgement of fundamental sameness, they are a recognition of the familial and ancestral bonds that many Indigenous groups profess with animals (§A1.7.) [338]. As such, they destabilise seemingly straightforward addresses to ancestral entities ('father grandfather ancestor' [44, 46, 104, 105, 118] and 'mother grandmother ancestor' [49, 53, 100, 102, 103, 105, 118]). It is no longer clear if such entities are human or animal; the who-ness and what-ness of the entire text is not easily resolved.

5.5. *Dream Communication*

In Haines's *Winter News*, it is primarily sound, rather than sight, that connects humans and animals in the dense woods of Alaska. In his poem 'A Moose Calling', he answers the animal's cry through mimicry – a 'ruse of the hunter' that he acknowledges as 'deceitful' (Haines 1993: 16). But in the succeeding poem, 'Horns', in which a moose speaks with 'a faint sigh of warning', Haines is left in rapture:

I stood there in the moonlight,
 and the darkness and silence

surged back, flowing around me,
 full of wild enchantment,
 as though a god had spoken.

(1993: 17)

The contrast between his human duplicity and the god-like clarity and veracity of the animal's utterance is evident, and it underlines Haines's moral ambivalence at the taking of animal life. It is only in their death – when they are silenced – that the animal gaze figures strongly:

Their frozen, moonlit eyes
 stare into the hollow
 of my skull; they listen
 as though I had
 something to tell them.

(1993: 19)

Here the death of the animal precipitates the *hollowing out* of the hunter; a kind of death that unites both killer and killed in 'the cold / red mantle of dawn' – an image that, in this context, acquires bloody overtones:

But a shadow rises
 at the edge of my dream –
 No one speaks;
 and afterwhile the cold,
 red mantle of dawn
 sweeps over our bodies.

(1993: 19)

This dream-encounter with animals has echoes of Indigenous animal-human

interactions, such as those of the Ojibwa (§A1.7.) [338]. Indeed, Morrison argues that dreaming is a key means of communication between humans and animals (Morrison 2000: 27). In certain respects, Haines's lingering animal presences resemble the 'latent sentience' discussed by Hill (§A1.8.) [351], and there is a sense of judgement and reproach in their gaze that distantly resembles the vengeful nature of animal spirits noted by Nelson (§A1.9.) [362], and particularly the 'hoodless caribou' characterised by Ingold – those unforgiving spirits of animals who did not give their consent to being killed (§A1.10.) [368].

Of course, dream-state encounters are crucial to *North of Here*. The entire text could reasonably be described as a series of dream-sequences interspersed by moments of wakefulness. However it is not always clear when the transition between these states occurs – as evinced by the repeated occurrence of the phrase 'am i awake / am i dreaming' [50, 52, 58, 68, 99, 114]. With regard to hunting itself, the pursuit and killing of the deer is presaged by a number of 'dream' encounters. The first is the vision of a deer that is also *not* a deer:

& in that thin copse of trees a handful of deer
 a handful of deer & the curve of the earth & the light low
 shimmering dusk
 & they scatter the deer but one holds its ground looks at me
 stares me down
 & it is a deer & not a deer something other we both know it
 but i can say no more
 & i am already running
 running down the light low shimmering dusk

why am i always running

always running

even in dream

am i not yet ready

am i still afraid

[57]

This initial meeting explicitly occurs during a dream, but depictions of subsequent encounters draw upon its imagery in order to suggest a dream-state, rather than providing such direct cues. Hence the ensuing petition to a four-legged ‘stranger’ ends with a repetition of lines that occur earlier:

& i am already running

running down the light low shimmering dusk

[85]

In this confrontation, much in the same way as Haines’s *stalking* moose, both human and animal are characterised as capable of adopting the role of hunter:

& i will put down these points if you put down those points

the time is not right for killing

[84]

Moreover, the animal does not seem to willingly consent to the customary role of *prey*:

& so let us go our separate ways on this day

on this day let us go

but on another day

one of us will die

[85]

This capacity for death-giving is writ large in the next sequence, in which the deer assumes the role of hunter in the inverted world within the polar star (§4.4.) [140]. Here it wears the mask of a woman in order to entice the human hunter into surrender:

& it is a woman & not a woman something other we both

know it but i can say no more

[...]

& at the last moment she puts down her mask

& i see its antlers

& i see its jutting teeth

& i hear these words in the air between us

i will be quickness itself my dear one

i will be quickness itself

[101]

There is an intended resonance here with Vitebsky's accounts of shamanic initiations in which novitiates are stalked by animal spirits until they submit to the initiatory trial (Vitebsky 2000: 60) (§A1.16.) [389]. In the oneiric world of *North of Here* both human and animal take turns to psychically pursue and kill each other. This echoes the way in which the dismemberment and reconstitution of the shamanic body in Indigenous circumpolar cultures is a spiritual analogue for the death and regeneration of the animal's corporeal body. The 'path' of both animal and human is therefore one of 'suffering'; both know what it is to be hunted [85].

In Haines's poem 'On The Divide', the dream-state communication between human and animal is understandably – even necessarily – one-sided. The implicitly

reproachful glances of the dead leave him speechless; a reticence which speaks volubly of his feelings of guilt. But in *North of Here* I wanted to explore as fully as possible Morrison's observation that humans and animals *communicate* in dreams. Hence there is conversation, reciprocal action, narrative and drama. Bound up in these interactions is what I consider to be a key issue between agential beings: *consent*.

5.6. *Consent*

Ingold raises this topic in relation to taboos surrounding the killing of caribou (§A1.10.) [368]. For the Inuit, consent is interpreted in the animal's performance of a particular action; it stops running and turns to face its pursuer. It so happens that this survival mechanism is a natural adaptation to being chased by endurance hunters such as wolves. A cynic might therefore suggest that consent is always given in such hunting encounters, but the elaborate folklore concerning the vengeful spirits of caribou who aren't given the opportunity to face their attacker would seem to speak against this. Clearly it is easier to use subterfuge to kill an animal, rather than tiring it out through pursuit – so the question of *apparent* consent is undoubtedly of great importance.²¹ From an Inuit's ontological perspective, it *would be* normal for a caribou to give itself to a hunter who performs the courtesy of pursuing it correctly, and more so because its death will, in any case, effect its regeneration and rebirth.

When thinking about these issues for *North of Here*, I became interested in the possibility of both hunter and hunted *facing* each other, and in exploring other kinds of exchanges that could take place in establishing consent. In developing these ideas, it became apparent to me that the timing of the kill would be crucial in such encounters,

²¹ Although, as has already been seen from Igpakuhak's 'hymn', this consent-seeking does not obtain for all circumpolar peoples.

and consequently the question ‘is it the right time’ – with an associated sense of anxiety – recurs through the ‘Hunt’ section of the poem. The final bargaining therefore revolves not only around assurances of the respectful treatment of the animal’s remains (§A1.10.) [368], but also its freedom of choice with respect to *when* it is killed:

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the waters
 & in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the soil
 so that you may come again & give yourself again
 trust me you know it is so
 so tell me
 is it the right time
 is it the right time

[109]

The deer’s response to this petition initially appears not only to be consensual, but a repeated entreaty to be killed; a form of begging that seems to echo the pleading tone of the hunter. But with the third repetition, the phrase is transformed into a reminder of their essential sameness, and of the echoic nature of a reality in which selfhood is an index of the selves of others:

will you kill me it asks
 will you kill me
 will you kill yourself

[109]

Like Haines’s hollowing out, the hunter is not immune to the repercussions of death-giving – to wounding – and both human and animal are intimately and inextricably bound together in the act of killing:

& our blood & our lives & our blood & our lives & our
blood & our lives & our blood & our lives

[110]

Crucially, however, the deer does not offer its consent and ‘turns away’ – but a chain of actions has already been instigated:

& it turns to leave but my hand is raised in hunger & in
desire & in fear & too late the shaft leaves my grip too late
the blade finds its mark & i see a great scar at its back a
bloody eye opening looking back at me looking back
& it turns & bares its jutting teeth & screams
& it stumbles into the waters its legs buckling shaking

[110]

The ‘bloody eye’ that looks back at the hunter is comparable to the staring ‘moonlit eyes’ of Haines’s dead animals. There is a similar sense of mute accusation, of censure – but in *North of Here* it is not the act of killing that provokes this sentiment, but rather the non-consensual nature of the exchange itself. Of course, Haines’s kills are also non-consensual, because there is no mechanism within his ontological apparatus that can facilitate the brokering of such an exchange. For a twentieth-century hunter, there is no conceivable situation in which an animal would consent to die. But in the shamanic world of the British LUP, as *conceived of* in *North of Here*, the entirety of human-animal interactions revolve around this critical issue, and, as with the Inuit described by Ingold (§A1.10.) [368], it is governed by strict taboos.

The result of breaching taboo is a curse. In the rarefied, reverberant world of the poem, the deer’s cry spills out beyond the confines of this single encounter. It becomes emblematic of every transgression that humanity has made in relation to the natural

world:

& that scream echoing the far back of hills
 that scream echoing & not diminishing but resounding &
 resonating & amplifying down the years
 a curse sung across the great gulf of time

[111]

From my reading of archaeological and anthropological literature, I would argue that – in non-hierarchical social universes in which worship has no place – ritual becomes the mechanism for making amends when taboos have been breached. Making formalised petitions to the spirits of offended animals is a means of rectifying wrongdoing (Rasmussen 1929: 127), thereby explicitly demonstrating the reinstatement of respectful behaviour:

& many reparations sought
 & many offerings made unto nival rivers
 & many rituals called into being
 & so on & so on
 the passing of blood from hand to hand
 down the long human chain

[111]

The lines ‘& so on & so on’ suggest a kind of contagion; a proliferation of ritualistic activity performed in response to many subsequent transgressions. Once spilled, the blood cannot be contained. The profundity of this non-consensual act ripples outwards in time. It implicitly addresses *our* contemporary guilt in the way we treat animals, but it also addresses the treatment of humanity by other animals. Hence the question of *hunter* and *hunted* moves beyond the 15,000-year horizon of Late-glacial Britain to the

early ancestors of humanity itself, approximately 4 million years ago:

erectus

afarensis

ancestor

is the deers cry but an echo of our own

a blood memory surfacing with each wound inflicted

for so many deaths have you received not looked for

so many sharp & narrow lives

but at what point in our lineage did we return transformed

when did the night & the day bleed together

from which wound did the killer in us emerge

& is this the true curse

this the darkness from which we cannot run

that we wear the mask of both the hunted & the hunter

that we have seen the life lived on both sides

[112]

The dynamic of humans hunting herbivores such as deer is therefore re-contextualised within the deeper history of the Homo and Australopithecus genera. Our plant-eating ancestors were once pursued by animals who dealt in death 'not looked for'. The poem suggests that this repeated wounding may have eventually precipitated the emergence of the human hunter – that the psychological wound suffered by shamanic initiates could be a distant, perhaps cellular, memory of living life on the 'other' side; of being hunted. This

observation is not necessarily an attempt to absolve humanity from the guilt associated with taking life, but rather to re-situate hunting within a broader system of destructive-regenerative action. In the greater scheme of reality, death ‘as a gift’ is passed from ‘hand to hand’ [111] and shared by all, in the giving and receiving:

for i have suffered & give only that which was given to me

[113]

In a bloody and violent world, all animals, whether human or other-than-human, are united by suffering:

& the horror that is our knowledge of what has already passed &

what has already passed an unendurable suffering

& the horror that is our knowledge of what is to come &

what is to come an insurmountable trial

[60]

5.7. *Reincarnation*

The final revelation in the ‘Echo’ section of the poem – hinted at repeatedly throughout the text – is that the cycle of life and death in the echoic universe is endless:

remember this it said

in the moment of your death

the knowing will come to you at last

the knowing that you have died innumerable times

& given death innumerable times
 & returned innumerable times
 & the joy in knowing that there is no end
 & the horror in knowing that there is no end

[114]

Critically, the joyful-horrific return to life is shown to be one that is common to all sentient beings. Moreover, outward form – the mask of difference that distinguishes human and animal – proves to be interchangeable:

& yes
 what mask
 what covering
 will you wear the next time
 when you pass through here
 through the hole in the earth i have made for you

[119]

The implication in this passage is that cross-species transformation is possible with each incarnation of the body, which in some ways parallels the therianthropy evident in the poem by Nalungiaq already discussed (Nalungiaq *in* Rothenberg & Rothenberg 1983: 3). But how does this equate with the idea that an animal reincarnates in the same form and continues to offer itself to respectful (human) hunters [109]? Clearly there is paradox – or at least complexity – here, but it is not without precedent in the ethnographic record. Consider this example from the Caribou Eskimo:

Heaven is a great land. In that land there are many holes. These holes we call stars. In the land of heaven lives pan`a (the woman up there) or tap`azuma inua (the one that rules over, or owns, what is up there). There is a mighty spirit, and

the aṇatkut hold that it is a woman. To her pass the souls of the dead. And sometimes, when many die, there are many people up there. When anything is spilt up there, it pours out through the stars and becomes rain or snow. The souls of the dead are re-born in the dwellings of pan'a, and brought down to earth again by the moon. When the moon is absent, and cannot be seen in the sky, it is because it is busy helping pan'a by bringing souls to earth. Some become human beings once more, others become animals, all manner of beasts. And so life goes on without end (ihōqan'itōq).

(Rasmussen 1930: 79)

In this mythological narrative the decision as to how each being reincarnates is accorded to 'a mighty spirit', but in *North of Here* there is ambiguity as to *who* makes such decisions. The lines 'what mask / what covering / will you wear the next time' might seem to indicate personal choice on the part of each individual, but the lines might also simply draw attention to the possibility that different forms may be *allocated* when the time comes. If the latter, is the decision made by the entity who creates the birthing 'hole in the earth', who is both a shamanic guide and 'mother father ancestor' [118]? If so, the who-ness and what-ness of this entity are never fully clarified.

As has already been seen, the text inextricably entwines the human, animal and familial, such that there is no clarity, just as there can be nothing that exists singularly, disentangled from all that it has touched:

& all the people you have known it said
 & all the people who have known you
 each human animal plant stone
 each hill cloud river word
 echoing commingling

this clot of life

this clot of being

[114]

This bloody imagery imposes an implicitly ancestral link between these seemingly disparate forms. Human, animal, plant, stone, hill, cloud, river and word are consanguineous; they are *of* the same blood. In a sense, the question of *which* form an individual may reincarnate into is immaterial, as *all* forms bleed into each other. *North of Here* presents a reality of leakages; its non-hierarchical universe has no absolute boundaries between nominally different categories of being. Rather, the essence of being moves fluidly and simultaneously among the plethora of forms – it is the ‘sacredness in all things’ [62].

In another sense, all such forms – being imbued with the same essence, and having fundamental internal sameness – are aspects of each other:

& these lives are part of the same whole therefore

& life is nothing less & nothing more than singular therefore

[...]

& the world is the self reflecting self

the self reflecting

self

[63]

Like the omnipresence of ‘sacredness’, the ‘self reflecting self’ generates another paradox. It proposes not just similarity in all forms, but the existence of a *singular* entity – the world – which appears to manifest in a *plurality* of individual forms. In some ways, this mirrors the interplay between the solitary and the manifold discussed earlier with reference to land (§5.1.) [169]. Crucially, however, the insistence here is that

individual identity itself is illusory. Sameness is collapsed into oneness.

5.8. *Otherness*

Nevertheless, the reality and non-reality of that illusion is central to the text, such that it is ‘endlessly dissolving & resolving’ [81]. Identity is something that must be both acknowledged and yet moved beyond:

& i must discover myself & discard myself
assemble disassemble assemble disassemble

[106]

Any sense of wholeness – of true connectedness to the rest of existence – is ‘north of here’; always beyond reach. A sense of otherness therefore persists, even in relation to those who are closest to us:

am i still who i think i am
you who know me would say so
but you have not seen what i have seen
& so i must seek out an other

[83]

The ‘other’ who is sought here is implicitly an animal, ‘a figure on all fours’ who is both a ‘stranger’ and yet knows more intimately the seeker’s true nature:

we are alike you & i it says
we are alike
[...]
you have opened your body & you have opened your self so

that others may be spared

but you will suffer because of this

[84]

Such uses of the term ‘other’ within *North of Here* have none of the pejorative connotations associated with the act of *othering*; of excluding those who are perceived to be different. Rather, it is used to connote the ‘animal other’ [87, 100] – an *other-than-human person* (§A1.7.) [338]. This conception of animals-as-persons is *other* to our usual ideas. Again, Kimmerer’s observations about English pronouns highlight the way in which animals are often thought of as *objects*, rather than *subjects*. In a discussion with some of her students, one of them argues that the attribution of *he* or *she* to animals is disrespectful to them: ‘We shouldn’t project our perceptions onto them. They have their own ways – they’re not just people in furry costumes.’ (Kimmerer 2013: 57).

But this characterisation is in some ways *exactly* how animals are perceived by Indigenous cultures: *humans and animals (and others) are persons with different outward forms*. There are more kinds of ‘people’ than simply human beings, and indeed Kimmerer goes on to suggest as much:

Imagine walking through a richly inhabited world of Birch people, Bear people, Rock people, beings we think of and therefore speak of as persons worthy of our respect, of inclusion in a peopled world.

(2013: 58)

This is not a projection of humanness to others, but rather an acknowledgement of fundamental sameness that transcends human uniqueness. The insistence that animals ‘have their own ways’ has, in some ways, resulted in their *othering* – in the pejorative sense – within our rationalist-materialist world-view. The denial of similarity has resulted in estrangement. In the example that Kimmerer cites, it is her student’s

respectfulness that precipitates this denial, but Kimmerer herself gently suggests that respectful behaviour should result in ‘inclusion’ rather than exclusion.

All animals in *North of Here* seem to possess knowledge, a ‘circuit of meaning’ which in some cases is hermetic and undivulged [69]. Other animals gesture towards sharing their insights:

the fox calls to me from the failing black
the fading black

says there is a way to reside within this ache of darkness
beneath the earth

[71]

Still others seem to possess both self-knowledge and vital intelligence as to the condition of reality and of other agential beings. Nowhere is this more poignant and revelatory than in the encounter between hunter and hunted:

will you kill me it asks
will you kill me
will you kill yourself

[109]

These sentiments are communicated ‘with words made of silence’ [108] by an animal that is ‘a deer & not a deer’ [108]. That this animal is ‘something other’ [108], like the ‘figure skinned in ochre & wearing the mask of a deer’ [67, 113] is in no doubt, although exactly what kind of entity it is the text does not make clear.

As has already been discussed, this encounter and others like it occur in a dream-

world – a space that facilitates the communication between animal and human. The hunt itself is therefore a psychical confrontation, a visionary narrative that is made possible by shamanic trance:

& i am standing in the river
 the great river the dark river
 & its edges are within me
 & its edges are beyond reach
 & i awoke
 & i can feel my stomach acid rising
 & a sweat is covering my skin

[106]

The kind of consensual killing that *North of Here* proposes is consequently shamanic in nature. The hunter-seeker has undergone the trial of initiation ‘so that others may be spared’ [85], and assumes the unlooked-for role of mediator between the human and animal worlds. Consent is brokered through psychical bargaining between a human who has been made ‘strange’ [65] and an animal who is also *not* an animal [57, 108]. In the shamanic realm they appear as equals and may hunt and *kill* each other, and, although death in this oneiric reality is not fatal in the common understanding of the word, it nevertheless has echoes in the ‘world of flesh’:

& the deer looking back at him the deer looking back with
 vacant eyes & he slides the blade between its ribs & gives it
 the gift of death not looked for the gift of life

[110]

The vacancy of the deer’s eyes is suggestive of the phenomenon known as *soul-loss*, normally discussed in shamanic contexts with reference to human illness, and which is

perceived as the result of the soul being ‘abducted by spirits’ (Vitebsky 2000: 61). In *North of Here*, the shaman hunts the deer’s soul whilst his father hunts its corporeal body. In shamanically killing the deer, its psychical substance is severed from its physical counterpart, which results in the deer ‘looking back’ at the father, apparently signalling consent – an echo of the real-world action of reindeer discussed by Ingold (Ingold 2000a: 122) (§A1.10.) [368]. In this instance, however, consent has not been brokered, but the ultimate effect on the deer’s corporeal body is identical, and there is:

... no way to tell him
no way to let him know
that the time was not right
that the time is not right

[110]

This entire elaborate and ritualised process – the ‘way of knowing’ [104] – therefore brings to life the observation put forward by Morrison that:

Every day (one should also say every night), human beings and animals communicate in dreams, a state of consciousness which bridges cosmological dimensions, including objective time and space.

(Morrison 2000: 27).

In terms of anthropological contexts, this accords quite well with shamanism in Indigenous cultures, as it draws on Vitebsky’s assertion that practitioners can engage directly with animal spirits and persuade them to give their corporeal bodies to the community that the shaman represents (Vitebsky 2000: 57) (§A1.16.) [389]. Winkelman argues that shamanism privileges humans by allowing them to gain ‘control of animal spirits’ (Winkelman 2002: 1877), but this conflicts with the essentially respectful, consensual dynamic that is central to *North of Here*. Indeed, the most powerful way that

I could find to explore this issue was, paradoxically, by pursuing its opposite. It is noticeable, therefore, that neither human [102] nor deer [109] finally consent to being wounded by the other. With regard to the former, the deer uses something akin to Haines's 'ruse of the hunter' – a womanly disguise which fills its human prey with desire, such that he wants 'to yield' [101]. But when the true nature of the encounter is revealed the human tries to scream and turn away. There is a similar deception at the heart of the human's efforts. A special skin and mask 'saved for this purpose' [106] are worn in an attempt to get close to his quarry, and – although there is a petition for consent – hunger, desire and fear override the deer's rejection and the spear is launched.

In tracking how animal-human interactions may fall short of respectful behaviour, this exploration of taboo-breaking thereby engages more realistically with the necessary pragmatisms of LUP life. The poem's thinking about the past therefore isn't idealised – it doesn't fall into the trap of eulogising a lost way of being-in-the-world. Rather, it immerses the reader in a nexus of inter-species bonds of obligation that are very different from our own. Central to this dynamic is a form of two-way communication between animals and humans that 'bridge[s] cosmological dimensions' (Morrison 2000: 27) and enters into 'nonordinary reality' (Winkelman 2002: 1876). Such a conception of life – one which knits the shadowy landscapes of altered states of consciousness into the everyday – may seem far removed from *where*, and *who*, we are now, but Joseph Campbell reminds us of a thrilling proximity:

By night, however, when the sun has set, the mind turns inwards and, together with its universe, which is now a reflex of itself, 'doth change Into something rich and strange'. The forms now beheld are self-luminous and in definition ambiguous, unsubstantial and yet insuppressibly affective.

(Campbell 1988: ix)

Dream is a quotidian experience for most, if not all, of us, and its ‘nonordinary reality’ is somewhat analogous to that encountered by vision-seekers such as *Lame Deer* (§4.6.) [160]. Dreams provide access to experiences that are ‘rich and strange’, and yet we – for the most part – pay little credence to them. In *North of Here*, the knowledge that ‘comes to you in the dark’ [53] is central to understanding all of reality, and vital in comprehending our place among the society of beings, human and other-than-human.

6. *Time*

In the following chapter, I will examine notions of beginnings, both with respect to the creative act and to the world and mythology of the poem itself. The finitude of individual lives will then be contextualised within the broader temporal reality of the poem, a reality in which vast tracts of time are broached in intimate, human terms. I will then go on to discuss how the distant past of the Late-glacial period is brought into sharp relief in the poem, in contrast to the relative proximity of conventional ‘British’ mythology. I will also reflect on the subject of individual volition in relation to the agency of time itself, before making a comparative study of the work of Clayton Eshleman, a poet who has generated a significant body of work focused on the LUP caves of southern France.

6.1. *Beginnings*

Before *North of Here* begins proper, it is prefaced by a circumlocutory statement that appears to call attention to the artifice of literature:

that this line appears new & complete & full formed & clear
 & perfectly distinct is an illusion a lie a betrayal a trick of
 the light that it has been cast down & broken & gathered &
 mended is nearer the truth that it is an arbitrary juncture in
 the process of endless reassembly is as good a definition as
 any as good bad indifferent as any

[43]

In point of fact, this was the first piece of writing that I produced for *North of Here*, along with the text that came to act as an endnote for the entire work:

so many erasures so many deletions so many effacings so

many extinctions so many wipings out so many annihilations
 so many occlusions so many obscurations so many coverings
 so many suffocations so many burials so many maskings so
 many eclipses so many blottings so many overwritings so
 many obfuscations so many shroudings so many secretings so
 many hidings so many suppressions so many cover ups so
 many hush jobs so many smoke screens so many hoaxes so
 many decoys so many con games so many scams

[120]

Both ‘parts’ were originally conceived as a single *body* of text, but a linguistic scalpel was subsequently applied to it, and, like the Primordial Giant (§4.4.) [140], it was divided so that the living matter of the poem could be inserted into it. The process of its creation therefore echoed the Palaeolithic creation myth with which *North of Here* is intimately concerned.

That these lines – in their metatextual quality – appear as something *other* in relation to the rest of the poem sequence perhaps gestures towards the ‘other forms’ [44] that the work might have taken in its unfolding. In a sense, they appear as the relics of other literatures, not quite fully effaced or overwritten. Or, more simply, like the Primordial Giant itself, they are the residue of mythic beginnings; the ground upon which the rest of the poem walks. As such, these texts don’t perform the conventional explicatory tasks assigned to a *foreword* or *afterword*, although they do provide vital, if oblique, thematic clues to the work as a whole. The self-referential tone of the Foreword, for example, bleeds into the subsequent poem, such that the question ‘where do i begin’ [44] becomes a writerly one, presaging the later concern with the praxis of vision-seeking:

how do i begin

mother

grandmother

ancestor

teach me how to see

[53]

From its very outset, then, *North of Here* is freighted with ambiguity and uncertainty. The task of *seeing* – and specifically, of seeing into the past, as intimated by the subtitle ‘Towards a Deep Mythography of Britain’ [41] – is brought under direct scrutiny.

6.2. *Primordality*

If the giant of conventional myth is somehow *primordial* – there being no question as to how the creature itself came into being – *North of Here* as a work of poetry is predicated on the ‘endless reassembly’ [43] of previous literary material. Its body has been divided and reunited countless times in the process of writing and re-writing. Needless to say, this idea of poetic synthesis is an enactment of the metaphysical concepts at work within the poem: the processes of cyclicity – of psychical and corporeal death and rebirth. The notion of *primordality* – of an absolute beginning – is therefore repeatedly called into question in the text [43, 59, 62, 81, 89, 96, 97], and particularly in the following passage:

remember this it said

there is nothing primeval nothing primordial nothing

original nothing first there is only now it said the circuitry

of life ever repeating

[59]

Accordingly, the primogeniture of the text's own 'primordial' giant is explicitly cast into doubt:

there is a one who was before us
 though not the first
 [...]
 & the upright spear that pierces its skull
 & although not the first
 & who threw it no one knows
 that spear through its skull is the pole or post that holds the
 sky aloft that keeps the skys tent from falling

though not the first & only just for now

[98]

The triple repetition of 'not the first' emphasises the uncertainty surrounding ideas of true beginnings in a world that is an ever repeating closed circuit [59, 60, 114, 115]. In the Late-glacial realm of *North of Here*, time is less linear and more circular – an endlessly eddying current in the great river's flow. In some respects this uncertainty speaks to the central *problem* of creation in world mythology, which, according to E.J. Michael Witzel, 'is often shrouded in mystery' (Witzel 2012: 105). The concept of the *primordial* – especially if it manifests ambiguously as darkness, chaos or water – is a way of resolving the difficulty without sacrificing that mystery. It is ultimately impenetrable and unquestionable. The idea of a primordial *entity*, however, is more problematic, as there is always the implicit question of ancestry; a chain of being. In Eddic mythology, the god-giant Ymir (§4.4.) [140], the 'first being', is born through the

‘contact of ice from the north and the warm breezes of the south’ (2012: 108). In some ways this accords with Indigenous perspectives such as the Ojibwa, who claim ancestry with elements such as the wind (Hallowell 1975: 157), but it still imposes a point of inception – from the *non-being* of ice and warmth to the *being* of Ymir. By contrast, in *North of Here*, the land-bear is simply ‘before’ [98] rather than *first*, and there are implicitly other *befores*, in an endless cycle of death and rebirth, stretching into the unknowable deep past. Indeed, the prolix nature of the Afterword – with its surfeit of *so manys* – speaks to this notion of countless *befores* and *afters* that have been lost to the most recent act of creation.

Nevertheless, it is possible to glimpse back to a past beyond the *latest* beginning. Earlier in the text, the immediate progenitor of the ‘little bear’ is alluded to in the form of a ‘great bear’, who is textually associated with *cold* in the form of ‘a huge white animal’ [45], whilst also being perceived by the little bear as ‘a woman singing / gently singing cradle songs’ [49]. On one level, there is an equivalency here between *North of Here* and the Ymir myth – the world-being arises out of similar elemental conditions. But the cold of *North of Here* is altogether different; it is an agential being, rather than a state of (primordial) non-being. As such, it is not dissimilar to the characterisation of the sky and the land as a pair of eternally entwined lovers in this Maori myth:

Heaven (Rangi) and earth (Papa) lay in close embrace, so intertwined that their children dwelt in darkness in this narrow realm. The children resolved to rend their parents apart, several attempted in vain, until Tane-mahuta, Lord of Forests, forced heaven upwards from the breast of his wife and let in the light of day.

(Witzel 2012: 129)

However, even the cold of *North of Here* is not primordial, but rather exists in a state of

flux – coming and going, motivated by ‘an unceasing hunger’ [45]. The answer to the very question of beginnings therefore cannot be a definitive one, but is instead an index of imaginative capacity:

how far can you cast your mind back
as far as that hill ridge
or the next

[44]

Like other sureties in the text, the ultimate answer is always ‘north of here’ [45] – it is continually beyond reach. This conflation of time and landscape is not merely metaphoric, but an acknowledgement of the deep histories of the land itself – that its presence (and present) is an accumulation of its pasts. It is also a reminder that ‘north’ as a destination invariably involves a journey into landscapes whose ‘cryotic soils’ [45] hold the preserved remains of our ancient predecessors.²² The journey that is *North of Here* is temporal, as well as geographical. It is a narrative sequence incorporating various movements through time.

6.3. Transcending the Individual

The first – and most important – of these movements is through and beyond the human body as a temporal vessel for an individual life. The image of inception in which ‘the bones [are] cast’ [44] conjures a sense of bodily mending that is entirely consonant with the poetic line being ‘cast down & broken & gathered & mended’ [43] in the Foreword, as well as the ‘disarticulation & rearticulation’ [65] of the shamanic and mythical body elsewhere in the text. However, it also carries the sense of a game of chance, and it is this meaning that is developed in the immediate context: ‘but surely there were other

²² Such as the 31,000 year old human remains found recently at Yana, Siberia (Sikora *et. al.* 2019).

forms / other faces of the dice' [44]. Crucially, this imagery foreshadows the concern with reincarnated forms that is central to the closing stanzas of the poem sequence:

& yes
 what mask
 what covering
 will you wear the next time
 when you pass through here
 through the hole in the earth i have made for you

[119]

Is it possible that the allocation of corporeal form is not self-determined, but simply a lottery; a game of cosmic dice? The 'great gulf' [60, 111] of text – some 89 pages in this thesis – between these two connected passages would seem to diminish the likelihood of the reader making that very connection. The *forgetting* that the reader may experience due to their own temporally prescribed (i.e. *linear*) engagement with the text therefore enacts the failures of memory that punctuate the work itself:

remember this it said
 in the moment of your death
 the knowing will come to you at last

 the knowing that you have died innumerable times
 & given death innumerable times
 & returned innumerable times

[114]

It is no coincidence that *North of Here* both opens and closes with lines that revolve around the same thematic issue. Although the text itself cannot escape the linearity of

the written word, its profoundly echoic, repetitive and circumlocutory texture point to the fact that it is a circular work. To return to the opening lines directly after reading the ending is to bring them into a proximity that is denied by a singular, linear reading. To do so is to perform a similar chronological feat as the poetry; to fold time back on itself so that futures and pasts bleed into each other, ‘echoing commingling’ [114]. Moreover, to re-read the *text-that-is-a-body-that-is-a-life* – and to experience it *differently* – is to reincarnate; to re-enact the ‘each the same / each different’ [88] experience of re-instantiation that the poem sequence proposes. The very saturation of *North of Here* with reiterative resonances is intended to evoke a sense of déjà vu. At every possible moment it seeks to alert the reader to its own eddying hyper-reality.

6.4. Time-Depth

The crucial question of beginnings, once it is cast beyond the frame of the individual life, precipitates the dissolution of the narrative self; a dissolution that is characterised as a kind of falling [47]. The act of seeing becomes visionary and trans-personal, as a consequence:

& when i look down i see my fathers hands

& he his fathers hands

& so on & so on

down the long human chain

[46]

This seeing is visionary because it is ancestral. Just as the *seeker* in *North of Here* – the central, questioning ‘i’ – calls upon ancestral voices and guides, so the sight that is granted is infused with that ancestral wisdom. Sight becomes insight. These voices are in the *present* of the poem, but it is not clear *when* this present is. Have they been called

from the past in a kind of literary séance, or has the poem moved beyond the seeker's own temporal realm? There is only ambiguity. The ground has fallen away, and the words glimmer in a kind of atemporal darkness. Vision becomes a form of seeing in that dark; a dark which is like the void of the page through which the words fall; a darkness at the edge of poetry, something 'vast' and 'immeasurable' that poetry tries to illuminate.

As I have already stated, vision-seeking is precarious (§4.7.) [164], and poetry that tries to *look beyond* is prone to failure. The darkness is cloying, always threatening to engulf everything else:

& when i look down i see my fathers hands & he his fathers

hands & so on & so on down the long human chain

& our hands holding on to each other in that vast

immeasurable dark holding on to each other

& our hands holding on to each other

our hands holding on in that vast immeasurable dark

holding on

& that vast immeasurable dark holding on

[116]

If the light of vision fades, then all that can be seen is darkness. Another paradox. The last line of this section would seem to imply the ultimate triumph of the dark over poetic – and ancestral – vision, and indeed earlier in the poem there is 'a darkness reaching beyond sight' [115]. This is not necessarily pessimistic, but pragmatic. There is an

endless ‘to & fro’ of remembering and forgetting, joy and horror, seeing and not seeing, within *North of Here*. The line ‘& when i look down i see my fathers hands’ is repeated three times at different intervals in the text. The act of vision-seeking can be re-instantiated, just as life itself is cyclically leaving and returning. If there is failure, there is also the possibility of trying again.

It is fitting that a moment of intimacy – of two people holding hands – becomes the image from which the ‘long human chain’ of prehistory is envisaged. A sequence of slender moments spooling backwards recursively into the seemingly infinite past. The eternal is born from the transitory. These lines were also among the first that I wrote, and they are in many ways the foundational construct of the entire poem. *North of Here* uses the prism of personal experience and reflection to imagine the deep past. When I began this programme of PhD research, I had no idea that my writing would enter into such a personal domain. It is unlike any of my previous work in this respect.

Despite the vast amount of time being covered – some 18,000 years – it is bridged in human terms; some ‘six hundred generations’ [48], which somehow brings that distant epoch closer to us, making it more tangible. The act of *casting the mind back*, a seemingly impossible task from the outset of the poem, seems instinctual and almost effortless in the context of the *hand-holding* image. The links in the chain are traversed in a moment of bone, muscle and blood:

to cast the mind back
 six hundred generations
 bones muscles blood
 terminal pleistocene
 ice veins

debris tails

boulder lobes

[48]

However, this vertiginous trip down through the centuries is abortive, as it is the land of Britain itself that is immediately tasked with the feat of memory, and the narrative slips into a mythic register:

little one

dreamer

can you cast your mind back

to before you were

islanded

[48]

Nevertheless, the land-giant is described in intimate, familial terms: it is a ‘little one’ [48] who calls for its ‘mother / grandmother / ancestor’ [49] and is ‘wrapped [...] in skins’ [46]. The similarities with the seeker, who repeatedly petitions ancestors, and who is addressed in the following way, are undeniable:

come to me little one

are you cold

i will wrap you in these skins

come

[46]

This elision of the human and other-than-human continues in the following section, ‘Dream’, culminating in a shamanic initiatory experience in which the seeker dredges up the cellular memory of ‘a blade so sharp it could cleave the world’ [65] – an echo of

the mythical land-giant's dream-memory of the blade-like ice of the Late-glacial [49]. These vivid, hyper-real consonances between ostensibly different classes of being clearly enact the underlying metaphysical tenet of similarity that is central to *North of Here*; everything is knotted together – the lines of identity are inextricably intertwined. Crucially, however, it also enables the life of a human and the life of a landscape to be drawn into oblique correspondence, such that temporal distinctions become blurred and distorted, thereby facilitating 'to & fro' movement across vast tracts of time.

In such a context, poetic logic presides over reason, and the following question can be equally asked of both human and landscape:

what did you dream of
all those millennia
under the ice

[49, 55]

Just as consciousness moves outwards and beyond the individual human, so too can the vastness of other-than-human time be brought into human experience. Everything partakes of each other. And it is through dreaming that such experiences can occur:

& we ride in her song so far so very far that the stars themselves
begin to shift
& deneb gives way to delta cygni to vega
[...]
& i lie in the mouth of the cave for what seems like millennia

& i lie in the mouth of the cave until the time is right

[101]

Here the experience of cosmic time, during which the precessional cycle of polar stars

occurs, is incorporated into a human narrative. Chronologies are stretched or compressed. The drama concludes in a moment of death-giving which the perpetrator assures ‘will be quickness itself’ [101]. Immense aeons of stellar time, during which countless billions lived and died, are brought to the point of a single second; a single gesture. When the dreamer wakes ‘the whole tent [is] shaking’ [102], signifying the universal, cosmological importance of this individual, ephemeral act.

6.5. *Before*

If the treatment of time in *North of Here* thus far has seemed somewhat elliptical, then the ‘Before’ section of the poem addresses the subject more simply and directly. It forms a series of questions and answers in the following format:

[& what was there] before x [i said]

y [it said]

The motivation behind writing this part of the poem was to demonstrate as clearly and succinctly as possible just how far back in time the Late-glacial period was – in relation to issues of geographical, ecological, mythological, spiritual and cultural significance that we commonly hold to be *ancient*. It therefore acts as a vehicle for communicating some of the knowledge that I acquired during the research phase of this PhD project. This knowledge I feel provides a vital context for the rest of the poem itself, by emphatically situating the drama of *North of Here* in the *deep past* (of 18,000 to 15,000 BP). The first question, for example, concerns ‘the flood’:

& what was there before the flood i said

ice it said

& before the archipelago i said

the dogger umbilicus it said

[76]

The flood was a real event that occurred approximately 8,500 BP (Preston 2008: 24)²³, just over half the span of years between the present and the Late-glacial. The event itself precipitated the formation of the archipelago that we now call the British Isles and Ireland. Floods as mythological themes exist in several cultures including the Judeo-Christian, Mesopotamian, Indian and Polynesian (Witzel 2012: 177), but there are no extant flood narratives in ‘British’ mythologies because nothing survives from this (comparatively *late*) period. The earliest mythological material that can be called British comes from the Celtic influx of peoples associated with the Hallstatt culture of central Europe, c. 2,650 – 2,550 BP (Ross 1974: 34).²⁴ What is often called the *ancient* culture of the British Isles is therefore relatively recent, when set against the world of LUP hunter-gatherers.

Similarly, the next question concerns itself with the mythical wildwood, a staple of folklore and fable:

& before the wildwood

the plain & the age of grasses

[76]

In the wake of so much deforestation in the historical period, the thought that much of Britain was anciently covered in woodland alternately conjures images of an Arcadian or barbaric past, depending on your point of view. According to Bezant, by the time John Evelyn had published *Sylva* in 1664, ‘the notion of the ancient and mysterious British forest with its secretive woodland lore already held a romanticised position in the national psyche’ (Bezant 2016: 4). In part these sentiments no doubt drew upon

²³ Milner and Mithen identify it rather broadly as occurring between 7,000 and 6,000 BC (i.e. 8,950 to 7,950 BP) (Milner and Mithen 2009: 54).

²⁴ Ross gives the dates 700 to 600 BC.

mythology, such as the Welsh otherworldly realm of Annwn from the First Branch of the *Mabinogi*, ‘a place of eternal youth and boundless food’ that Bezant locates ‘in the steeply wooded and winding Cych Valley’ (2016: 3). There is a sense that such a woodland is somehow primordial; that it was ever so, because it existed before Western civilisation. When the Romans came to Britain their towns formed a sanctuary from the encroaching wilderness:

Those who entered the civic boundaries took refuge there from the forests, which became a frontier of margin against which the civic, strictly institutional space was defined. The god of sacred boundaries in Roman religion was Silvanus, deity of the outlying wilderness ...

(Pogue Harrison 1992: 49)

Ross identifies Silvanus as one of a pantheon of native (i.e. Celtic) gods, and specifically as a ‘patron god of hunters and wild beasts’ (Ross 1974: 213). She avers that the Roman soldiery ‘in this alien northern countryside ... would doubtless take good care not to antagonise the “god of the place”’ (Ross 1974: 215). Further north still, Alec Finlay identifies in Uist a ‘Hebridean outlier of a prehistoric savannah that we know as The Great Wood’ (Finlay 2016: 87).²⁵ This framing would seem to reaffirm the primordial aspect of such kinds of woodland, but as ecological analysis has shown, the true ‘dense deciduous forest’ of oak, alder and elm only began to cover the island of Britain after c. 8,500 BP, when the climate began to ameliorate further (Preston 2008: 24). Long before the peninsula was cut off from mainland Europe, ‘the plain & the age of grasses’ endured for many millennia. The world of *North of Here* is emphatically of a time *before* our earliest (woodland) mythologies.

‘Before’ concludes with a series of questions that bring the ontological concerns

²⁵ A savannah is a mixed woodland-grassland ecosystem that has come to be associated with tropical climates. Finlay is possibly alluding to the boreal phase of more open woodland in Post-glacial Britain, c. 11,000 to 8,500 BP.

of the text to a single-pointed focus:

& what was there before worship i said

respect it said

& before reverence i said

respect it said

& before sacrifice

respect

[79]

These are not events from the distant mythological or ecological past, but states of being-in-the-world. They explicitly orient the reader towards a radically different pre-theistic ontology; one that is predicated on a non-hierarchical view of the universe. As such, they are – to my mind – entirely new and alien to contemporary Western thought, even if they are from an incredibly ancient culture. They draw upon a previous statement in the text that overturns commonly accepted definitions of sacredness:

think of an other way it said

think of this for example

of the possibility of sacredness in all things

the shimmer of life itself it said

the firedance of atoms

[62]

Reverence and worship are usually closely identified with sacredness in our understanding, but in the all-is-sacred world these attitudes fall away, or more accurately, they never existed, and ‘respect’ is revealed to be the fundamental guiding

principle (§A1.13.) [378]. Of all the sections of *North of Here*, ‘Before’ is perhaps the most transparently didactic; it is a call-and-response between seeker and guide. As such, it operates on a more prosaic level than other parts of the text, but its content necessitates its inclusion, rather than it being relegated to a footnote or contextual essay. That such unambiguous assertions should exist *in the poem* is vital to a work that is trying to enact those very assertions. The emphatic repetition of ‘respect’ in the final lines, for example, is intended as a bell-note that resonates through the rest of the poem sequence. It underscores each action between human and other-than-human – especially death-giving, during which consent must be brokered (§6.6.) [230]. It also creates anxiety in the seeker’s mind, because the seeker is forced to think about all the *others* in the world for the first time:

but how to make my way through the world i said
 when each step impinges upon an other
 when each action displaces or absorbs an other
 when everything must eat & be eaten

 & how to hold that knowledge in the mind & not be
 paralysed by horror fear anxiety

 did i take from you unnecessarily
 did i not give of myself when it was my time

[81]

When contemplating an ontology that does not privilege the human, a sense of paralysis ensues. Landscape is ‘not a neutral space’ (McFadyen 2006: 121) (§A1.1.) [321] – it is ‘aware, sensate, personified’ (Nelson 1986: 14) (§A1.9.) [362]. The force of this

revelation is too much. The world becomes alive in a way that is unbearable. Its very fecund *person-ness* is somehow horrific.

6.6 *The Right Time*

The question of ‘my time’ in the preceding passage would seem to imply a degree of fate or predetermination in the interactions of humans and other-than-humans. This idea is certainly borne out in the customs of some circumpolar Indigenous groups such as the Naskapi. Their ‘Caribou Man’, for example, has control of the lives of the caribou under his protection:

The living caribou emerge in a migration from their summer domain apportioned to the hunters whose religious observances have been properly carried out under the instructions of their dream mentors.

(Speck 1935: 84)

Here the word ‘apportioned’ clearly indicates that the animals are given to human hunters in recompense for their previous respectful behaviour – there would appear to be no volition on the part of the individual animal as to *when* it dies. Compare this with the following lines from *North of Here*:

& in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the waters
 & in the world of flesh i will return your bones to the soil
 so that you may come again & give yourself again
 trust me you know it is so
 so tell me
 is it the right time
 is it the right time

Respectful consent-seeking is individually negotiated, and is distinctly time-contingent. As previously discussed (§5.6.) [196], when conceptualising human-animal encounters, the timing of when an animal consents to be killed seemed crucial to me in demonstrating its capacity for volition and self-determinacy. But it strikes me now that the phrase ‘right time’ is not unambiguous. I do not necessarily find this problematic. As with the issue of reincarnated corporeal form, there is a degree of indeterminacy over who, or what, is making the choice. Here, ‘right time’ might simply refer to an allotted moment in the animal’s future when it is fated to die; a fate of which the animal is starkly cognizant. Is it possible to conceive of time itself as an agential being who moves through the actions of others? There are clues in the text that might hint at this:

& so these marks i leave here

legible now but for how long

& the words they make

are they my own

did i write them

for i have felt them gather me like pollen

or collect on my surfaces like dew

move through me like mist or wildfire

& so is something else speaking us

writing us

as it passes among us

are we landforms that have mistaken weather for thought

for selfhood

[96]

Here the question of individual agency is addressed with reference to speech and language, but it could quite easily extend to other actions. The question ‘is something else speaking us / writing us’ might equally allude to the stories of our lives, rather than simply our use of language. The ensuing line, ‘are we landforms that have mistaken weather for thought’ is, of course, a paradox, as apprehension (and therefore misapprehension) is a quality of thought. Given that *North of Here* is intimately concerned with paradox, is there a way to reconcile such matters? Can an individual think whilst also being a vessel for the thoughts of others? To what extent are our actions the result of our own will? How much of our lives are imitative, impulsive and reactive – a consequence of the thoughts and actions of others – rather than reasoned and proactive? To what extent are we really in control? Is what we call *instinct* actually the *volition* of time itself?

In the world of the text in which the self is endlessly shattered and reconstructed from the selves of others, it is possible to conceive of thought and volition as also ‘moving to & fro to & fro’ [81], *within, behind, and beyond* [100] the individual. In one moment knowledge, memory and certainty might dwell within an individual, and in another moment they may disappear. This is not to imply a fundamental dualism; there is not simply *knowledge* and *ignorance*, *memory* and *forgetting*, *certainty* and *uncertainty*, but rather an unsettling flow between and around these opposing states. As such, absolute and unequivocal answers to questions are rarely given in the text. Definitives are hard to come by.

Returning to the ambiguity of the line ‘is it the right time’, this question perhaps makes sense as a reflection of how *flow* prevails over *fixity*. Time, which of course is

never motionless, becomes a critical concern. It is the key point of reference about which all interactions revolve. Timeliness is everything. Accordingly, flux is evident in the animal's response, which seems to ebb between both possible answers, without ever being conclusive:

will you kill me it asks

will you kill me

will you kill yourself

[109]

Such convolutions, where a straightforward *may I kill you?* is framed in terms of 'is it the right time' may also reflect the circumlocutory logic of taboo; to broach the subject directly might exceed the limits of respectful behaviour. The hunter submits to the protocols of 'right' human-animal interactions, just as both submit to the ongoing *rightness* of time.

6.7. Longevity

The previously quoted lines about writing's legibility speak to a broader concern with the endurance of written communication – of mark-making – and to questions of longevity in general:

& so these marks i leave here

legible now but for how long

[96]

These lines succeed the depiction of Pin Hole Cave Man (§A1.4., A1.8., A1.15., A1.17.) [327, 351, 384, 394], a 'figure scratched' on the 'single shattered rib bone' of a woolly

rhinoceros from the Creswell Crags cave complex:

a figure of vaguely human shape

no more than five centimetres in height

its penis erect & its face pointed

its face pointed as if wearing a mask

its face pointed like that of a bear

[94]

The artefact itself has an unclear history. Originally the bone was thought to be reindeer (Armstrong 1929: 28), and then bovid (Smith 1992: 91), and finally woolly rhinoceros (British Museum),²⁶ but Jacobi *et. al.* have deduced from fossil evidence that this animal ‘became extinct in Britain after c. 35 cal ka BP’ (Jacobi *et. al.* 2009: 2551). There are numerous possibilities as to the object’s provenance, but given that the woolly rhinoceros had been absent from Britain for over 20 thousand years, it is extremely unlikely that the bone – with or without its carving – was discovered on the peninsula. The most plausible idea is that it was brought to Creswell Crags as an already carved artefact, given that it would be surely unusual for a traveller to carry an unadorned bone hundreds of miles north from the greater European continent. In my view, to look at this object is to be transported – not back to the time of its carving, but further back, to an unspecified, unknowable time for which the object itself acts as a signifier; as an ancestral totem, as a device linking its owner (whether individual or group) to their intimate past. In this respect I agree with Armstrong’s suggestion that it is dancing; moving ever further back in time, like the chain of hands stretching into the dark:

26 Source: https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1528116&partId=1. Accessed 19/03/20.

& to think that those who are relict to us had their own relics
to look back at a past that itself looks back

[94]

In the ensuing poem, the ‘figure’ itself is asked to divulge its own ‘story of creation’ from the first incision to the last, thereby making ‘a face a body a figure a world’ [96]. But the figure answers with silence, or rather with a mute reiteration of its own language of lines; a language that is impenetrable to all but its maker. The difficulty of inferring a legible narrative from its hermetic tangle of forms ‘dancing between’ [94] fixable meanings is stated more clearly later in the poem: ‘what have they left us that we can interpret as language’ [115]. This in turn folds back to the present-and-future moment of the poem as an artefact – a series of marks and lines that is ‘legible now but for how long’ [96]. In the vast epochs of time that *North of Here* spans, the longevity of communicable forms is uncertain. Even if the marks themselves endure, how is meaning or representation assured? And what then of more ephemeral modalities – what of speech and oral culture? Earlier in the text the question of collective oral memory is broached directly:

could their minds have held a land in the memory during
those thousands of years of absence when it was lost to ice

the passing of water from hand to hand
down the long human chain

it is unthinkable surely

[59]

When faced with the temporal limits of our means of transmitting culture, we are

presented with another paradox. In codifying speech into writing, there is some attempt to overcome the silence that attends to any utterance; a striving to live longer, and to travel further than the threshold of hearing. The written word aspires to permanence; it desires to be a time-capsule. But as a vessel for language the book may remain unread and communicate nothing, just as the carved bone lay buried in a cave for many millennia. But if the book is re-opened after a gap of time, what if culture has moved on and changed its linguistic machinery? Words come and go, their meanings morph and rupture. How many of us now can read *Bēowulf* in the original Anglo-Saxon, for example? In desiring permanence the text has fallen out of the flux that *is* culture; it has ossified, it is a relic. The Foreword to *North of Here* speaks to the ‘endless reassembly’ [43] that is the experience of swimming in the current of culture, but the moment it became codified on the page it dropped like a stone and the current moved on. It became simply an ‘arbitrary moment’ [43]. The poem can at best alert us to the shimmering chaos of its own creation, but, in a sense, it experiences the self-extinction, self-annihilation, and self-burial of the Afterword because its life is cut short; its forward momentum is ended. The life of a poem truly belongs to an oral culture; a context in which its continued reassembly is vouchsafed.²⁷

6.8. Palaeolithic Art

North of Here implies a connection between word and image through an interpenetration of terms, such that the poem has ‘marks’ and the picture (of Pin Hole Cave Man) has ‘lines’, but is the impulse behind both forms of communication the same? The ‘cave’ section of the poem asserts that narrative is fundamental to both, by virtue of the manner of their construction; each necessarily involves a process of

²⁷ An example of a text that actively resists this stasis is the aforementioned *An Ocean of Static* by J.R. Carpenter (2018) (§1.2.), which provides multiple ‘arguments’ for repeated alternate readings.

accretion. There is a succession of gestures, each incomplete in itself, but when taken together they form something that is greater than the sum of their parts. But it also suggests that the bare representation of a figure such as Pin Hole Cave Man implies ‘a world / a story of creation’ – not just its own coming into being, but the story of the world that it is inscribed into; the world that is its point of reference. The outline of a figure is recognised as such because it gestures at *real* figures, who have lives, stories, beginnings and ends. Such an outline may appear to offer little in the way of narrative, but it can still be said to be ‘standing waiting’ [83], or ‘looking back’ [67]. Even an apparently inert form is nevertheless composed of a ‘firedance of atoms’ [62]. In the case of Pin Hole Cave Man, its inter-species hybridity might suggest that it is an imaginal being, but this is not to negate its *reality*. As I have demonstrated, many Indigenous cultures hold the dream-world and real-world in equal regard (§A1.7.) [338]. In such a context, the act of inscription is one of piercing worlds, bringing one into the other. If caves are places where the senses are deprived so that visions are brought forth, it might follow that ‘what comes to you in the dark’ [53] should also be brought into this world, and inscribed in the place of its manifestation; its point of entry. Indeed, this merging of realities could be the impetus behind such site-specific mark-making in the first place.

But did such marks supersede other, more tangibly representational, forms? Were the first Palaeolithic inscriptions those of hybrid creatures that did not exist in corporeal reality? The American poet Clayton Eshleman offers two perhaps conflicting observations on the origins of mark-making. His work provides a highly relevant context for *North of Here* because he is – to my knowledge – one of the only contemporary poets to have engaged with the Late-Upper Palaeolithic in a sustained way. His book, *Juniper Fuse* (2003), is, in his own words, ‘a twenty-five year project’

and the culmination of extensive research and field-work in France, where a great many of the LUP cave paintings and inscriptions are located (Eshleman 2003: 293). The book itself is compendious – 300 pages of ‘poetry, prose poetry, essays, lectures, notes, dreams, and visual reproductions.’ (2003: xvi). As such, I can only address aspects of his work here – specifically those elements that are most relevant to *North of Here*, and to this particular subject.

His first argument with regard to the origins of cave painting is broadly pareidolic – human mark-making was produced in a way that added to, and thereby completed, naturally occurring cave-wall features suggestive of the shapes of animals:

It may have seemed to these early explorers that animals (and, less often, humans) were partially embedded in, or emerging through, such walls, and that such presences only needed the assistance of some man-made lines to be completely present. As the animal was sighted partly submerged in stone, imagination, reinforced by actual modeling or engraving, brought forth its form. If a wall was “with animal”, then some Cro-Magnon midwifery could help it to give birth.

(2003: xviii)

This seems entirely plausible on two counts: firstly, there are numerous examples of parietal art that follow this pattern, involving ‘the use of the shape of cracks, concavities and convexities of cave walls and ceilings as elements of the animal, notably serving as dorsal lines, chests and legs’ (Hodgson and Pettitt 2018: 591-2). Secondly, such a collaborative effort suggests itself as an intermediate step in the evolution of mark-making; it posits a gradual unfolding of human artistic development, rather than a sudden efflorescence. Indeed, Hodgson and Pettitt suggest that the hypothesis was first proposed by Leon Battista Alberti in the fifteenth century, long before LUP art was

discovered:

[...] to see in some tree stumps, or in clay, or in various other materials, some features which could, with a little work, be transformed into something similar to faces made by nature ... as these men's studies advanced, they no longer needed to see an initial likeness within their materials in order to express any object they wanted.

(Alberti *in* Hodgson and Pettitt 2018: 597)

Furthermore, according to Hodgson and Pettitt, hunters had a 'hyperactive visual system for detecting fauna' (2018: 592) due to the survivalist need to identify both predatory and prey animals in the visually complex Upper Palaeolithic landscape. Life depended on the quickness of that sensitivity. This in turn led to the outlines of animals being "'imprinted" more strongly' (2018: 597) on the hunter's visual system than others kinds of images, which therefore predisposed them to discover animal-like forms in the topographies of cave walls, among other places.

To my mind, this seems like a perfectly credible explanation for at least some of the aspects of LUP parietal art, but Eshleman goes on to make a remarkable assertion:

"To explore is to penetrate; the world is the inside of mother," Brown writes in *Love's Body*. If we follow out the psychic implications of penetrating and exploring, we might imagine finding a Cro-Magnon adolescent gouging a hole in the wall of a cave's terminal chamber. By gouging a small cavity in the limestone this person would symbolically be feminizing the surface of the wall but would also be facing an uninvadable impasse.

The simple but extraordinary solution to this impasse was to abandon penetration *into* for cutting *across* the otherwise unyielding matroclinic matter. Engraving especially was a remarkable solution as it allowed for a shallow

surface penetration at the same time that it opened up a surface area for a laterally extending line. Once the line turned, a shape in nature was suggested; when it formed an enclosure, not only were insides and bodies at hand, but also the hole-making impasse had been converted into a successful hole outline.

(Eshleman 2003: xx)

The implicit phallocentrism of this theory is writ large in his ensuing poetry:

Below Our Lady, in my mental wall,
is the foot-long rock phallus Her devotees may
have taken inside while they chipped in Her sign.
I have been straddling, all poem long, that insistent,
rapacious thing, of phallus, the tooth-phallus,
the borer, for the tooth-phallus is insatiable,
male hunger to connect at any price,
but not to connect, to cease being an island,
a speck before the emancipatory shape of
the birth-giving mainland, to create a mole
to tie fucking to birth, to cease being ticks
on the heaving pelt of this earth, to hook
their erections to the sleigh of a howling starveling.

(2003: 24)

In making – and so vividly illustrating – such assertions, Eshleman explicitly draws on ‘psychoanalytically oriented’ writers (2003: xvii). Specifically, he quotes Norman O. Brown (1966), who in turn quotes from Melanie Klein’s *The Psychoanalysis of Children* (1932) and *Infant Analysis* (1923), among other of her works. Eshleman only cites a single line from Brown, but the broader context is enlightening:

To explore is to penetrate; the world is the insides of the mother. “The entry into the world of knowledge and schoolwork seemed to be identified with the entry into the mother’s body.” “The child’s epistemophilic instincts ... together with its sadistic impulses, have been directed toward the interior of its mother’s body.” “The whole scene on the water was the inside of his mother — the world.” “Sadistic phantasies directed against the inside of her body constitute the first and basic relation to the outside world and to reality.” “In the imagination of the small child these multiple objects are situated inside the mother’s body.” The interior of the mother’s body “becomes the representative of her whole person as an object, and at the same time symbolizes the external world and reality.”

(Brown 1966: 36)

Klein is specifically theorising about *infant* psychology; with ‘the first and basic relation to the outside world and reality’ (1966: 36). Notwithstanding the capacity for early experience to influence or even underwrite later adult behaviour, it seems to me somewhat problematic to apply child psychology so prescriptively to (prehistoric) adult behaviour. Eshleman appears to assign an equivalence between early (i.e. *Palaeolithic*) humans and early (i.e. *infant*) humans. He would seem to seize upon the latent sexual connotations of the words ‘penetrate’ and ‘sadistic’, and, perhaps combined with Freud’s ‘psychosexual stages’ of child development (Cameron 1967), elaborate them into a thesis in which the artist is equated to a *penis* and the cave a *womb/vagina*. Eshleman therefore posits that the first mark was a ‘head-on penetration’ (Eshleman 2003: xxi) which was ‘stymied’ by the ‘unyielding matroclinic matter’ (2003: xx) of the cave. The primal impetus behind mark-making was therefore sexual, and it only took on a representational character once the line emerged as a literal tangent to the thwarted phallic forward thrust. The curve of the line as it veers off across the concavity of the

wall suggests an animal form, and the sexual instinct is transformed into, and somehow satisfied by, artistic expression.

One of the difficulties in accepting Eshleman's proposition is that, in borrowing from theoretical descriptions of individual psychological development, it surely follows that *every* hunter-artist must go through the action of transmuting their own sexual desire into artistic expression. It is part of the process of growing up. But how does such a process of personal sublimation become integrated into a broader tradition of mark-making – a tradition that spanned some 30,000 years? How does the *repeated* discovery of the (curved) line occur against the backdrop of several millennia's worth of – often sophisticated – artistic production? Surely Eshleman is simply asserting that human psychosexual development at some point precipitated the inception of this tradition, but if so, then there must have been something else that contributed to it being triggered approximately 40,000 BP.²⁸ It must be pointed out, here, that the evolution of artistic expression itself was not restricted solely to the walls of caves, as the carving of figurative objects and the making personal ornaments occurred contemporaneously. One of the oldest examples of portable art is the Hohlenstein-Stadel figure, a 28cm high standing form with a felid face and human-like torso, carved in ivory in the Aurignacian period, between 41,000 to 39,000 cal BP (Kind, *et al.* 2014: 129). It is difficult to conceptualise the production of this, or any such figure, as the consequence of 'head-on penetration'. Rather, both parietal and portable art appear to be part of a complex of modalities that express *behavioural modernity*:

[...] figurative art, complex religious beliefs documented in the material record in the form of therianthropic images, large numbers of personal ornaments shaped in three dimensions, and musical instruments appear in the

²⁸ According to Genevieve von Petzinger, the oldest example of cave art comes from El Castillo Cave in Spain, and is at least 40,800 years old (von Petzinger 2016: 131).

archaeological record. These innovations reflect the appearance of fully developed, symbolically mediated lifeways among anatomically modern humans.

(Conard 2008: 177)

Eshleman's theory is also predicated on the assumption that LUP society exercised the same kind of constraints on sexual expression as the twentieth century. Would his *adolescents* feel proscribed in their behaviour to the extent that sadistic violence (and its subsequent sublimation) would have been necessary? But even if we accept Eshleman's theory, surely the transformation of sexual urges into line-making would render those very urges in some manner managed? Moreover, if psychosexual factors are critical to the inception of a long tradition that began c. 40,000 BP, what bearing do they have on the cultural production at Lascaux, c. 17,000 BP,²⁹ about which Eshleman is particularly interested (Eshleman 2003: 53-65)? And yet his evocations of Lascaux are suffused with violent sexual imagery:

[...] as he hammered infantwise

against the Mother-primed tunnels

to open omen-encysted nature

[...]

And as the Mothers sexualized the cave the Fathers grew colder

an erectectomy had to be performed

Savolathersilonighcock lay like young Black Elk nine days

the Fathers tasted the visionary prisoner

raised from the lower body to a skull-enwalled garden –

adders flickering from their ears, they heard cock

separate from Savolathersilonigh

²⁹ 17,190 ±140 BP (Leroi-Gourhan & Evin 1979 in Bahn 1995: 196).

the wall was language, it was the truth
 but the truth had to be spread as skin, as target,
 the Fathers had to spot the cave shapes suggesting an animal in
 absence,
 to bore into the word itself against which the mainspring now so
 sexualized
 that a vortex was created to the present,
 roots fracturing Angkor Wat are ghosts of these creepers ensouling
 Lascaux
 the shapeshifter bristling with zodiacal light
 to flood the Fathers with a desire for pelts, for animal pregnancy
 so that Atlementheneira fucked Kashkaniraqmi to become
 pregnant with an ibex
 and to reanimate scattered Savolathersilonigh
 forced rude gartersnakes up several of the Mothers' cunts

(2003: 59-62)

These lines make the pseudo-sexual encounters in *North of Here* sound rather coy in
 comparison:

& she wraps her arms around me
 taking me into her embrace
 moving me to & fro
 & i want to yield to her
 & i want to yield

[101]

Eshleman goes on to draw on Gary Snyder's poem 'What You Should Know To Be A

Poet' in furtherance of his conception of a vividly carnal, bodily poetry:

kiss the ass of the devil and eat shit;
 fuck his horny barbed cock,
 fuck the hag,
 and all the celestial angels
 and maidens perfum'd and golden –

(Snyder *in* Eshleman 2003: 84)

Undoubtedly sexual motives form *some part* of the complex of factors that constitute any art form, but to situate them so centrally is, I think, reductive. As it transpires, Snyder includes a much wider range of references than are pertinent to Eshleman's argument:

all you can know about animals as persons.
 the names of trees and flowers and weeds.
 the names of stars and the movements of planets
 and the moon.
 your own six senses, with a watchful elegant mind.

(Snyder 1970: 50)

If nothing else, Eshleman's thesis proposes a gendered interpretation of artistic production in the Palaeolithic as an exclusively male activity – of 'male hunger to connect at any price' (2003: 24) – where none can be assumed. Furthermore, it seems to strip LUP culture of any kind of complexity beyond the rudimentary – beyond what we might call 'animal' urges. This is somewhat ironic as Eshleman argues that the depiction of animals in caves such as Lascaux is a signifier of the emergence of the *human* from the *animal*:

Around 30,000 BC the animal was unlocked from the mammal furnace, what

we call man separated the animal out of his being yet aware that such separation was false he put the animal back on the most enduring end he knew: stone.

(Eshleman 1979: 22)

The outline of image
vibrates back to a primal grounding:
separation from that which a person
imagines to be his food.

(Eshleman 2003: 20)

There is a fascinating paradox here. Eshleman describes a human sense of self that identifies both *with* and *in opposition to* the animal. This would seem to be antagonistic to the Indigenous ideas I have explored in which personhood is shared between different species (§A1.7.) [338], but, as Hill notes, this sense of sameness can necessitate the assertion of (human) difference:

Humanness, like beariness, must be performed, constantly reasserted, lest the boundaries between types of persons become blurry and permeable.

(Hill 2011: 408)

In *North of Here*, however, sameness can precipitate a loss of *human* self-identity – in the *whoness* and *whatness* of being. Crucially, this inability to self-actualise is not shared by the poem's animals, who seem able to make the critical distinction between *sameness* and *similarity*:

& who do you see when you look at me

& what do you see when you look at me

[...]

we are alike you & i it says

we are alike

[84]

Given Eshleman's focus on the depiction of animals in LUP caves, it is notable that *his* animals are largely mute. There is no discernible dialogue, no social exchange, beyond the suggestion of ritualised transmutation:

As Tiresias drank animal blood to be able to speak

in Hades, so in an earlier underworld

did hominids swallow skulls of blood

that animal sounds might dream in them

and take on shapes of humans?

(Eshleman 2003: 67)

These lines hint at the possibility of an inter-species dream-communication that is fully realised in *North of Here*; a pedagogical dialogue comprised of 'words made of silence' in which the animal-guide shares knowledge with the human-seeker [53, 108].

Eshleman's poetry itself is vivid, densely imaged, and not readily assimilable or resolvable; it is a seemingly fevered or hallucinatory concatenation of image after image in an often hermetic and gnomic chain. As such, its lack of immediately identifiable meanings echo the 'endlessly dissolving & resolving' flux of *North of Here* [81], but whereas I broach these perceptual issues discursively in my own text, Eshleman brings them into action at the level of significance in the very matrix of his poetry. He characterises his process as follows:

Not only did it seem inadequate to merely describe Lascaux's paintings in such a poem, it also seemed superficial to describe the act of painting. So I tried to

set up Chinese firecracker-like bursts of metaphoric interactions between the mythic figures and their image worlds-in-progress.

(2003: 252)

Eshleman provides many such appendical commentaries to the poetry, which elucidate some of its more hermetic allusions, whilst also providing insight into procedural and biographical details. Reading the work can sometimes feel like a ‘to & fro’ between text and peritext; a movement forwards and backwards through the timeframe of the codex itself. In this way Eshleman’s text resists linearity. His use of superscripted numeral annotations pushes the reader out of the poem and into the book’s end matter, before looping back to the poem again. There is a sense of disruption and movement that echoes the way his texts cross-cut temporalities. By contrast the text of *North of Here* is insular and immersive – its contextual commentaries are completely excised from its main body.

A thrilling aspect of Eshleman’s text is therefore this temporal inter-penetration. Consider, for example, this already quoted section from ‘Visions of the Fathers of Lascaux’:

the Fathers had to spot the cave shapes suggesting an animal in
 absence,
 to bore into the word itself against which the mainspring now so
 sexualized
 that a vortex was created to the present,
 roots fracturing Ankor Vat are ghosts of these creepers

(2003: 62)

The Palaeolithic act of *boring into* Lascaux’s cave wall creates a ‘vortex ... to the present’, and the phallic creeping hole-maker is latently manifested in the plastic forms

of tree roots that coil around the ruined Cambodian temple of Angkor Vat (Angkor Wat). It is a truly shocking, but undeniably powerful, image. Eshleman describes his process as follows: ‘I have received the Upper Paleolithic in this book as it thrusts into, and is shadowed by, my twentieth century’ (2003: xxiv). Eshleman, in visiting LUP caves, is not entering into the past so much as the past is violently penetrating the present. The rediscovery of these sites, buried for millennia, such that they burst into the here-and-now, is for Eshleman an earth-shaking rupture. Crucially, it is significant for him that the discovery of their ancientness – a temporal detonation – occurs in the twentieth century during a climate of unspeakable violence:

As Lascaux “emerges” in 1940,
Belsen begins to smoke on nearly the same horizon.
Then Dresden, Hiroshima ...

(2003: 93)

For Eshleman such a juxtaposition creates profound hope: ‘[...] the astonishing ancientness of the human creative impulse, which was discovered in this most inhuman century, may somehow offset total despair’ (2003: xiv). That very hope is the re-establishment of a paradisaical continuum between *then* and *now*:

In a century rife with alienation and hopelessness, Upper Paleolithic imagination implies that we belong to an undifferentiated paradise, a primordial underworld of unchanging perpetuity.

(2003: xii)

But, by following Eshleman’s previous logic, the ‘human creative impulse’ is a sexual-sadistic urge to bore into anything that is unyielding. Its individualistic violence is implicitly entangled in broader societal conflicts, such as war. Although Eshleman sees Palaeolithic creativity as an antidote to the horrors of the twentieth century, I suggest

that, contrarily, *his* logic connects them. I do not necessarily adhere to such a theory, although there is undoubtedly a violent aspect to the male sexual imagination. Although *North of Here* does not explore this issue directly, there is a contrasting pessimism to the acknowledgement of a continuum between past and present:

remember this it said

there is nothing primeval nothing primordial nothing
original nothing first there is only now it said the circuitry
of life ever repeating & the you of then is just like the you of
now & the you of then is looking front & back side to side up
& down & just like you with a fist of narrow answers

[59]

Accordingly, both *then* and *now* are twisted into a möbius strip of suffering:

& the horror that is our knowledge of what has already passed &
what has already passed an unendurable suffering

& the horror that is our knowledge of what is to come &
what is to come an insurmountable trial

[60]

For Eshleman, the re-emergence of the Palaeolithic mind negates Theodor Adorno's assertion that *there can be no poetry after Auschwitz* (Eshleman 2003: xiv); it is the opening of 'a trap door in poetry's floor' (2003: xii), a revivification of poetry's substance with ancestral power.

Notwithstanding my disagreement with Eshleman over the complex nature of the creative impetus, I find his conception of the intrusion of the ancient into the modern both poignant and compelling. His poetic texts present a dizzying

interpenetration of past and present in which the usual semantic load of specific signifiers is unbalanced and destabilised. Key among his redefinitions are *the Fall*, which he expands from its usual biblical context to refer to the separation of human from animal as we became more self-conscious, and *Hades*, which he describes as the emergence of that psyche in cavernous darkness:

The beginning of the construction of the underworld takes place in Upper Paleolithic caves. To identify this “place under construction”, I use the later Greek word “Hades”, and it is there that the first evidence of psyche we can relate to occurs. To be in a cave is to be inside an animal – a womb – but to draw there is to seek another kind of birth; an adjustment to the crisis of the animal separating out of the human, – or, the Fall. To be inside, to be hidden, to be in Hades – where the human hides in the animal.

(2003: 16)

I find this declaration, which forms part of the prose-poem sequence ‘Placements 1: “The New Wilderness”’, incredibly powerful.³⁰ These explicit terminological reinterpretations function in a similar way to my own reworkings of ‘it’ and ‘sacred’, such that they require effort on the part of the reader to short-circuit their conventional meanings and imbue them with fresh significance. But Eshleman’s redefinitions work on a more tangibly temporal level – pushing each word’s frame-of-reference much further back into pre-history. The poet sends his words ahead of him into the past, recast in his own *new-old* meanings.

Eshleman’s allusions range from the mythological and theological (Arachne, Cernunnos, Coyote, Dracula, Gilgamesh, Prometheus, Sedna) to the historical and contemporary (Antonin Artaud, Belsen, Dachau, Bill Evans, Fulcanelli, Hitler, Charlie

³⁰ I originally discovered it – and therefore Eshleman’s writing – in *New Wilderness Letter*, the serial anthology edited by Jerome Rothenberg.

Parker), often juxtaposed in striking, and even absurd, combinations:

As Kashkaniraqmi watching the stars
 marveled at stags rhinos mammoths drifting on the same fraying
 umbilicus
 so did he dream of today's Czech
 pensioners in Prague by dim formica table trying to spot
 the line to X for dumplings and broth –

(2003: 59)

The reference to *dream* here is key; Eshleman's poems are open, in the truest sense, to dream logic, and to the unfiltered 'bottomlessness' (2003: xiv) of the unconscious. His 'Visions of the Fathers of Lascaux' is aptly named, as it reads like an anti-meditation; instead of a single-pointed focus there is a phantasmagoric onslaught of imagery; nothing is omitted, no matter how seemingly profane. The act of speaking it aloud leaves the reader breathless, as image follows image in long, ranging lines with little or no punctuation. Indeed, the light-headedness that such a reader might feel may well gesture towards the ecstasis of trance. The dream-writing of my own work is, by comparison, more measured and controlled. *Juniper Fuse* and *North of Here* relate to each other in the same way as *literal* and *idiomatic* translation. *Juniper Fuse* imitates the *form* of visionary experience, whereas *North of Here* assimilates the dream experience into *its own* form.

6.9. *Darkness*

The darkness of Eshleman's caves is a primordial one, but the return to non-self – to non-separation from the animal – that it offers is unobtainable, as the light that those Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers brought with them into the cave chased the darkness into

its corners; pushed it always beyond reach. But even if they were to snuff-out their tapers, the light of self-knowledge can never be extinguished. The never-to-be-granted darkness is a prelapsarian condition of union; it is paradisaical precisely because it is lost. Nevertheless, the cave is a place of vision (Eshleman 2003: xvii); a place where ‘proto-shamanism’ occurs ‘to rebind human being to the fantasy of that paradise that did not exist until the separation was sensed’ (2003: xvi). There is a great poignancy in this characterisation of LUP ontology.

By contrast, the darkness of *North of Here* is not hidden or ancient. It is ever-present in the here and now, both *above* and *below* the earth [114], and also *within* the individual [53]. It suffuses corporeal and imaginal reality. It is a condition of now that is endless. As such, although it is eternal, it is not primordial, because the primordial belongs to a time before time. To admit to primordality in *North of Here* would be to sever the interconnecting bonds that continue to tie everything together. Eshleman’s separation has not occurred. His line of distinction between human and animal presupposes (self-) consciousness as an exclusive condition of humanity, but the study of animal consciousness is a burgeoning philosophical and neuro-scientific field.³¹ The 2010 ‘Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness’ speaks to our growing awareness of the shared experience of humans and animals:

The absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states. Convergent evidence indicates that non-human animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness.

31 As are studies of plant communication and sentience.

Non-human animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates.

(Low *et. al.* 2010: 2)

Eshleman implicitly aligns *the Fall* with behavioural modernity, but our knowledge of the prehistory of the Homo genera is still far from complete. According to Conard, there are data from Ethiopia which ‘push the date of the development of anatomical modernity back to at least 160,000 years ago’ (Conard 2008: 175). Given that behavioural modernity is predicated on anatomical modernity, this would seem to challenge ideas of a behavioural revolution 40,000 years ago. Perhaps there are as-yet undiscovered clues that posit a more gradual evolution of human sophistication. Archaeologists are constantly discovering complexity further and further back in time. The (pre-) history books are constantly being rewritten. In *North of Here*, there is no moment of departure from animal ancestry, but a ‘long human chain’ [46] that seems to stretch endlessly back into the darkness of prehistory. Perhaps its repetitive ‘& so on & so on’ can be seen as an implicit pushing back of *humanness* beyond *Homo sapiens sapiens*, back to *Homo erectus* and even to *Australopithecus afarensis* [112]. These systems of classification are artificial, after all. As such, the gaze of *North of Here* looks ever back into a past that, although receding from view, is not ontologically separate or unobtainable. Its chain of being is unbroken.

Nevertheless, there is something analogous to Eshleman’s ‘Fall’ in my own text; a hinting towards a prelapsarian state of innocence that is, however, not paradisaical, because it is suffused with the fear of being hunted:

is the deers cry but an echo of our own
 a blood memory surfacing with each wound inflicted
 for so many deaths have you received not looked fo

so many sharp & narrow lives

but at what point in our lineage did we return transformed

when did the night & the day bleed together

from which wound did the killer in us emerge

[112]

North of Here argues that the first instance of deliberate killing by humans evidenced a change in our identity, but, crucially, this is not a separation from the animal, but rather a transition to a different kind of animal. Moreover, this transformation was effected by animals themselves through death-giving – a psychic trauma that is relived through shamanic initiation and visionary flight:

i see it do you not see it

it has hunted us in our dreams

it has haunted us in our dreams

& it has maimed us killed us time over time

but it returned us to life & we were made new & stronger &

when we awoke the gift of death not looked for & the gift of

life not looked for

was ours

[103]

Whereas Eshleman's 'proto-shamanism' is an attempt to 'rebind' the human to the animal (2003: xvi), my own imaginative reconstruction of 'the way of knowing' [104] is a remembrance and reliving of ancestral trauma, and an emphatic acknowledgement of the reflective and echoic quality of existence in which 'everything must eat & be eaten'

[81]. Humanity is a participant in the animalian game of kill-or-be-killed. Eshleman ascribes his animal-human transition explicitly to the Upper Palaeolithic, and in so doing he binds his poetry to a dataset that may later become revised. In his 1979 poem, 'Placements', he ascribes 'The Fall' to 'around 30,000 BC' (Eshleman 1979: 22), but in his extensively revised 2003 version of the poem, his assertion is less specific, perhaps because of new cave discoveries in the intervening years: 'The beginning of the construction of the underworld takes place in Upper Paleolithic caves' (2003: 16). By contrast, my own identification of the transition from hunted to hunter is phrased as a question – 'when' – because scientific knowledge is always advancing, and dates are subject to seemingly endless revision. Following this observance, *earliest* dates are only ever provisional, as we can never know with absolute certitude when events of this order first occurred. I would also argue that, in leaving such details ambiguous, they become more enigmatic and compelling to the imagination. The date of *human emergence as hunters* is in the unknowable deep past, but the remembrance of *being hunted* is cellular – it bleeds into the present, and informs our instincts and our subconscious imaginings.

Juniper Fuse provides a vital context for *North of Here* because it is a work of significant depth and scope that takes LUP Europe as its focus. I could find no other historical or contemporary poets whose area of interest overlaps so clearly with my own. I therefore find it fascinating that our conceptions of LUP life and ontology vary so markedly. Rather than being problematic, I suggest that this is to be celebrated. Archaeologists and anthropologists often disagree in their interpretation of the same data. The criticisms that McFadyen directs towards ecological-economic models of behaviour are a case in point (McFadyen 2006: 121) (§A1.1.) [321]. It therefore follows that two poets should not necessarily agree when engaged in similar practice. Divergent

views expand the parameters of discourse, creating an environment in which there is a plurality of thought. These differences in ideas reflect the fact that there is no singular body of ontological belief that unites all peoples, past or present. The ‘way of knowing’ presented in *North of Here* is only ‘our way’ [104], but there are implicitly *others*. There is therefore room for multiplicity, a polyphony of voices, both convergent and divergent.

7. *Reflection*

In this final chapter I will reflect on the creative process of writing the poem and on the importance of dreaming, both to my own artistic practice and also to Indigenous cultures, as well as the inevitable ethical issues that arise from such cross-cultural entanglements. I will then address the key research questions of this thesis: how can poetry engage with archaeological discourse when thinking about the past, and what contribution does *North of Here* make to cross-disciplinary knowledge, and to my own creative development? I will end by reflecting on the implications of the work beyond its focus on the past, by identifying how it sheds light on contemporary ways of being-in-the-world.

7.1. *Process*

A recurrent theme from my reading of ethnographic and anthropological works is the importance of altered states of consciousness to Indigenous experiences of the other-than-human. Dreaming, in particular, is recorded as a key means of accessing non-corporeal reality. Hallowell asserts that the Ojibwa are a ‘dream-conscious’ people (Hallowell 1975: 164), and Morrison elaborates by describing how ‘human beings and animals communicate in dreams, a state of consciousness which bridges cosmological dimensions, including objective time and space’ (Morrison 2000: 27). Likewise Nelson states that for the Koyukon *diyinyoo* (shamans) ‘some spirit associations were begun in dreams’ (Nelson 1986: 29), and Vitebsky avers that ‘a future shaman does not choose his or her profession, but is chosen by the spirits themselves to serve. The young candidate may be made aware of this through dreams or by other signs’ (Vitebsky 2000: 60).

When it came time to pursue the creative writing element of this thesis, the idea

of engaging with dreaming therefore presented itself as a viable and highly relevant methodology. In approaching this endeavour, I was acutely aware of the ethical issues inherent in drawing upon Indigenous sacred practice and tradition, and the more general problems presented by analogic thinking (§A1.6.) [335]. I was careful, therefore, to avoid researching particular Native customs and to minimise my exposure to Aboriginal literatures, so as not to risk an act of direct (or even unconscious) cultural appropriation. In drawing only on what Sean M. Connors might call ‘blanket concepts’, I have effectively disregarded the diversity and complexity of circumpolar cultures (Connors 2000: 140) (§A1.6.) [335]. Nevertheless, my circumspection was an act of respectful sensitivity to those other cultures, and – having read Connors – it was done with full cognizance of the distinctiveness of each Indigenous groups’ traditions. Indeed, this awareness of cultural specificity prevented me from moving beyond the observance of shared generalities; to proceed any further would imply a correlative relation between a *single* living culture and one that has long since disappeared (*sensu* Jordan 2006: 87). In my view, to draw upon general themes shared by different groups is less ethically problematic than focusing on the detail of a particular culture. The resulting reimagined Palaeolithic world that *North of Here* presents therefore arose in the context of the collective ontological similarities of a number of different peoples, including the Ojibwa, Koyukon, Chukotka Eskimo, Yukaghir and Naskapi. However, its individual detail arose in a context that was removed from the influence of any particular culture. Given my aim of *thinking* my way into the Palaeolithic mind and landscape, I was particularly interested in how dreaming might disrupt ‘objective time and space’ with its inherently non-linear and elliptical logic. Furthermore, as my prime PhD research goal was to *move beyond* the academic discourse of my source material, the unpredictable synthesis generated by the unconscious mind represented a radical alternative to conscious reasoning and deduction. I did not want to simply flesh-out the bones

provided by the anthropological literature, but to imaginatively rediscover something of their long-lost ancestry. It struck me that if I was to do so, then it would be in oneiric space where I would make such discoveries.

Any sense of ethical discomfort regarding the use of dreaming was somewhat ameliorated by the knowledge that dream-visions and altered states are not the sole ritual apparatus of a particular subset of Indigenous societies. Vitebsky attributes shamanism to ‘many hundreds, perhaps thousands’ of cultures, arguing that there are ‘many shamanisms, just as there are many monotheisms’ (Vitebsky 2000: 55). Witzel concurs by observing that ‘classical “Siberian” shamanism, with its myth of the shaman’s death, the recomposition of the body, and the shaman’s ascent into the heavens, is spread over a wide area, from northern Siberia to Nepal and Borneo and from Lapland all the way to the tip of South America’ (Witzel 2012: 9). Indeed, it is partially due to the relative ubiquity of historic shamanism that its existence (in a prototypical form) in the prehistoric period is hypothesised. Lewis-Williams, for example, generalises ten characteristics of ‘hunter-gatherer shamanism’ in the historical period, chief among them being ‘institutionalized altered states of consciousness’, which he argues can be equally applied ‘to the Upper Paleolithic of western Europe’ (Lewis-Williams 1997: 323-4). Many other experts also suggest that shamanism may have comprised a core element of LUP belief (Bahn *in* Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1998: 217-8; Clottes 2016: 166-9; Dickson 1990: 215; Lommel *in* Dickson 1990: 129-137; von Petzinger 2016: 82, 261; Vitebsky 2000: 57).

Needless to say, an attentiveness to dreams and visions also exceeds those cultures that practice shamanism, and there is, for example, a well-attested tradition of *dream-vision literature* in the Western canon, including *Caedmon’s Hymn*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Parlement of Foules*, *Piers Plowman*, *Pearl* and

The Pilgrim's Progress. According to Russell, 'the dream [form] is usually a record of a *debat* or less formal conversation with one or more characters, sometimes real, sometimes allegorical. Usually there are several interlocutors and various topics of conversation.' (Russell 1988: 5). *North of Here* could equally be described in such terms, and it might even be fruitful to contextualise the poem within this genre of writing. In many instances, visionary texts are associated with Christian mysticism, and are intended to be didactic, or to communicate revelatory information. *Pearl*, for example, is 'from first to last, a serious doctrinal poem concerned with nothing other than crucial truths of eschatology' (Russell 1988: 160). *North of Here* is similarly concerned with life, death and, as it turns out, reincarnation – it is in many ways a vehicle for communicating ideas about the nature of being, albeit framed as deriving from a time in the long distant past. But if *North of Here* could be classed as an example of dream-vision poetry, the pre-theistic concepts it propounds share little in common with the theistic doctrines that inform the majority of the aforementioned canonical works. In short, although there are formal consonances, there is little harmony in terms of a shared music.

When beginning the creative phase of *North of Here*, I simply thought of dreaming as a creative resource – a means of generating raw material that could be subsequently reworked and expanded, or in turn used to seed new work. I started by adopting two complementary processes. The first involved the task of attempting to transcribe a dream immediately upon waking. Ostensibly simple, I found the effort of remembering dreams themselves incredibly difficult. As a result of this initial frustration, I wrote the following lines of the poem:

in the early not quite morning

before the light bleaches all memory

i go again looking for them
 those warm bodies of the unconscious

 but the cave mouth is deserted
 the hearth already cold
 & a wind is moving wildly through what they have left
 a scavenger like me

 i cannot hope to truly know them then
 cannot see their faces hear their language
 but perhaps i can infer something of their lives
 reconstructed in this scatter of discarded stone
 yes find in the shape of absence
 the thing itself

[67]

The analogy between the poet-dreamer and archaeologist is self-evident, but in this instance the poet's task is *identical* to the archaeologist's; they are both looking for truths about the deep past. But whereas the archaeologist's methods focus on the remnants of material culture, the poet's cave mouth is the opening to the unconscious that swiftly closes upon waking; the poet's *debitage* is the shattered remnants of dreams. In some ways this is a hubristic assertion, as it draws an equivalence between the (albeit unknowable) veracity of the past and the artist's unconscious mind. It says *all the answers are in my head, if only I could remember them*. However, I would argue that such a criticism has no relevance here. Hallowell suggests that we must discard our rational-objective perspective in order to understand the otherness of Indigenous metaphysics (§A1.7.) [338]. Despite being an admission of defeat – of a failure of

memory – these lines wholeheartedly *believe* Morrison’s contention that ‘objective time and space’ can be bridged whilst dreaming, and that the dreamer may travel back to the Palaeolithic to encounter its ‘warm bodies’. If the poet-dreamer entered the cave of the unconscious a rational-materialist, they emerged with an entirely different ontology.

In this sense, the passage into and out of the cave is one of internal transformation. The novitiate doesn’t bring something back that can be held in the hand, but rather a state of mind. It is significant, therefore, that the communicator of wisdom in this passage is the wind, that most intangible – and yet perceptible – of elements:

they are not lost to me entirely then

& as i leave the cave the wind cuts its melody from the fluted

rocks

there are other shatter marks more elusive than flint it seems

to say

& there scratched in ochre & low to the ground i see a figure

wearing the mask of a deer

looking back at me

with blazing eyes

[67]

The ‘figure ... with blazing eyes’ is real within the universe of the poem, but it is also a metaphor for poetic creation itself. It is not a *warm body* of the *unconscious* but a series of *marks* scratched in the ochre of *consciousness*. The poetic mark is therefore the movement of something unconscious and unknowable in the realm of the conscious and knowable. It is a reverberant echo from a strange and remote subterranean source.

This *poetic* mark-making is an apt summary of the second creative process that I employed in generating the early material of *North of Here*. If I found it difficult to

remember the forms of my dream world, I would at least write in their shadows. The process involved simply writing *as soon as* I awoke, as near to the cave mouth of the unconscious as I could, when my mind was not quite fully alert, and still bore the fading influence of the hypnopompic state. I found this method more productive the less I consciously intervened or tried to direct what was being written. If allowed to continue uninterrupted – a difficult feat – it became a stream of consciousness in William James’s sense.³² This manifested in my own writing in a highly repetitive, circumlocutory style. The aforementioned *Foreword* and *Afterword*, for example, were written using this method:

that this line appears new & complete & full formed & clear &
perfectly distinct [...]

so many erasures so many deletions so many effacings so many
extinctions so many wipings out [...]

[43, 120]

It would appear that in such conditions my mind works synonymically, with each word or phrase generating another that is in some way similar or contingent. In terms of producing material for *North of Here*, it is difficult to ascertain if this was simply fortuitous, or a consequence of the preceding months of anthropological research focused on the ontological principles of similarity and cyclicity. Undoubtedly my sustained immersion in a distinctly different philosophical world-view will have had *some* effect on my hypnopompic writing.

On finding this form resonant with the themes I was wishing to explore, it

³² ‘Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as “chain” or “train” do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A “river” or a “stream” are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.’ (James 1890:239)

therefore became a template for more consciously directed writing:

& no roads no paths to follow no pilgrimage routes no drove
ways tracks or passes nothing but the scour of retreating
ice nothing but gougemarks new riverbeds the edges of
floodwaters moraines screes eskers drumlins

[56]

It will be noticed that there is no punctuation here. During this phase of production, I found both the comma and full stop too inhibiting; they seemed to disrupt the fluidity of the process, allowing pause for reflection – becoming weirs in the stream’s flow. But when I reinstituted them later, the normalised text lost much of the stark, hypnotic effect of the original:

& no roads, no paths to follow, no pilgrimage routes, no drove
ways tracks or passes. Nothing but the scour of retreating
ice. Nothing but gougemarks, new riverbeds, the edges of
floodwaters, moraines, screes, eskers, drumlins.

The poem, I realised, needed to retain its unmediated, mantric quality if it was to communicate something of the sought-after oneiric state. It needed a sense of otherness, if it was to speak compellingly about the temporally and culturally distant world of the Palaeolithic and its other-than-human inhabitants. Returning the text to its original state spoke to these needs whilst also honouring the processes of its creation. In their raw form the lines appear closer to the spontaneous utterance of speech, or even to a form of autonomic communication, unhampered by the cosmetic niceties of conventional orthography.

This sense of an absence of textual restrictions in turn emblematises broader

ontological concepts within the poem. In a non-hierarchical, social universe that embodies ideas of personhood and metaphysical similarity, there are no inhibitions to communication: everything is connected (§A1.8.) [351]. But the delimiting function of punctuation – though helpful in conveying meaning by grouping words together – nevertheless disrupts the sense of parity and interconnectivity between each *word-body* in the text. Words are quite literally set apart; clarity is ultimately a *reduction* of available meanings; a closing off of possibilities. The poem therefore performs interconnectivity at a structural level through its absence of punctuation. It gestures towards an openness in which ‘everything [is] commingling’ [81].

Once I had made the decision to omit punctuation that interrupted the flow of text, I also considered the necessity of other forms. Excluding only commas, full stops, dashes and colons seemed a half-measure, and in their absence other punctuation seemed increasingly superfluous; a scatter of marks *outside* the language itself. Clearly each glyph had its function, but how vital were they in actuality? Is there any real difficulty in the line ‘& when i look down i see my fathers hands’ because of the lack of the possessive apostrophe? [46, 61, 116]. And even if ambiguity did arise from, for example, an absence of question-marks, this lack of clarity is consonant with the overarching theme of uncertainty that is a corollary of ontological likeness (§5.4.) [183]:

& who do you see when you look at me

& what do you see when you look at me

[84]

During these early experiments, I did not think about the poetic line and its concomitant break, but rather wrote in ‘blocks’ of text, with the loose idea of each block representing a single line of thought – in effect a miniature prose-poem:

a visitant at my window circling rousing its feathers a

plume of language if only i knew it & I kneel close a
 foot or less between us between my slack body and
 this taut wildness this wildness like a torrent & it
 circles closer I am afraid I am not afraid I gently raise
 my hand & flatten it palm outwards on the glass & it
 moves away at first flight-instinct genetic memory but
 then it circles back comes close starts to pick gently at
 the seams between my fingers unpicking reality & a
 deep wave of sadness overwhelms me & a deep wave
 of hope

The ampersand was initially used out of brevity, but I noticed that its unorthodox form (in replacing the more usual ‘and’) helped to visually signal structure within the text, thereby aiding the process of reading in the absence of punctuation. Moreover, the form of the glyph itself, in which a singular line makes two loops, visually enacts its conjunctive function, and subtly reinforces the thematic idea of structural interconnectivity. The entire passage is – visually – one of uninterrupted flow, and it therefore enacts Ingold’s observations about the flow of vitality in circumpolar societies (Ingold (1986: 250, 2000a: 113) (§A1.11.) [373], and Morrison’s notion of entropic (i.e. continuously moving) power (Morrison 2000: 33-4) (§A1.7.) [338].

Nevertheless, power necessarily resides in some forms *more* than others, even if its flow ultimately never ceases. The awe felt for animals such as the bear, for example, is an index of its special status within circumpolar cultures (§A1.12.) [374]. When thinking about how to represent this at the level of the line, I was drawn to reexamine the uniformity of the text block itself, and to acknowledge the fact that this structure didn’t necessarily always serve the best interests of the poem. In the previously quoted

selection, for example, there are undoubtedly issues with readability, as each syntactic unit abuts its neighbour with no punctuative signalling to alert the reader. It struck me that whitespace might be used as a structuring device to both aid this readability whilst also providing room for certain words or phrases to resonate more strongly:

a visitant at my window circling rousing its feathers
 a plume of language if only i knew it & I kneel
 close a foot or less between us between my slack
 body and this taut wildness this wildness like a
 torrent & it circles closer I am afraid I am not
 afraid I gently raise my hand & flatten it palm
 outwards on the glass & it moves away at first
 flight-instinct genetic memory but then it circles
 back comes close starts to pick gently at the seams
 between my fingers unpicking reality & a deep
 wave of sadness overwhelms me & a deep wave of
 hope

But by retaining the justified ‘block’ format, the larger interstitial spaces effectively segregate various word groupings. The spaces *punctuate* the text, and the sense of interconnectivity is diminished. However, when these spaces are rendered at the end of lines, they seem less obtrusive. They bleed out into the whitespace of the page that surrounds the words:

& as day slowly dawns at my window a visitant circling rousing
 its feathers
 a plume of language if only i knew it
 & i kneel close a foot or less between us between my slack

body & this taut wildness this wildness like a torrent

& it circles closer & i am afraid i am not afraid i gently raise

my hand & flatten it palm outwards on the glass

& it moves away at first

flight instinct

genetic memory

but then it circles back comes close starts to pick gently at the

seams between my fingers

unpicking reality

& a deep wave of sadness overwhelms me

& a deep wave of hope

[68]

Perhaps this is partially a consequence of the line-break being fundamental to the entire tradition of written poetry, whereas a justified block of text with internal spaces is more exceptional, and the eye is consciously caught by its novel structure as a result. In the above example, the previously undifferentiated paragraph of text is broken – both to aid readability and to allow certain phrases, such as ‘flight instinct / genetic memory’, to resonate on their own.³³ The sense of ending that a line-break might convey is nevertheless frustrated repeatedly by enjambment: ‘rousing / its feathers’, ‘my slack / body’, ‘gently / raise’, and ‘at / the seams’ – the line therefore cannot be understood as a unit of meaning. Indeed, the poem is not so much a series of lines as it is a micro-structure of textual units that may comprise one or more lines in length. In many

³³ It will be noted that there are fewer spaces/breaks than in the previous example. In the final version of the poem I only introduced a line-break where I felt it was absolutely necessary.

circumstances, meaning *ranges across* several of these units, binding them together, whilst the space surrounding them gestures towards their individuality. There is therefore a subtle tension between the unique and the similar, between isolation and connectedness; a tension that is explored at large within the poem (§5.3., 5.8.) [178, 205].

Although derived from a form that did not *think* in lines, or in what might be called conventional verse, *North of Here* is nevertheless a *poem* because it concerns itself with the intimate interactions of its constituent words and how they *perform* the thematic elements of the work as a whole. The text has evolved over successive iterations with a concerted attention to its arrangement in service of these ends. This orthographic and spatial awareness does not only operate at a microscopic level, but also more broadly – for example, in the way different voices are signalled. Initially, I created different versions of early parts of the poem using various methods, including alternate typefaces, font-sizes and variants (romans and italics). All of these experiments produced results that were too emphatic in the way they visually differentiated a change in speaker. This *difference* spoke against the ontological similarity that is so pivotal to the work as a whole. I therefore tried a more formal approach, using Greek symbols, which, at least, preserved a sense of optical parity between the stylistic form of each voice:

α & when i look around i see darkness
 a great darkness reaching beyond sight
 & in the darkness other voices
 heard & not heard

β come to me little one are you cold
 i will wrap you in these skins come

α & when i look down i see my fathers hands
 & he his fathers hands
 & so on & so on
 down the long human chain
 father grandfather ancestor

γ do not follow
 whatever form it takes

β come to me little one

α help me
 i cannot hold on
 i am falling

β come to me

But even this scheme jarred with the sense of uncertainty concerning the self and identity, emblematised through a convergence of the human and other-than-human (§5.4.) [183]:

& you are human & you are animal & you are plant & you
 are stone & you are hill & you are cloud & you are river &

you are path & you are star & you are above & you are below

[73]

& i see it & i see it wears my skin & i see it wears my blood

& its eyes are the eyes of my father & its eyes are the eyes of
my mother

[109]

This amorphous sense of selfhood, I realised, precluded the kind of certainty that I was trying to establish with these various signalling methods. As with the punctuation, it appeared that a curtailment of *guiding* structural elements was required to evoke the necessary spirit of the poem. A simpler solution was therefore devised in which a shift in voice was signified with a vertical region of whitespace followed by an outdented first line of text. Nothing was therefore added to the poem; it was simply a question of arrangement:

where do i begin

father

grandfather

ancestor

begin here

four & a half decades ago

the bones cast

a name given

yours

this body

this clot of muscles & blood
 skin & nerves

[44]

7.2. *Literary Contexts*

Of course, these various concerns with the structuring of marks on the page echo those of the literary Modernists, a century ago. Ezra Pound's credo, 'make it new', with its implicit rejection of traditional prosody, could be said to reflect a desire to come to terms with the unsettling and shifting terrain of the early twentieth century; to bear witness to change, and 'to paint the thing as I see it' (Pound 1971: 6).

Literary Modernism therefore saw the text squirm free from the stranglehold of formal versification – of the metrical line – and move towards the performance of a more authentic psychological realism. Evidence of this can be found in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (a key influence on my own early poetics), in the sharp transitions between a more measured verse and what seems like overhead fragments of speech:

'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

I never know what you are thinking. Think.'

(Eliot 2018: 59)

The anxiety in these clipped, repetitive, incomplete sentences is echoed in my own fragmentary lines from *Landings*:

You passed me on the church road. Did you not see me?

Dusk. The engines. Your eyes. Colluding.

Last year I came here. Do you not remember?

They drowned this valley. She died. Drowning.

I found her in a handful of stones.

Do you think of me? Still?

(Skelton 2009: 69)

Modernist innovations, in seeking convincing textual representation of speech and thought, perhaps reached their apotheosis in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and specifically in the book's final section (Molly Bloom's 'soliloquy'), which culminates as follows:

... and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me
would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around
him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume
yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

(Joyce 1992: 1078)

This 72-page, virtually unpunctuated, sequence – with its numerous repetitions and circumlocutions – affords a particular context for all subsequent writers – myself included – who wish their texts to convey the immediacy and idiosyncrasy of spontaneous expression. In this passage it is fascinating to observe how the word 'yes' itself is used as a form of punctuation, partitioning distinct clauses in the text, whilst also foreshadowing the final, emphatic, capitalised 'Yes'.

Despite his eschewal of conventional interpunction in Molly's soliloquy, Joyce generally defers to the rules of traditional English case distinctions, albeit occasionally capitalising for emphasis. Parallel developments in poetry, however, saw even these strictures overturned:

raise the shade

will youse dearie?

rain

wouldn't that

get yer goat but

we don't care do

we dearie we should

worry about the rain

huh

dearie?

yknow

i'm

sorry for awl the

poor girls that

gets up god

knows when every

day of their

lives

aint you

oo-oo.

dearie

not so

hard dear

you're killing me

(Cummings 1959: 11)

In this 1925 E.E. Cummings poem, any sense of conventional metre – of enumerated feet – is rejected, and each line performs on its own terms, yoked together with the others to create a loose-fitting textual ensemble that is entirely appropriate to the conversational context the poem evokes. Nevertheless, Cummings follows the traditional prosodic rule of grouping his lines into stanzas of equal length, albeit only to subvert it in the final stanza, by creating an apparent break (which can also be read as an empty third line) before the emphatic and disturbing ‘you’re killing me’.

For me, as a poet writing almost a century later, I feel a debt to poems such as this, which set a precedent by effectively rejecting the idea of poetry as a form governed by a persistent and measured rhythmic pulse. Instead, an ad-hoc logic applies, minutely attentive to the music of the syllable and using the line-break to varying effect. These sensitivities to ‘syllable, line, field’ were later reformulated by Charles Olson, in his seminal Postmodernist manifesto, ‘Projective Verse’ (Olson 1950). Olson explicitly criticised conventional metre and ‘the smothering of the power of the line by too set a concept of foot’, although – unlike much of Cummings’s work – Olson himself preferred a longer line that was synonymous with the poet’s own breath.

As I have already intimated, the formal construction of *North of Here* is not the result of a rejection of, or direct dialogue with, the poetry of my peers or precursors. Nevertheless, an indirect influence needs to be acknowledged: the technical innovations of literary Modernism (and its successors) are now the tools at every contemporary

poet's disposal; in challenging orthodoxy those same innovations became, over time, a new orthodoxy.

These affordances, I suggest, have granted myself and fellow poets the freedom to vary our lines as we see fit. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from J.R. Carpenter's 'Along the Briny Beach':

Penguin.

Geese.

Eggs of Doris.

The edge of a colossal jungle so dark-green as to be almost
black ran straight, like a ruled line far, far away along a
blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist.

Blue Haze.

Peninsula inscribes the gulf.

Heavy Rain.

(J.R. Carpenter 2018: 140)

Just as Carpenter recombines 'source/code' (2018: 155) from a variety of original works, including Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Edward Lear's 'The Owl and the Pussy-cat', so her poetic line expands and contracts — sometimes incorporating (like Cummings) only a single word, and sometimes approximating the unmediated dimensions of prose. In a not dissimilar way, my own line in *North of Here* varies its qualities for reasons of emphasis:

& at first i was scared heart racing chest aching but as the
 dark of winter deepened i began to accept them & welcome
 them

like family

delusions

hallucinations

family

dream & sleep disturbances

family

[55]

The first three lines here are essentially a single poetic line, spilling over onto the next and the next, but there is an intentional break in order to allow the final phrase, ‘like family’ to ring out, and then echo twice in the space that follows. This latter *visual* grammar is sparingly used in the poem, and is intended to evoke a sense of spatial depth and acoustic resonance. Occasionally, words are cut free from their tethers to the page’s left margin, simulating the effect of spoken words drifting off and diminishing in a cavernous space:

am i awake

am i dreaming

she has left

me

dreaming

[52]

In other contexts, portions of text are right-aligned to more clearly signal an *other* voice coming back to the speaker from across a void:

do not follow

whatever form it takes

come to me little one

help me

i cannot hold on

i am falling

come to me

[46]

A sensitivity to the *terrain* of the page has been a feature of my own previous work, and *North of Here* therefore builds on these preoccupations. However, the way in which this sensitivity has manifested is different in each case, and, as Olson argued, ‘form is never more than an extension of content’ (Olson 1950). *Landings*, for example, draws upon the principles of cartography to conceive of the page as a *textual landscape*, populated by various discrete bodies of text that are nonetheless brought into conjunction by virtue of their proximity. If the open book mimics the V-shaped valley of a Lancashire moorland, then the relation of two textual fragments on facing pages – a census transcript and a journal entry, for example – operate in the same way as a patch of woodland and a ruined farmhouse on the valley slopes of the *real* landscape.

In *North of Here*, the *cave*, of course, is a key context and metaphor in the poem, and so the visual patterning of the work as a whole is alive to this fact. The page is not

simply a two-dimensional flat space; its void, though white, is conceived of as a facet of that ‘vast immeasurable dark’ which the poem explores [114]. The voyage of the text, page-after-page, into that white space is analogous to the narrator’s voyage into unconscious, time-travelling darkness.

With reference to my own *voices-in-the-cave*, the idea of the page – and the codex-at-large – visually signalling the extra-lingual characteristics of human communication has a highly relevant precursor in the work of Jerome Rothenberg, and his aim to find ‘a way of laying out an active poetics’ (Rothenberg *in* Hinton 2017: 180). He, and other members of the ethnopoetic movement, sought to more fully represent in *printed form* the dynamics of the songs, rituals and performances of Indigenous peoples:

T	H E H E H H E H
h	
e	H E H E H H E H
The animals are coming by	H E H U H H E H
n	
i	H E H E H H E H
m	
a	H E H E H H E H
l	
s	

(Rothenberg and John 1970: 8)

According to Rothenberg, this setting of traditional Seneca poetry, a collaborative translation with Indigenous poet Richard Johnny John, seeks to set the words out ‘in clear relief against the ground of the (“meaningless”) refrain’ (1970: 8). Compare this,

for example, with a more conventional ethnographic translation from 1907 by Washington Matthews:

Síké	holó	ládín	nasá	ga
<i>My kindred</i>	<i>where are</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>I wander</i>	
Síké	holó	ládín	nasá	woya
<i>My kindred</i>	<i>where are</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>I wander</i>	
Síké	holó	ládín	nasá	ga
<i>My kindred</i>	<i>where are</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>I wander</i>	
Síké	holó	ládín	nasá	woya
<i>My kindred</i>	<i>where are</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>I wander</i>	

(Matthews 1907: 36)

In the above ‘interlinear’ translation, the words ‘ga’ and ‘woya’ are glossed as ‘meaningless’ by Matthews, and, in his ‘free translation’, the four lines are commuted into a single statement: ‘where my kindred dwell, there I wander’ (1907: 27). There is an intrinsic diminishment in such a translation that Rothenberg and John implicitly seek to counteract. Nevertheless, the work of ethnographers such as Matthews is of particular relevance to *North of Here* because, as co-editor of *Reliquiae*, I have published excerpts from a variety of anthropological works over the past eight years. Consider this example:

‘Let there be one darkness above,
 Let there be one darkness below (alternate),
 Let there be a darkness unto Tupua,
 Let there be a darkness unto Tawhito,

It is a darkness overcome and dispelled.’

(Richardson & Skelton 2017: 74)

Notwithstanding the complex issues relating to the editorial choices made by translators, my exposure to the resulting English texts has undoubtedly informed my own poetics. As with the work of the Modernists, these texts have become part of the *materia poetica* that I unconsciously draw upon. The example just quoted is a creation myth from Polynesia, and its references to ‘darkness’ are echoed strongly in *North of Here*:

& the vast immeasurable dark above the earth

& the vast immeasurable dark beneath the earth

[114]

Nevertheless, whilst writing the poem, the *conscious* contexts that I sought to explore were the ontological ideas and concepts deriving from my preliminary research, as removed as possible from the particular rhythms and linguistic idioms of (translated) Indigenous poetics. Moreover, given the spatial and temporal gulf between Late-Upper Palaeolithic Britain and the circumpolar north of the historical period, I needed a mechanism to ‘disarticulate’ and ‘rearticulate’ my research, thereby communicating something of the distance between distinct cultures. That mechanism proved to be an assembly of the unconscious and conscious imagination, instigated through close attention to dreaming.

7.3. *Dream-Recall*

If my initial attempts at transcribing dreams were largely ineffectual, this was not solely due to a failure of recollection. The fragments that I was able to recover seemed to have

little connection with my waking life, and my desire for unconscious insight. I therefore began to think about ways in which I could attain a frame of mind that might precipitate a more immersive state. Although I balked at the idea of ingesting hallucinogens, such as the naturally occurring flyagaric mushroom, there were other plants that might nevertheless bring me sensorially closer to the Palaeolithic environment. Looking at Pennington's pollen records for the Late-glacial north-west (§A3. Table 3 [412]), I saw among the list *Artemisia* (mugwort/wormwood), *Betula* (birch), and *Juniperus* (juniper), each of which are safe to ingest, and, moreover, have health-giving properties (Hoffman 1990: 180, 209, 216, 243). I therefore began preparing a decoction of these plants to drink daily, whilst also lighting a fire each evening and burning small amounts as incense. I also began taking a supplement of *Rhodiola rosea*, and specifically a batch that was wild-harvested from Siberia – a contemporary circumpolar climate not dissimilar to Late-glacial Britain. *Rhodiola* itself is thought to assist with brain function, among other health benefits.³⁴ Whilst researching the qualities of each herb I discovered that mugwort is considered a 'magical' plant in Western esotericism, and is used for, among other purposes, dream-prognostication (Roth 2017: 149; De Cleene *et. al.* 2003: 391). I therefore began to prepare a special decoction to be taken prior to sleep.

The positive effects of this ritualisation of my creative practice cannot be understated. I almost immediately began to dream more vividly, and to remember more of those dreams on waking. The first of these vivid dreams I transcribed below, and it remains almost unchanged in the final version of the poem [56]:

all the men of my family gathered at the shoreline
 waiting & I am standing behind the others higher up
 & see them four of them great creatures risen from the

34 <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/rhodiola-rosea#section4> (Accessed 14th January 2020).

lowest stratum of sea & my father with the great scar
 at his back steps forward into the waters & the nearest
 of the four rises wraps its many arms around him &
 all the men of my family at the edge of sleep put
 down their masks their arms around each other

This dream introduced the image of a ‘great scar’ to my writing, which later became a leitmotif [56, 61, 65, 74, 109], and also the action of *putting down masks*, which was also developed into a recurrent image [56, 70, 83, 101, 104, 109]. Crucially, this dream almost single-handedly introduced the familial element to the *North of Here*; a strand that grew significantly as my writing progressed. It is difficult to stress how much of a departure this is from my previous books, or how surprised I was to find myself writing about such personal subject matter. Apart from a brief allusion to a familial ritual in *Beyond the Fell Wall* (Skelton 2015: 27), I have scrupulously avoided drawing directly upon personal biography. This is not to say that I have hitherto evaded writing about deeply personal matters, but that such subjects have been dealt with somewhat obliquely:

Footprints. In the soft, damp earth.
 Mine encircling hers. How quickly
 they faded into barely recognisable marks.
 Had we really been here at all?

(Skelton 2009: 75)

Nevertheless, to the extent that my parents appear in *North of Here*, they do so through the prism of my dreaming and, subsequently, my creative imagination. Moreover, in their facility as guides they become fused with what might be termed my *oneiric Palaeolithic ancestry*. This merging of identities is, I believe, entirely authentic to the

psychology of dreaming, in which personas can shift or may combine more than one identity.

The next significant dream that I transcribed was a repeated encounter with an other-than-human:

i am moving at speed past a handful of deer past a
 handful of deer by the roadside & the curve of the
 road & the light low shimmering dusk & they scatter
 the deer but one holds its ground looks at me stares
 me down & it is a deer & not a deer something other
 we both know it but i can say no more & i am already
 gone moving at speed down the low shimmering road

 from the low bank of hills it approaches its pelt
 greywhite mottled with darker colour shifting as if in
 mist & its mask arcane impenetrable & too quickly it
 is gone & i am left in unknowing & yet for that
 moment when we held each others gaze yes in that
 dark unfathomable instant we shared the same plume
 of blood³⁵

The line ‘it is a deer & not a deer something other we both know it but i can say no more’ is, in my view, one of the most significant in the entire poem. Its circumlocution would seem to speak against poetry’s ability to distill language, to pare away the unnecessary, to express with an economy of means. But its crudity is an index of an inability to communicate an ‘unfathomable’ experience, and so the poem must

35 At some point during these early writings, I began to consciously collapse the hierarchy between ‘I’ and ‘it’ by decapitalising ‘I’, hence: ‘i’ and ‘it’ are brought into orthographic balance.

necessarily *perform* that very inability. There can be no eloquence in such matters. *North of Here*, then, is a work that at its heart is concerned with the failure of *our* language to come to terms with a different kind of metaphysics. The consequence of this failure leaves its trace in a paradox of language: ‘it is a deer & not a deer’. The ampersand draws together two opposing statements that cannot co-exist in our rational-materialist ontology, but poetry is a domain unto itself, and isn’t bound by the same rules of logic and reason. And so poetry draws upon these special privileges, and the paradox – the threat to our metaphysics – is neutralised; contained within its hermetically sealed laboratory.

Moreover, as the ‘experience’ itself occurred in a dream, it can be equally dismissed as the surreal product of the unconscious mind – a mind assisted by the compounds found in medicinal plants. But not dissimilar experiences occur within some Indigenous cultures that are conceptualised quite differently. The ‘dream-conscious’ Ojibwa or Koyukon would characterise such dream-entities as existing independently of the dreamer (§A1.7., A1.9.) [338, 362]. Accordingly, their language is equipped to deal with such encounters. There are undoubtedly numerous names for such *entities*, and, given that the *visionary* experience is normalised within their cultures, it would not be something ‘unfathomable’.

But do I perform an act of appropriation by dreaming of entities that might more readily be associated with another culture? If such a culture believes that they *exist* independently, can it exclusively lay claim to them, as it might with an element of material tradition? Given that I consciously decided against researching the specifics of any individual Indigenous group – so as to avoid direct (or indirect) influence – what can be said about the *detail* and *texture* of my particular vision? Where did *my* conception of the ‘deer-&-not-a-deer’ come from – is it simply an unconscious fleshing-

out of the bones supplied by ethnographies? But given that this was my very aim in commencing dream-work, why does such a characterisation seem dismissive of the actual experience, which felt *real* and unforgettable?

I therefore find myself caught between two incompatible ways of describing the world; two conflicting interpretations of the same phenomena. It would seem that I must necessarily align myself with one side or the other, but perhaps poetry's ability to *contain* paradox points to another way. Indeed, just as *North of Here* presents a dilation of the *human* and *other-than-human*, such that categorical distinctions blur into an all-encompassing sense of personhood (or *itness*), so it may be possible to bring these contradictory positions into balance. Moreover, I would assert that poetry's special privileges make it uniquely suited to such a task. It effectively provides safe ground for readers to experience different ontological views – to momentarily suspend their rational incredulity and become immersed in something *other*. Earlier, I stated that poetry neutralises the threat of otherness, but this is to diminish the profound effect that literature – and indeed all artistic endeavour – has on its audience. When we read fiction, or watch a film, if the artform is doing its job we *believe* in the reality of what we are experiencing, even *as* we know that it is artificial. We empathise and feel as if it were *real*. One of the functions of art is therefore to provide a discrete context within which our world-views can be challenged. It has the possibility to provoke empathy and understanding, and it may evoke an openness to other ways of thinking.

With regards to *North of Here*, I can therefore assert that, *within* the poem, I believe that the entity is real, whereas *outside* the poem, I perceive it as a phantom of the unconscious. Like the wave-particle duality of quantum physics, neither is solely, individually the whole truth. Moreover, in communicating my experience through written poetry, it enables me to preserve a sense of otherness that my everyday rational-

materialist beliefs would otherwise erode. By revisiting the poem, those thoughts and feeling are given life again. The poem is therefore not merely a temporary window into another modality, but a permanent vehicle for repeated transformations. It is a ritual device, and, like dreaming itself, it is a portal into another world.

7.4. Shamanic Elements

North of Here contains a number of other dream transcriptions. Key among them are the journey ‘through the roots of the hill’ [64] and the episode in which ‘i woke to find my body strange’ [65]. The first, with its trial of endurance and leap of faith is, in some ways, consonant with Indigenous accounts of shamanic initiatory journeys:

In the course of the journey the [novitiate] shaman arrives at a narrow plank-bridge across a very fast river and he must cross it. After having crossed the river he is not very far away from the ancestral shaman but there is still one more obstacle he must conquer. There are two cliffs there. Sometimes they close, and then again they withdraw from each other. They keep moving day and night. After they clash then start to move away from each other again, this is when the shaman may slip across between them.

(Halifax 1979: 51)

Crucially, however, my dream-journey was itself a dream-within-a-dream, from which I ‘woke’ to dream ‘my body strange’. This second dream, with its discovery of the violent ‘disarticulation & rearticulation’ of the dream-body, also has certain similarities with shamanic narratives:

In my dreams I had been taken to the ancestor and cut into pieces on a black table. They chopped me up and then threw me into the kettle and I was boiled. There were some men there: two black and two fair ones. Their chieftain was

there too. He issued the orders concerning me. I saw all of this. While the pieces of my body were boiled, they found a bone around the ribs, which had a hole in the middle. This was the excess-bone. This brought about my becoming a shaman. Because, only those men can become shamans in whose body such a bone can be found.

(Kyzlasov *in* Halifax 1979: 50)

But whereas the Siberian novitiate's dissection is performed to discover the 'excess-bone', and thereby their legitimacy in becoming a shaman, my own disarticulation was somewhat different. Instead, the memory of violence is all but effaced, although its trace is nevertheless 'carried in the cells' [65]. Its consequence is an opening or loosening of the reconstituted dream-body, rather than the uncovering of extraneous anatomy; this *slackening* thereby allows a 'river' of energy to flow through it:

we are alike you & i it says

we are alike

& you feel it just as i do

in the spaces between your joints

hunted

yes

this slack body

& a river moving through me

its edges beyond reach

always beyond reach

you have opened your body & you have opened your self so that

others may be spared

but you will suffer because of this

you will suffer as we suffer

i am burning & have never stopped burning

[84]

This experience effectively transforms the dreamer into *a-human-&-not-a-human*. The replication of the animal ordeal of butchery – something which, to my knowledge, is only implied in Indigenous narratives – is made explicit in *North of Here*.³⁶ The transformation is an opening of both ‘body’ and ‘self’ to realign them with the other-than-human, and, as a consequence, identity extends to encompass all things:

& you are human & you are animal & you are plant & you

are stone & you are hill & you are cloud & you are river &

you are path & you are star & you are above & you are below [73]

Needless to say, when I began experimenting with dreaming I did not envisage producing such consonances with (and divergences from) circumpolar shamanic ordeals. This places me in a somewhat uncomfortable ethical position. In the words of Albanese, I would certainly ‘do violence’ to the shamanic traditions of circumpolar peoples by implying that I, also, had undergone a shamanic initiation (Albanese *in* Connors 2000: 140). It is therefore worthwhile asking how I would have interpreted these dreams had I not been immersed in ethnographic literature? Would I have simply perceived them as an insolvable puzzle from the unconscious?³⁷ Does my discomfort

³⁶ Likewise, I have not found any references to this bodily ‘slackening’ in shamanic narratives.

³⁷ Indeed, it is only in hindsight that my ‘visions in the darkness at the edge of sleep’ [55] acquire their

arise, not from the content of the dreams themselves, but from a sense that, despite my best efforts, I have been susceptible to indirect influence? But if so, which of the ‘many hundreds, perhaps thousands’ of cultures have I unwittingly infringed? Equally valid is the question as to whether or not I would have had such dreams had I not been so immersed, which in turn raises the issue of the importance of social context. How much of our imaginative life is governed by societal conditioning? With regard to *North of Here*, can anthropological works be a kind of synthetic proxy for the more organic process of enculturation? Clearly, ethnographies are an incredibly impoverished substitute for the richness and variety of the society that they purport to document, but, in my case at least, there would seem to be sufficient stimulus to generate a certain kind of unconscious imaginative reality.

In this particular case, it is not the content of the dreams, nor their seeming proximity to the ritual apparatus of other cultures, that gives pause for thought, but rather how I perceive and label these experiences themselves. It is therefore worth noting that, in consciously developing the ‘shamanic’ element in the poem, I did not draw on any of the obvious tropes of historical shamanism such as the drum, baton, rattle or elaborate costume. Neither are there references to *trance*, or the word *shaman* itself. Similarly, the poem doesn’t concern itself with healing and soul recovery – both central shamanic modalities (Clottes 2016: 16; Graburn and Strong 1973: 169; Hultkrantz 1997: 190; Vitebsky 2000: 59) – but rather orients itself around human-animal interactions and the hunter-hunted dynamic.

7.5. *The Function of Poetry*

This, I think, gets to the heart of the research question that *North of Here* poses, namely:

prophetic quality.

can poetry move beyond the cautious suppositions of archaeological discourse when thinking about the deep past? The sense of ethical discomfort I feel is a litmus test that the work itself is grounded ‘in an authentic, real-world setting’ (§A1.19.) [381]. It is the simple corollary of finding an echo of the real in the world of the (poetic) unreal; the feeling of contact prior to the imaginative leaping forth. But the poem – in its texture, detail and imagining – transcends these preliminary reference points. It synthesises them into something new. With regard to the shamanic elements, in addition to the disarticulation and rearticulation of the dream-body, I drew upon the concept of soul flight (Graburn and Strong 1973: 169; Vitebsky 2000: 57) and the concomitant possibility of encountering conflict in developing the narrative of the poem (Vitebsky 2000: 59; Vasilevich 1963: 58). The result is a scenario in which both human and animal psychically pursue, kill or wound each other in a dynamic that explores consensual death-giving in the Palaeolithic.

I also resonated with Rane Willerslev’s characterisation of a ‘deep-felt anxiety of self-alienation’ (Willerslev 2004: 638) experienced among Yukaghir hunters. This I drew upon to posit a more general, existential anxiety about self-hood in a ‘self reflecting’ Palaeolithic world that entangles identity in a shifting field of undifferentiated personhood. Willerslev observes how hunters make physical, mimetic transformations to their bodies in order to beguile – and ultimately dupe – their prey. However, this isn’t merely Haines’s ‘ruse of the hunter’ (Haines 1993: 16) (§5.5.) [191], but a form of trans-species possession, a temporary act of ‘taking on the body of another species’ (Willerslev 2004: 634). The Yukaghir believe that such acts of bodily alteration effect a psychical transformation, such that they begin to see with their prey’s ‘alien perspective’ (2004: 634). This, in turn, allows them to behave and communicate like their prey, which ultimately allows human hunters to gain mastery over them. Such

transformations nevertheless come at a cost – hunting mimesis effects a transition from a human- to an animal-identity, and there is a risk of going too far, of self-identifying as the animal they are pursuing (2004: 634). The act of hunting is therefore perilous to the hunter's state of mind – requiring an individual to become sufficiently animal to perpetrate a deceit, and yet to remain sufficiently human so as not to believe the deceit themselves.

Willerslev in turn draws on the 'perspectivist' theory of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro to assert that, for the Yukaghir, 'all beings, whether human, animal or spirit, each within their own sphere of existence, are said to see the world in similar or identical ways, that is, in the way human beings generally do' (Willerslev 2015: 152). As such, the human hunter, in transforming into an elk for example, is seen by the elk in terms of its own 'humanness' (2015: 152). If the hunter succumbs to the power of his own transformation, his *becoming elk* manifests in his seeing the elk *as a human*, and his desire to kill the elk therefore dissipates. The Yukaghir believe that prey animals actively participate in this hunting dynamic by, in turn, 'seducing the hunter' (2015: 153). As far as I can ascertain, this primarily takes place on a psychical level. In a dynamic that partially inverts corporeal reality, the animal's spirit attempts to entice the sleeping hunter's soul to copulate with it, with the aim of coercing the hunter's soul to permanently return back to the animal spirit's 'household' as its 'spouse' (2015: 153). Nevertheless, Willerslev cites a hunter's account of encountering 'an old man' whilst tracking reindeer whose 'footprints were those of a reindeer' (2004: 634). The old man entices the hunter back to his camp, where he later dreams he is 'surrounded by reindeer' (2004: 635). It is only then that he realises the deception and manages to escape.

I have cited Willerslev's work in some detail because aspects of *North of Here*

clearly evolved in dialogue with it; specifically the idea of humans and animals pursuing each other. Moreover, my engagement with Willerslev's ethnography is a relevant example of the iterative patterning of my creative processes. I did not adopt a simple two-phase schema of research followed by literary production. Rather, the text was repeatedly held to account, and revised if necessary, to ensure that it was fully servicing the ontological concepts that I wished to explore. I have already discussed many of these issues at length – the technical and orthographic revisions (§7.1.) [259], for example, or the use of pronouns (§5.3.) [178]. I began to consult Willerslev's work in refining and developing the 'stranger', 'flight' and 'hunt' sections of the poem. His observations of humans and animals pursuing each other resonated with my earlier reading of Vitebsky, who describes animal spirits pursuing novice shamans in their dreams (Vitebsky 2000: 60), as well as shamans who 'may undertake a soul flight in order to locate game animals' (2000: 57). My synthesis of Vitebsky's and Willerslev's material therefore occurs in the idea of an ongoing psychical confrontation between shaman- and animal-spirits, during which the human attempts to broker consent to kill the animal, whilst also being aware that the animal, in turn, is engaged in an identical endeavour. The killing of the animal's psychical body results in its corporeal form becoming compliant and 'vacant':

& the deer looking back at him the deer looking back with
 vacant eyes & he slides the blade between its ribs & gives it
 the gift of death not looked for the gift of life

[110]

In Willerslev's account, there is no consent-seeking, but only seduction and deception. An aspect of this finds its way into *North of Here* in the way the *deer-&-not-a-deer* disguises itself as a woman in order to get near to its human quarry. Crucially, this

disguise is revealed to be a *mask* that must be *put down* [101] prior to the act of psychical wounding itself. This act of self-revelation is an acknowledgement of fundamental likeness between human and animal – of shared personhood – as well as a demonstration of respect. It is, in turn, mirrored by the shaman's putting down of the 'mask saved for this purpose' [109], a mask which the ancestral figure advises 'may bring you close' to the deer spirit [104]. Hunting is therefore presented as a collaboration between a shaman and one or more hunters, the former who hunts the animal's soul, and the latter who pursue its corporeal body. Critically, the psychical killing must take place prior to its physical counterpart, thereby rendering the body safe and vacant. However, as it transpires in the poem itself, the *deer-&-not-a-deer* does not consent to its psychical death, and ritual reparations must be sought to placate it:

& many petitions of sorrow made ever after

& many reparations sought

& many offerings made unto nival rivers

& many rituals called into being

& so on & so on

the passing of blood from hand to hand

down the long human chain

[111]

These consonances and dissonances with Willerslev's account of hunting, as well as Ingold's descriptions of consent-seeking (Ingold 2000a: 122) (§A1.10., A1.11.) [368, 373], demonstrate a deep and sustained engagement with research materials as part of a wider poetic practice. My use of masks, for example, draws upon Erica Hill's characterisation of 'perspectivist' and circumpolar ontologies that conceive of outward bodily forms as interchangeable 'coverings' (Hill 2011: 410) (§A1.8.). In my own

reimagining of this concept, the mask is a covering that exists in both corporeal and non-corporeal realities, and the ‘putting down’ of masks is therefore a performance of self-revelation *and* an acknowledgement of inner likeness between persons. As far as I can ascertain, this conception, in its particular form and detail, is a unique imaginative response to the complexities of indigenous metaphysics. Crucially, this conception itself stemmed directly from initial transcriptions of dream-encounters:

... & all the men of my family at the edge of sleep put
down their masks their arms around each other

[...]

from the low bank of hills it approaches its pelt
greywhite mottled with darker colour shifting as if in
mist & its mask arcane impenetrable

This thread within the poem therefore demonstrates the braiding of specialist research, speculative reasoning, poetic thought and unconscious processes – in short, a wide gamut of techniques brought to bear on a singular subject.

7.6. *Evaluation: Research*

The original aim of *North of Here* was to look at the north-west through the eyes of its LUP human inhabitants, and to examine how they conceived of the natural world, and how this conception was incorporated into their cosmogonies, mythologies, beliefs and rituals. In retrospect this is quite a broad area of study – as Connors argues, there are ‘unimaginable variances’ in the particularities of Indigenous beliefs from group to group and region to region (Connors 2000: 140) (§A1.6.) [335], and, notwithstanding the sparse population density of Late-glacial Britain when compared to historical North

America, it surely follows that LUP peoples were, to some degree, similarly diverse. Added to this, the floral and faunal communities of the Late-glacial were far from impoverished (see §A3. *Table 4*, [414] for example, which lists 40 species of land vertebrates *only*). This mix of humans and other-than-humans presents too complex an ecology and *culture* to comprehensively synthesise into a single work of literature. Breadth necessarily must be sacrificed for depth. *North of Here* could therefore only ever aspire to present a singular and partial picture of the deep past. I do not consider this a failing, but a realistic appraisal of what is possible, given the time-constraints involved.

In the course of the poem's development, two faunal species became the subject of especial focus: the deer as a prey animal³⁸ and the bear in a cosmogonic role as Primordial Giant. The decision to largely focus on the relationship between humans and these animals undoubtedly limits what can be inferred about other human-animal interactions. For example, other LUP prey included megafauna such as the woolly mammoth and aurochs, but there is no guarantee that these species would have been treated similarly by Palaeolithic peoples. There are many examples in the ethnographic record that illustrate how Indigenous groups relate differently to individual prey species. For instance, Jordan cites Binford's 1978 study of the Alaskan Nunamiut, who are observed to display markedly different behaviours towards caribou (reindeer) and mountain sheep; special rituals being required in the hunting of the latter (Jordan 2006: 94). Furthermore, in focusing on deer, I have concentrated specifically on a proto-shamanic relationship between the novitiate human *vision-seeker* and an other-than-human entity (the *deer-&-not-a-deer*). I have proposed psychical bargaining as a mechanism for consent-seeking prior to the corporeal act of hunting, but, in dwelling on this aspect of the relationship, real-world hunting is only marginally addressed. In

38 A partial transformation of the Poulton Elk (§A1.4.).

developing this ritualised, extra-corporeal element of human-animal interactions, I have neglected others factors that may have complicated this relationship, such as human social structures and group dynamics, status, trade, gender, climate and famine. A more prolonged study therefore might have contributed to a more nuanced depiction of interspecies relationships.

From this perspective, it is therefore pertinent to ask was the allotted amount of preliminary research time sufficient for the task at hand? Or, to put it another way, *how much* study would be required for a non-specialist to become sufficiently familiar with the necessary academic material? The key word here is ‘sufficiently’. Undoubtedly a longer period of research would have afforded further opportunity to produce a more detailed picture of LUP Britain, but a key element of PhD planning involves defining the limits of what is achievable within the necessary constraints of a time-delimited programme of study. The experimental premise of *North of Here* was that twelve to eighteen months of immersion in the fields of ecological science, archaeology and anthropology would be *sufficient* to stimulate a new body of work about Late-glacial Britain. The task itself was challenging – the subject matter is interdisciplinary and there are few, if any, written syntheses available.³⁹ Nevertheless, the framework of support and guidance provided by the PhD programme ensured that I kept to a tight schedule.

The research that I conducted – I would suggest – represents a thorough, scholarly engagement with a broad spectrum of disciplines, covering glaciology, ecology, palynology, stratigraphy, archaeology, genetics, ethnology, mythology, anthropology and ethics. Far from simply recapitulating the work of others, it draws these various discourses into a reasoned and plausible picture of LUP Britain. In doing so, it evaluates material from multiple fields of enquiry, offering critique and insight.

³⁹ As discussed in Appendix A, Smith’s *Late Stone Age Hunters of the British Isles* (1992) was helpful in this regard.

Specifically, it challenges theistic ideas about the religious character of the deep past and the implicit hierarchies that are contingent on notions of reverence, worship and sacrality (§A1.13.) [373]. It also highlights inconsistencies and ambiguities in anthropological accounts of personhood and animacy (§A1.7.) [374], and spirit and energy (§A1.8.) [351], whilst also making a valid contribution to the discussion about animal mastery (§A1.10.) [368].

In addition to this, the preliminary research itself serves as the vital document of a poet's process in drawing upon interdisciplinary materials in order to make new work. It demonstrates a deep and involved engagement with its various subject matter, and thereby offers itself as a model for interdisciplinary poetic practice. With specific reference to PhD Creative Writing programmes, it makes a good case for a significant period (within the 3-year timeframe of a full-time PhD Creative Writing schedule) of initial research prior to the commencement of creative writing. In so doing, it affirms the validity of a scholarly engagement with specialist discourse as a means of stimulating new work. It suggests that an openness to expert domains of knowledge can result in a meaningful and valuable engagement with those sources.

Critically, the new long poem that resulted from this research constitutes a significant evolution of my own creative practice. I have worked with scholarly materials before – *Landings* (2009-19), for example, draws upon cartographic records, census data, historical treatises and dialect glossaries to perform its elliptical analysis of the landscapes of Lancashire's West Pennine Moors. But its process involved incorporating data from these various disciplines directly into its mosaic sequence – there is no attempt at synthesis. By contrast, *North of Here* absorbs its research materials and makes imaginative extrapolations into the deep past. It aims to move beyond its sources into a realm of imaginative reality, thereby poetically infilling

lacunae in academic discourse. *The Cult Revived* (2015-present) extends the collage techniques of *Landings* by assembling as its *materia poetica* a large corpus of writing from the domains of history, archaeology, geology, folklore and ecology. Its creative output forms an attempted ‘(re)synthesis of archaeo-mythic images through repeated recombination and assembly’ (Skelton 2019: 31):

ventral earth . lingual fog . dialects of the breathing whole soil . grain
foxes . interstadial rituals . birches under changing apex peat . anterior
sewn remains . living membrane trace marks to the patterning elm .
mid-distal wing carcasses . refugial deep languages . late-border
grammars . surviving . vertebral

(2019: 31)

The procedural *assembly* language of *The Cult Revived* draws on self-devised computer programs to make its recombinant selections, therefore removing the poet’s very consciousness from the compositional process itself. The motivation behind this technique is to bypass individual linguistic idioms and to short-circuit aesthetic predilections, resulting in a form that extends the possibilities of individual poetic practice. The consequences of this process are fissured and broken syntaxes, or strange, hyper-real or impossible images:

iiii

in water joints the

diagrams aiming quiver peat

i.i

for lichen and isolated

also are to bone

i.ii

during chamber the resin

the contra of with

i.iii

where the body findings

six the the the

(Skelton 2017)

When commencing work on *North of Here*, I contemplated extending or refining these techniques and applying them to a LUP dataset, but on evaluating the highly experimental form I had already developed, it struck me that there was perhaps little I could do to evolve the form any further. If the PhD programme was to provide me with the opportunity to uniquely advance my writing practice, then it would be in a different direction. My subsequent engagement with unconscious dream-states constitutes an analogous but entirely different modality to the procedural workings of *The Cult Revived*. Both methodologies push poetic practice beyond the restrictive influence of consciousness itself. This engagement with dream-recall and hypnopompic writing therefore constitutes a new development in my writing, and a vital addition to the techniques at my future disposal.

7.7. Evaluation: Poetry

If the value of a scholarly approach to interdisciplinary research is tangible, then the question of how creative writing itself can contribute to academic discourse is more complex. With specific reference to *North of Here*, the question is primarily relevant to

contemporary thinking about prehistory. As already discussed, archaeology is fundamentally bound to artefactual evidence; its inferences about the lives of the past are necessarily limited by those elements of material culture that have survived into the present day. In seeking creative ways out of these limitations, archaeologists have sought insights from other cultures that may be analogical to those of the past, but the way in which these insights have been applied is incredibly circumspect. Jordan notes how early uses of ethnographic studies – the so-called Ethnoarchaeology movement – had a ‘materialist bias’ that focused on adaptive behavioural patterns and their manifestation in material culture (Jordan 2006: 88). However, subsequent attempts to move beyond this – to gain some understanding of the intellectual culture that produced particular physical residues – have been hampered by deficiencies in the ethnographies themselves. Attention to the ‘material articulation of hunter-gatherer belief’ is lacking; ethnographers studying living cultures are not necessarily concerned with how – if at all – such beliefs may manifest physically and endure into the archaeological record (2006: 91). Nevertheless, Jordan points to those instances in which symbolic action *can* be inferred from material remains, such as the ritualised treatment of animal bones in outward demonstrations of respect (2006: 94) (§A1.1.) [321]. He even goes on to suggest that archaeological understanding may benefit from considering hunter-gatherer ‘universals’, such as notions of ‘ensoulment’ and ‘masterhood’ (i.e. animal mastery) (2006: 98). Jordan argues for a need to ‘constructively expand the range of questions that we direct at forager societies’ if archaeological interpretation is to progress (2006: 98),⁴⁰ but his aspiration is firmly rooted in the desire to think about the ‘processes generating common kinds of archaeological evidence’ (2006: 99). To reiterate, despite its looking towards other disciplines for analogical insights, archaeology is ultimately

40 Jordan makes this comment specifically in relation to the Mesolithic period, but it holds for the Upper Palaeolithic too.

constrained by the available physical evidence. As a domain of study, it necessarily defines itself by, and limits itself to, what can be inferred from material remains in its interpretive reconstructions of the past.

It is therefore my contention that if archaeology so limits itself, then it falls to other kinds of practice to contribute their different ways of thinking. Inevitably, these other modalities must be less constrained by evidentiary support, if they are to fulfil that role. I suggest that poetry is aptly suited to the task. When Clayton Eshleman began visiting LUP caves in south-west France, he was confronted by the archaeologist Alexander Marshack:

This book is also an attempt to answer the first question that the science writer Alexander Marshack fired at me when he walked into our kitchen on the French Dordogne in the spring of 1974:

“What is a *poet* doing in the caves?”

(Eshleman 2003: xi)

Eshleman’s use of the word ‘fired’ here, and his italics, are telling. Clearly Marshack thought that poets had no business engaging with the serious work of trying to decipher and understand the mark-making of prehistoric humanity. This is somewhat ironic, as poets may *imaginatively* travel far deeper into Palaeolithic caves than archaeologists will ever allow themselves. They are not circumscribed by the burden of proof in the same way. But if Marshack’s words stung, then Eshleman spent the next 25 years assimilating archaeological knowledge – partially it would seem, in order to contend with the likes of Marshack on an equal footing. Tellingly, *Juniper Fuse* (2003) is as much a prose work as it is poetry (§6.8.) [236]. Rather than let his hard-won expertise speak through his poems, Eshleman chose to augment them with a textual underpinning and bulwark in the form of copious well-researched, elucidatory notes and commentary.

He argues that this ‘pluralistic approach [...] may result in a fuller “reading” of Upper Paleolithic imagination than archaeological or literary approaches alone might yield’ (Eshleman 2003: xii), and the resulting interplay between poem, prose and commentary certainly generates a rich field of discourse.

Eshleman’s lack of faith in the purely literary approach in disseminating his ideas is certainly understandable. His poems are often impenetrable and hermetically allusive, requiring explication in order to resolve some of their complexities. The discursive essay that he develops in *Juniper Fuse* is a form of footnote writ large. But in opening the text up to other modalities, he is able to couch his work in serious, academically inflected *prose* writing, which no doubt goes some way towards bridging the divide between archaeologist and poet – towards being taken seriously by practitioners of another discipline. *North of Here* takes a very different tack by trying – as much as possible – to assimilate specialist knowledge *into* the poetry itself. As a consequence the poem is far less opaque than Eshleman’s work; it cannot rely on peritext to communicate essential information. Even though *North of Here* is intimately concerned with uncertainty and ambiguity, its dialogical form can therefore be read relatively easily and quickly. Indeed, that *flow* is important in conveying ontological ideas about the always moving flux of energy and power in the Palaeolithic world.

By providing copious commentary in *Juniper Fuse*, Eshleman is able to cogently communicate large amounts of data, articulate theory, cite other writers, and contextualise his poetry. Moreover, in this process he removes a certain burden from his poems, allowing them to follow their own elliptical, hallucinatory thinking. Nevertheless, direct access to the poetry itself is somewhat impeded by the wealth of contextualising prose, and, I suggest, the poems are subtly compromised by their very contingency to supplementary material. In the context in which they are presented, they

are not afforded the opportunity to speak for themselves. By contrast, *North of Here* offers an immersion in the flow of a singular, self-contained form that attempts to *absorb* interdisciplinary discourse *into* its poetics. Whereas Eshleman's is a hybrid form, my own poem is simply that; a poem. Its process of absorption is a transposition of argument and supposition into a performative mode; *North of Here* is an enactment of an underlying theory fused with *imaginative* thinking.

To return to my original assertion, it is precisely this *performative* mode that makes poetry ideally suited to the task of moving archaeological thought past its dependence on evidenciary support. Nevertheless, if it is to make a valuable contribution, it must do so *plausibly*. This, I think, is the fundamental difference between *The Cult Revived* and *North of Here*. The former is unrestrained in its synthetic recombinations:

i. Before the Drowned Peninsulas

languages along mineral tissues
 marks below border souls (mineral, arboreal, interstadial)
 open boundaries, membrane rites
 caves of the climatic sea

ii. The Lower Findings

tongue regions, downward sediment
 birds of the karstic shore
 small gods key open the dialects
 grammars greater, deep

(Skelton 2018b)

Although these lines undoubtedly engage with prehistoric themes, they have less to say about the intellectual culture of a particular people; they are less helpful in thinking about humanity in a specific time and place. By contrast, *North of Here* proffers an enactment of certain aspects of Palaeolithic lives. In so doing, it aims to directly contribute to contemporary thinking about a very distinct period of prehistory.

The paradox at the heart of this endeavour is a desire to break the chains of academic circumspection whilst also remaining in some way accountable – or at least proximal – to notions of veracity; to both imaginatively extend the parameters of the discussion *and* remain credible. But does the gravitational pull that academic discourse exerts over the work compromise poetry's trajectory, limiting it to a *safe* orbit? Is its imaginative function neutralised as a result? Does *North of Here* strand poetry on the banks of those other domains of knowledge?

I suggest that most – if not all – literary works are necessarily bounded by *some sense* of plausibility. If a work aims to be understood, then it makes concessions to commonly accepted ideas about, for example, the psychology of the mind, laws of cause-and-effect, certain observable material realities, and the history of ideas. Exceptions to these would be nonsense verse, conceptual works, and the more extreme experimental poetics, but even most of these, I would argue, evince an internal logic or methodology that binds them to a recognisable epistemology. I myself, for example, published a book entitled *Limnology* (2012), which contained several visual poems that could not be *read* in any conventional sense, but which in their typographic arrangement imitated riverine processes. Holding the book half-open therefore reimagined the codex as a v-shaped valley, with the words caught in the action of cascading down its sides like streams and rivers. Despite their illegibility, the 'poems' derive meaning from their

conformance to known facts about physical geography. The work is therefore held to account in a very definite and observable way; its performance of *gravity*. In fact, it is from these very constraints that the poetry itself arises.

I would argue that similar constraints operate on many levels within *North of Here*, and that, far from inhibiting poetic function, these constraints determine many of the literary and poetic qualities of the text itself. The repetitive, echoic character of the poem is therefore an index of a proposed ‘reflective’ Palaeolithic reality in which everything is simultaneously *looking* and *looked at* (§5.2.) [174]. It is also emblematic of notions of cyclicity implicit in metaphysical beliefs concerning regeneration and reincarnation (§5.7., 6.3.) [201, 218]. Similarly, the orthographic and structural form of the work performs aspects of ontological similarity and interconnectivity, whilst also addressing the tensions inherent in differences of power in a non-hierarchical, social universe (§A1.13., 7.1.) [378, 259]. In short, the data accumulated during preliminary research exerted a critical guiding influence in shaping the outcome of the poem. Nevertheless, the texture and detail of that outcome itself is the province of the creative impulse – of the synthetic capacity of the poetic imagination.

To illustrate this, it is worth returning to the image of the *cave mouth of the unconscious*, discussed earlier (§7.1.) [264]:

they are not lost to me entirely then

& as i leave the cave the wind cuts its melody from the fluted

rocks

there are other shatter marks more elusive than flint it seems

to say

& there scratched in ochre & low to the ground i see a figure

wearing the mask of a deer

looking back at me
with blazing eyes

[67]

In this context, the action of the wind that produces ‘melody from the fluted rocks’ can be seen as a metaphor for the workings of conscious poetic thought. If the agency that made the masked figure is unrevealed, then the movement of the wind is at least felt and heard. It is tangible and present, if still elusive and volatile. The music it makes is the result of cause-and-effect, but that convergence of *air-and-stone-producing-sound* is nevertheless mysterious; its harmonies are unpredictable and unrepeatable. I suggest that this image may be usefully applied to the imaginative activity that is at the heart of *North of Here*. Its esoteric methodologies work outside the confines of conventional logic and reason. The music it produces may have a tangible point of causation – and is therefore *bound* to the *fluted rocks* of research data – but its means of coming into being are hermetic, and, ultimately, evade simple explication.

As such, its processes cannot produce reliable results. Each act of synthesis will generate new material that is unforeseen in its intimate form and detail. In a literary domain this is to be celebrated, but it causes problems when thinking about how *North of Here* might reasonably contribute to archaeological thinking. If the poem feeds upon the insights generated by other domains, then the insights that *it* in turn may offer will be discounted *within* conventional archaeological discourse. Its arcane methodologies estrange it from *reasoned* debate, and, despite its desire for plausibility, its fundamental unaccountability to both logic and material evidence qualifies its assertions as purely speculative. Archaeology cannot sanction anything that does not adhere to its own ethics and principles.

If this is a somewhat pessimistic assessment of the possibility for cross-

disciplinary dialogue, then a recent trend in archaeological practice might give cause for future hope. This so-called ‘creative turn’ (Thomas *et. al.* 2017: 121) echoes similar developments across the humanities involving more collaborative, multivalent approaches to cultural phenomena. A recent volume of the *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* provided a ‘Creative Archaeologies Forum’ for discussing these issues under the title ‘Beyond Art/Archaeology’ (2017). Doug Bailey’s provocatively titled paper, ‘Art/Archaeology: What Value Artistic-Archaeological Collaboration?’ observes that many artists have found it worthwhile ‘exploring archaeological concepts, methods and debates’, whereas comparatively few archaeologists have ‘benefited from artistic inspiration in their examinations of the archaeological past’ (Bailey 2017: 247). I would suggest that *any* observance of artistic contributions to archaeological thought is – in the context of this PhD research – to be celebrated, although, within Bailey’s paper at least, it is difficult to discern exactly what these contributions might be.

Thomas *et. al.* concur in observing the attraction that prehistory exerts over artists, but warn archaeologists against exploiting arts practice purely as a means of communicating specialist archaeological knowledge to the broader public (Thomas *et. al.* 2017: 122). In such contexts, artists are excluded from knowledge exchange; they are merely ‘heuristic devices to bridge the apparent temporal divide between prehistory and present’ (2017: 122). Bailey goes on to discuss the constraints that conventional archaeologists face in producing such knowledge:

[...] heavy contextualization, justification and explicit explanation weigh down most (perhaps all) standard and highly respected archaeological work. Innovation and original thinking are present, though they occur within a circuit of carefully guarded perimeter ditches. Seldom do we stray far.

(Bailey 2017: 249)

This accords with my own characterisation of the self-defining limits of conventional interpretive archaeology, but I am therefore intrigued by the idea of *straying*. How far might such perimeter ditches travel into other disciplines? Bailey is nevertheless cautious in his appraisal of existing interdisciplinary work, asking:

Is it anything more than individuals from two subjects versed in the sets of their disciplinary practices working in the other's intellectual, fieldwork and studio spaces?

(2017: 247)

There is a redundancy and futility implied here in the actions of practitioners of one discipline operating in another. What good can come – Bailey seems to be asking – from working in a field outside our domain of expertise? Clearly, I would argue against such pessimism, but I do so by suggesting that expert practitioners become *sufficiently* familiar with other disciplines in order to meaningfully and credibly contribute to a cross-disciplinary dialogue. Such acts of familiarisation are necessarily labour-intensive, and, indeed, in the context of *North of Here*, it might seem hubristic to suggest that a creative practitioner can assimilate the necessary archaeological theory in order to participate in knowledge exchange. It implies that poetry can effectively absorb (or annex part of) archaeology, and, moreover, that it is only through poetry's synthetic capacity that contemporary thinking about prehistory can be advanced. But I suggest that poetry simply presents itself as the ideal medium for speculative imagining. Thinking of Bailey's 'ditches', creative writing becomes a passageway between disciplines, crossing demarcated boundaries and facilitating movement in both directions. If poets such as myself can embrace aspects of archaeological thinking, then it follows that archaeologists can think poetically.

An excellent case in point is the archaeologist Mark Edmonds. An expert on the

stone tools of the Neolithic and Bronze Age in Britain, he has written extensively for mainstream archaeological publications such as *Antiquity* and *The Journal of Material Culture*, but he has also produced artist's books, often in collaboration with others. *Stonework* (2013), for example, was developed out of the need to 'experiment with a different way of telling' than that found in conventional archaeological monographs (Edmonds and Ferraby 2013: 7). In this work, poem fragments about *cloudstone* from the Langdale Fells of Cumbria are brought into patterned arrangement with artwork by Rose Ferraby, creating an evocative and absorbing interplay between text and visual material. According to Edmonds, these experiments are intended to present 'a form of narrative that, to paraphrase Henry Moore, offers a more appropriate *truth to materials*. A use of words and images that is responsive to the nature of the work, to the qualities that people recognised in the stone and the values that they realised, unspoken, through their bodies' (2013: 7).

Edmonds's collaborator Ferraby is herself trained in both archaeology and fine art, and is therefore ideally situated to explore the connecting threads between these seemingly discrete disciplines. In her recent collaboration with Rob St. John, *Soundmarks* (2019), they argue that 'creative practice roves between the sciences, arts and humanities' (Ferraby and St. John 2019: 7), and their work amply demonstrates how artistic modalities can deeply engage with the same material that is normally considered the preserve of archaeologists: the 'sub-surface world' (2019: 51). In so doing, their multivalent combination of text, photography, visual art and soundwork demonstrates ways of 'narrating buried stories' that are complementary to, and extend beyond, technical discourse (2019: 41).

In the light of this 'creative turn', I suggest that *North of Here* might comprise a node in this developing matrix of interdisciplinary thought. Although the work itself is

multidisciplinary in its methods, unlike the books of Edmonds, Ferraby and St. John it is singular both in its medium of communication and in its authorship. In this sense, it is not a collaborative work, although I have had interesting discussions with archaeologists, anthropologists, literary geographers, environmental scientists and creative practitioners along the way. However, my desire to contribute to archaeological discourse gestures towards future collaborative modalities. I welcome dialogue with experts in LUP archaeology, and I am particularly solicitous of any critique or commentary that might be forthcoming. In turn I would be interested to hear if *North of Here* influences their thinking about the deep past. If this were to occur, the poem itself would become part of an ongoing cross-disciplinary discussion, and might stimulate future – more collaborative – modes of enquiry and production.

In the absence of such conversations occurring now, *North of Here* can still make a contribution to knowledge by stimulating discussion about the deep past outside of the archaeological academy. It synthesises complex and subtle subject matters, making them more accessible to the general reader. In this respect, it performs the public ‘outreach’ that Thomas *et. al.* characterise as the conventional role of creative practice (Thomas *et. al.* 2017: 122). Crucially, though, it is not simply a recapitulation or translation of pre-existing specialist knowledge into an assimilable form. Instead, it performs its own thinking about the lives and landscapes of the Palaeolithic. Furthermore, it also contributes to *thinking about thinking about the past*, and presents creative practice, and specifically poetry, as a valid vehicle for documenting and testing such thought. The poem is an experiment, and irregardless of its success or failure in presenting a plausible picture of Late-glacial Britain, it sheds light on the importance of thinking about prehistory itself, and the value that such thinking can have in addressing contemporary issues.

Fundamentally, *North of Here* is a poem about a contemporary consciousness looking back into prehistory. It is therefore concerned with the dissonances between ‘modern’ and ‘ancient’ ways of being, and the poem takes an elliptical journey in which it moves ‘to-&-fro’ between these two positions. Just as the human and other-than-human bleed into each other, creating a ‘clot of being’ [114], so there is an enmeshing of modern and ancient ontologies. From the outset, I believed that this was the only honest way to approach the task of looking into the deep past; to acknowledge the difficulty of the endeavour and the possibility of failure:

how do i begin

mother

grandmother

ancestor

teach me how to see

[53]

North of Here therefore presents itself as the poetic document of an act of imaginative speculation, rather than simply proffering a version of the past as if it were the only authentic one. The poem is explicitly a singular vision – one of many potentialities:

think of an other way it said

think of this for example

of the possibility of sacredness in all things

the shimmer of life itself it said

the firedance of atoms

[62]

there are other ways other beliefs

but ours is the way of knowing my dear

one ours the way of knowing

[104]

This ‘way of knowing’ is but one ontological variation on a theme. There are implicitly others. In being presented to the poem’s narrator as a *possible* mode of thinking, the reader is implicitly invited to entertain it also. This framing allows for a more direct scrutiny of contemporary thought, because the poem tracks the dissolution of the narrator’s world-views and his concomitant difficulty in assimilating ideas that seem radically different:

but how to make my way through the world i said

when each step impinges upon an other

when each action displaces or absorbs an other

when everything must eat & be eaten

& how to hold that knowledge in the mind & not be

paralysed by horror fear anxiety

did i take from you unnecessarily

did i not give of myself when it was my time

yes it said

horror but also joy

horror & joy commingled

everything commingling

endlessly dissolving & resolving

moving to & fro to & fro

everything contingent on one another

touching one another

piercing one another

[81]

The value of *North of Here* is therefore not limited to its reconstruction of the past, but extends to a critique of the present. In an earlier version of the poem I included these lines:

yes i said

is there anything beyond

our helical dreams of eternity

our arrogance

& our pathos

But on consideration they were too emphatic in their suggestion that modernity represents an ethical decline in our perception – and treatment – of other-than-human life. The sentiment *that things were better in the past* is too simplistic, and it romanticises other modes of being-in-the-world. The Palaeolithic reality that *North of Here* presents is assuredly unromantic – it is bloody and violent – and its morality concerning death-giving is perhaps unpalatable to modern sensibilities. Nevertheless, in its ascription of equality to all elements of life, it casts a long, slant shadow across our hierarchical, anthropocentric world-views. By reintegrating the human within the society of animals, plants and supposedly inanimate matter, it reminds us that there are ‘other ways’. It does not suggest a reversion to Palaeolithic lifeways, but rather a possibility for change and a new direction:

& yes

what mask

what covering
 will you wear the next time
 when you pass through here
 through the hole in the earth i have made for you

& how will you greet the world
 how greet the world anew
 when you are made new
 still writhing amniotic

[119]

These allusions to regeneration that form the poem's closing sequence equally refer to a moral, ontological renewal as much as they do a corporeal one. Moreover, the orientation is explicitly towards behaviour, rather than merely thinking. If we are to consider 'the world alive & thinking & feeling' [63], how would this change how we *greet* it, and how we behave towards it? *North of Here* requires that the reader *put down* their masks when they 'pass through' the 'here' of the text, in order to engage with a different way of being. They may then 'turn away' and 'find solace in ... forgetting' [82], or remain, and dwell in a world of both *sorrow* and *gratitude*.

Appendices

A1. Preliminary Research (Verbose)

In Britain, the last intensely cool period or *glaciation* is known as the Devensian, and the timing of its greatest extent is called the Last Glacial Maximum (hereafter LGM). The ensuing climatic amelioration is called the Windermere Interstadial, which in Britain was followed by a short period of cooling known as the Loch-Lomond Stadial. Glaciologists collectively describe this period of time the Late-glacial. In archaeological terms it is known as the Late-Upper Palaeolithic (hereafter LUP). See *Table 1* (§A3.) [406] for a visual summary of these terms. For the purposes of *North of Here*, my specific focus is on the Windermere Interstadial only, c. 15,400 to 12,900 BP.

A1.1. Questions of Scale

In order to imaginatively ‘enter the landscape of Late-glacial Britain’, and to think about how Late-Upper Palaeolithic peoples conceived of the natural world, it is important to bear in mind Lesley McFadyen’s assertion that:

Landscape is not simply a geography of environment. It is not neutral space that is then filled with contents such as architecture or material culture, neither is it a physical entity that is then peppered with various natural features or resources.

(McFadyen 2006: 121)

McFadyen’s perspective reflects a recent trend in archaeological interpretation that moves away from previous ecological-economic models of human behaviour in which the landscape is viewed as a ‘cartography or ecological framework [...] [that] dictate[s] the limits of past people’s lives’ (2006: 121). Such models pay little attention to the significance of culture in shaping perception, behaviour and attitudes towards the land and its other-than-human inhabitants. The ecological-economic paradigm focuses on

human interaction with the environment in terms of rationality, observable stimuli and causation, and has therefore been criticised for the way in which it ‘reduce[s] humans to instruments that mechanistically adapt to their natural world’ (Jordan 2006: 91). Ethnographic research has shown that hunter-gather societies are complex and don’t necessarily behave in a way that is *optimally suited* to their environment. As Jordan notes, ‘hunting large evasive animals [can be construed as] [...] wasteful economic activity’, but is socially significant in its function as an act of skill whose currency is prestige (Jordan 2006: 92). Moreover, the rich ritual and symbolic life of such communities often involves the idea of taboo foods (Milner 2006: 74), or animals that are only hunted in extremis, where the only other option is starvation (Jordan 2006: 94). Occurrences of the ‘votive’ deposition of entire uneaten animal bodies have also been documented in the European Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods (Chatterton 2006: 104), and there are ethnographic accounts of the construction of special shrines dedicated to the remains of certain animals (Jordan, 2006: 94) – both activities that operate outside the bounds of the models ‘for the potential food and other resources’ propounded by J.D. Clark in which estimates ‘of behavior, group size and density’ are extrapolated from ecological data (Clark 1968: 277-8).

By contrast, the perspective advocated by McFadyen acknowledges the complexity and ambiguity of human agency by placing stress on how the environment is perceived and actively constructed by its inhabitants. It takes into account how landscapes become historicised through human activity – how *spaces* become *places*, redolent with past movements, encounters and actions; how localities become encultured and full of meaning, and how they are ‘peopled by ancestral and spiritual entities’ (Tilley 1994 *in* McFadyen 2006: 125). A key aspect of this approach is also an acknowledgement of the effect of human action on the environment itself, through sites

of activity and the paths that connect them. Humans modify the world directly and indirectly, and their passage through it is not necessarily one of economy of movement or direct trajectory. Moreover such movements are enmeshed in complex personal and social narratives, such that the landscape itself becomes part of human identity; a means of ‘understanding life in relation to the lives of others’ (McFadyen 2006: 125).

Whilst this phenomenological perspective forms, in part, a critique of the ecological-economic model, there is, I think, a way to incorporate aspects of both views in a complementary way – it is simply a question of scale. When thinking about humans returning to Late-glacial Britain collectively, it is useful to think about subsistence and adaptation. Indeed, Gísli Pálsson, a critic of the ecological-economic model, acknowledges that ‘aspects of human behaviour are responsive to natural constraints’ (Pálsson 1991 *in* Jordan 2006: 91) and it therefore seems reasonable to begin with a discussion of the environmental factors that might exercise such constraints, albeit whilst acknowledging that I am initially using quite thick brush-strokes. Such factors include: climate and temperature, soil conditions, plant coverage and faunal populations. A more phenomenological approach can be adopted when looking at landscape through the discipline of anthropology.

A1.2. Last Glacial Maximum and Vegetative Recolonisation

The overall picture for the north-west as it emerged from the LGM is one of gradual repopulation by ‘interwoven fungal hyphae and unicellular algae’ (Pennington 1970: 49), followed by small *pioneer* plant species such as grasses (*Gramineae*), sedges (*Cyperaceae*), docks (*Rumex*), and creeping willows (*Salix herbecea*), eventually forming a *tundra* type biome. As the climate continued to improve, increasing numbers of larger shrubbier plants such as mugworts (*Artemisia*) and dwarf birch (*Betula nana*)

became established, forming *shrub-tundra*. These were followed by the larger shrubs and small trees, including junipers (*Juniperus*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), and willow (*Salix* spp.), forming *park-tundra*. Tables 2 and 3 (§A3.) [408, 412] collate much of the material published by Pennington, which plot sequences for various areas of the Lake District against more general trends for Britain as a whole. It is therefore important to acknowledge that different areas of the north-west landscape will have had their own unique phytogeographic histories, many of which are impossible to know intimately because pollen records are not preserved evenly across all topographies. Rather, they are only favourably preserved in the layered silts and muds that are evenly deposited in the undisturbed basins of deep tarns and lakes, meaning that this picture of the Late-glacial has the propensity to become distorted in favour of certain environments.

When referring to *Tables 2 and 3*, the key point to remember is that the taxa listed are the dominant species, but as Pennington notes, ‘records show that about half of the total number of species in the British flora has now been recorded from Late Quaternary deposits, and of these about 60% were already in the country by the end of Late Devensian time.’ (Pennington 1977: 251). Individual pollen diagrams for specific sites show rich and complex vegetative communities evolving over time, and it is undoubted that a diverse fauna – including *Homo sapiens* – would have followed the advance of tundra grasslands northwards as the British and Irish Ice Sheet retreated, some 15,000 years ago.

Frustratingly for my research purposes, there appears to be no attempted synthesis of regional data since Pennington’s, which, in terms of academic currency, is over forty years old. Jonathan Laegard asserts that attempts to correlate local palynological data with broader countrywide or continental stratigraphies/vegetative

zones is now acknowledged to be problematic, and is therefore rarely undertaken. This is partly due to advances in the techniques of pollen sampling and recording, which are revealing higher degrees of differentiation in the composition of individual floral communities, such that wider trends are difficult to plot. It is now standard practice to define detailed local stratigraphic sequences, rather than attempting to map them to the Pollen or Vegetative Zones of Pennington's synthesis (Laegard, 2018, *pers. comm.*).

A1.3. The Return of Animals and Humans

Both Yalden (1999: 30) and Corbet & Harris (1991: 571) agree that between 18,000 and 15,000 BP the climate of Britain was such that only a limited arctic fauna could have survived, especially in northern regions. If there were exposed areas of high ground above the ice with associated pioneer vegetation, then it is possible that mountain hare and Norway lemming foraged for food in this environment, and that arctic fox, and possibly stoat, preyed upon them. In the *peri-glacial* region south of the ice-front, a more complex faunal community would have subsisted. Due to vastly lower sea-levels as a consequence of glaciation, Britain was still connected to continental Europe during the Late-glacial period. This would have afforded easy transit to and from the British peninsula. *Table 4 (§A3.)* [414] gathers together 40 species of land vertebrate, only half of which are still present in the faunal population of the British Isles today. It must be noted that it is an incomplete list (there are no birds, marine animals or insect populations, for example), as it is largely derived from LUP fossil assemblages. As such, the dates for extinctions are also largely provisional, and given that the majority of these archaeological sites (such as Gough's Cave, Somerset, and Robin Hood's Cave, Derbyshire), are mainly composed from the remains of human settlement, they largely reflect only the kinds of animals upon which humans preyed.

Jacobi and Higham (2009) identify a fossil assemblage at Gough's Cave as indicative of – not only the Late-glacial mammalian return – but also their attendant humans. As well as numerous cut marks on the bones of deer, tarpan, mammoth and reindeer, several human bones were found. Dates for the assemblage range from 12,940 (± 140) to 11,820 (± 120) *uncal* BP ((15,895 – 15,091) to (14,021 – 13,462) *cal* BP)⁴¹ (Jacobi and Higham 2009: 1901). These dates are significant as they allow for the possibility of a return date that is prior to the rapid 'warm' fluctuation of the Windermere Interstadial known as the Bølling interlude. Climatic information extracted from Greenlandic ice-cores confirms this warm period as commencing c. 14,700 BP (Barton *et al.*, 2003: 640; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2006: 14; Steffensen *et al.*, 2008: 682; Jacobi and Higham, 2009: 1902), although this does not mean that such rapid changes in climate occurred simultaneously across the northern hemisphere (and therefore *in* Britain). Nevertheless, the picture this paints is of a cold-tolerant mammal community living at the very edge of the habitable north-western European peninsula, clearly well-adapted to less than optimal vegetation cover, and pursued by equally tenacious *Homo sapiens*. Jacobi and Higham acknowledge that the radiocarbon dates on their own 'cannot tell us whether re-colonization was synchronous with, just prior to, or after, Lateglacial warming' (Jacobi and Higham 2009: 1895), but they put forward a Bayesian analysis of the data which 'allows the incorporation of associated archaeological information' (2009: 1900). The result is a much narrower date range for the peopling of south-western Britain: 14,845 – 14,705 *cal* BP, which they assert with a 68.2% probability, and which is more or less synchronous with the Bølling interlude (2009: 1902). The picture they propose is therefore rather different – a rapid warming and consequent swift recolonisation by animals and humans.

41 For a discussion of *uncal* BP versus *cal* BP dates, see the Glossary (§A2.). The calibrated dates here were obtained using the OxCal Radiocarbon Dating Calibration System Version 4.4 (<https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>) using the 95.4% probability and the IntCal20 Curve, and verified on 21/09/2020.

Christopher Smith, in his *Late Stone Age Hunters of the British Isles* (1992), helpfully describes the plant species found in the meagre pollen assemblage of Gough's Cave as primarily composed of grasses and 'other open country weeds', but also alder, birch, hazel, and willow (Smith 1992: 93). This mix of both tundra and deciduous woodland flora he interprets as reflecting 'the diversity of the landscape of the Lateglacial Interstadial' (1992: 94), and he remarks that the alder and hazel 'probably grew in the sheltered gorge' – a vivid indication of micro-phytogeographic history and a reminder of the dangers of trying to apply general countrywide trends to specific localities. In something of a tour-de-force of processual ecological-economic archaeology, he evaluates *critical carrying capacity*, *calorific expense* and *protein/carbohydrate intake* in order to devise a projected *optimum population* value for the British Late-glacial Interstadial of 0.006 to 0.02 persons per km², comparing it to a figure of 0.012/km² from the ethnographic record (1992: 12-16). Perhaps it should be remarked here that Smith doesn't claim to be able to calculate actual populations for the Late-glacial – and, as has been seen previously with regard to local, regional and countrywide flora, it is incredibly difficult to speak in general terms – but his analysis does suggest that the *Homo sapiens* who followed the herds back into Britain were very few in number.⁴²

A1.4. Archaeological Sites

These conclusions are borne out by the archaeological evidence. The number of LUP sites in Britain is not many. *Table 5 (§A2.)* [420] is adapted from Smith's appendix (1992: 183-9) and lists 24 sites from around the Late-glacial period (c. 15,000 to 10,000

⁴² The current area of Britain is approximately 243,305 sq km (source: <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/united-kingdom>). During the Late-glacial, sea-levels were much lower, and so the surface area would have been greater, but, based on Smith's data, this generates a 'population' of between 1,459 and 4,866 people at any one time.

BP) in which there are radiocarbon dates derived from fossil evidence. There are a number of caveats to be aware of in interpreting these data. Firstly, Smith assembled his appendix in 1992, and the task of revising his figures with the most current results available for each site is beyond the scope of this project. Given that radiocarbon dating techniques are constantly improving, these dates should be considered provisional.⁴³ Nevertheless, I have obtained calibrated radiocarbon dates for each of the uncalibrated figures Smith quotes, in order to situate each site in something approaching a ‘real-world’ chronology. Secondly, the ‘oldest’ and ‘most recent’ dates do not imply a period of permanent, continuous occupation – they simply record the oldest and youngest dates derived from fossils in those localities. In some cases, only a single date was available (in which case the ‘youngest’ column has been left blank), and this may simply imply a brief occupancy. LUP hunter-gatherer groups were undoubtedly highly mobile, and it is probable that most of these sites were only periodically visited – perhaps seasonally – or depending on more complex issues, such as the immediate topography, environment, social or ceremonial factors, or the availability of food.

Many of the sites listed are caves and constitute settlement locations, which may lead to the assumption that caves were the preferred type of dwelling, but it is important to remember that – like the tarns and lakes that preserve palynological evidence – caves present a special environment where the possibility of undisturbed sediment is much higher than in an open and exposed landscape. Ethnographic evidence from recent hunter-gatherer studies actually suggests that the use of caves is an exception to the open-encampment norm (1992: 98), but the remains of open camps are in comparison incredibly difficult to detect, especially if the site was briefly or infrequently used, as the evidence of human activity is easily disturbed and, in time, completely effaced.

⁴³ Compare, for example, the earliest figure of 12,940 (± 140) BP from Jacobi and Higham (2009: 1901) for Gough’s Cave with Smith’s figure of 12,530 (± 150) BP.

Given the unique environmental conditions within cave sites, the finds made therein offer a valuable insight into the ‘domestic’ life of LUP peoples. Smith’s assessment of Kent’s Cavern, Devon, is that no more than ten people could have comfortably gathered around a central hearth in the ‘Vestibule’ – the front area of the cave system where most of the faunal remains and artefacts were gathered (1992: 80). Among the inorganic finds were stone *burins* (lithic flakes with a chisel-like edge) for bone and antler working; serrated flint saws for butchery; ‘backed’ flint blades used as arrow-tips or spears; and a selection of stone scrapers, flint and bone awls, and a bone needle – all used in hide preparation and the making of clothing. The nuances of tool typology are perhaps not as relevant to *North of Here* as the more general technological and cultural advances that occurred in the broader Upper Palaeolithic, identified by Lang and Preston as coinciding with the emergence of Anatomically Modern Humans, c.40,700 BP,⁴⁴ and involving the ‘introduction of widespread blade technology, coupled with the appearance of art, jewellery and changes in cognitive behaviour such as organisational abilities’ (Lang and Preston 2008: 16-17). Significant technical developments included the bow and arrow and the spear thrower – both devices that increased the accuracy, range and sophistication of hunting, thereby further enabling the selective and seasonally based hunting of animals, in which different species were targeted at different times of the year.

The Creswell Crags cave complex on the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border, comprising Mother Grundy’s Parlour, Robin Hood’s Cave, Pin Hole Cave and Church Hole Cave, is also the location of some extremely important cultural artefacts, including the most northerly example of European Palaeolithic parietal art, as well as several unique examples of portable art. The twelve engravings found at Church Hole Cave include a large red deer superimposed over a bovine form, and several smaller horse

⁴⁴ See §6.8. and §6.9. for a further discussion of Anatomically Modern Humans.

heads. There is also ‘a group of enigmatic elongated figures of a type found in contemporary art on the European continent which may represent highly stylised females or long-necked birds’ (Pike *et al.* 2005: 1649).

In comparison to the European tradition, the portable art from the British Late-glacial is rather meagre, although not without interest. Examples include a selection of carefully incised reindeer and mountain hare bones from Gough’s Cave, Somerset; a horse’s head engraved on an unidentified piece of bone from Robin Hood’s Cave; an undated anthropomorphic figure engraved on woolly rhinoceros bone from Pin Hole Cave; an unknown bone with 19 v-shaped notches around its edges; and a geometrically engraved *Equus* mandible from Kendrick’s Cave, Gwynedd. I find the so-called ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’ particularly compelling, perhaps because of the description by its original discoverer as ‘a masked human figure in the act of dancing a ceremonial dance’ (Armstrong 1929: 28). The face is indeed pointed or proboscis-like, such that it might resemble a mask. It must be said that it is quite difficult to see how the figure could have been interpreted as dancing – possibly the so-called erect penis could be seen as signifying an aroused or animated state. Certainly, later writers have been more conservative in their descriptions, for example: Smith: ‘a highly stylized engraving of a human figure’ (Smith 1992: 91) and Pike *et al.*: ‘an engraved human form on bone’ (Pike *et al.* 2005: 1652).

The subject of masks itself I find fascinating. The modern connotation is one of disguise, but there are other, anthropologically informed perspectives, such as the idea of effecting a transformation between the human who wears the mask, and the animal that the mask represents (Conneller 2004: 42). This in turn leads us on to *therianthropy*, the shifting of shapes from human to animal; a recurrent motif in many mythologies and folktales. Masks also lead us to the analogous idea of hybridity – anthropomorphic

figures that are part-human, part-animal. There are numerous examples of these compound figures, including the ‘Sorcerer’ of Trois-Frères, France (depicted by Henri Breuil with both a tail and antlers, and dating to c. 15,000 BP), and the cross-legged, antlered figure depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron (thought to be the Celtic deity Cernunnos, and dating from 1 to 400 AD (Nielsen *et al.* 2005: 53)). In the realm of portable art, perhaps the most famous and enigmatic is the Hohlenstein-Stadel figure, a standing form, 28cm high, with a felid face and human-like torso, carved in ivory in the Aurignacian period, between 41,000 to 39,000 cal BP (Kind *et al.* 2014: 129). A smaller felid/human hybrid figurine found at Hohle Fels Cave indicates that the Hohlenstein-Stadel therianthrope is not unique (Conard 2003: 830).

By contrast, the ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’ is rather modest, if not underwhelming, but if Armstrong’s description of a ‘masked human figure’ is right, and if that mask is zoomorphic, then it is important to this study for thinking about how humans related to animals in Late-glacial Britain.⁴⁵ A further ambiguity concerning the Pin Hole Cave find is that, some time after Smith’s account of the site (Smith 1992: 91), the rib bone itself was identified as woolly rhinoceros, but there is no evidence of this animal returning to Britain following the LGM.⁴⁶ There are a number of possibilities to account for this anachronism:

- a) the piece was carved during a milder phase before the LGM when the woolly rhinoceros was present in this locality
- b) the bone is from an earlier period, but the carving is later
- c) the bone was transported from elsewhere

Without dating and genetic analysis these questions cannot be resolved, but irregardless of provenance the artefact has value – not least because it constitutes the only

⁴⁵ See §A1.15. for an alternative hypothesis put forward by Pettitt *et al.* (2012).

⁴⁶ ‘Woolly rhinoceros became extinct in Britain after c. 35 cal ka BP’ (Jacobi *et. al.* 2009: 2551).

Palaeolithic portable art found in Britain of a bipedal, humanoid form.

A1.5. The North West

Table 6 (§A3.) [424] gathers the archaeological sites of interest for the LUP in the north-west. As can be seen, the majority are cave sites, but there is one outstanding anomaly: the discovery of a full elk skeleton (*Alces alces*) in a peaty, waterlogged field at High Furlong, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire, in 1970. Thankfully, an excellent paper was published by Hallam, *et al.* in 1973 in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, and it still remains the most authoritative work on the find to date. It describes the skeleton as belonging to an adult male closely resembling in size the dimensions of contemporary European elk. Study of the antlers revealed that they were about to be shed, and from this it was deduced that the animal died in winter. Dates from the bones places it firmly in the mid part of the Late-glacial – a fact that is important when considering the return of LUP hunter-gatherers to the north-west.

The lack of northern sites comparable to those already discussed may seem to suggest that the region was still cold and inhospitable early in the Late-glacial, and the Poulton elk data would seem to confirm this assumption. The earliest date obtained from the site context of the elk skeleton is 12,200 (± 160) *uncal* BP, or 14,920 – 13,783 *cal* BP.⁴⁷ This is between 171 and 2,112 years later than the earliest current record of the presence of *Homo sapiens* in Britain after the LGM, obtained from a butchered horse vertebra found in Gough's Cave.⁴⁸ By comparison, the proximity in dates between

47 Derived from 'coarse detritus mud in which the bones lay' (Hallam *et al.* 1973: 110). Calibrated dates calculated using the OxCal Radiocarbon Dating Calibration System Version 4.4 (<https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>) using the 95.4% probability and the IntCal20 Curve. Dates verified 21/09/2020. See Glossary (§A2.) for further details.

48 The date range for the butchered *Equus ferus* at Gough's Cave is 12,940 (± 140) *uncal* BP (OxA-3413) (Jacobi and Higham 2009: 1901). This gives a calibrated date range of 15,895 – 15,091 *cal* BP, compared to 14,920 – 13,783 *cal* BP for the Poulton elk (See §A3. Table 6). This produces an offset range of (15,895-13,783) to (15,091-14,920), which is 2,112 to 171 years.

Poulton and Creswell Crags is much closer – in fact there is an overlap of 733 years, meaning that it is possible, though unlikely, that the Poulton elk is from an earlier site than Creswell.⁴⁹ In any case, the already discussed Bayesian analysis of the Gough's Cave assemblage by Jacobi and Higham (2009) must surely call into question any discussion of radiocarbon dates *on their own* as a means of establishing a meaningful chronology. It might therefore be useful to look at these sites in terms of their proximity: the distance as the crow flies between Poulton and Creswell is c. 85 miles, whereas the distance between Creswell and Gough's Cave is nearly twice that, at c. 150 miles. In other words, Poulton and Creswell are situated more closely, and may constitute something of a 'northerly cluster' of sites that also include Kinsey and Victoria caves in the Pennines. Given the comparative wealth of archaeological material discovered at Creswell, it perhaps makes more sense to see it as a southerly base from which LUP peoples pursued a northerly exploration of the peninsula, rather than as the northern limit of a south-west cluster of sites that include Aveline's Hole, Sun Hole, Three Holes Cave and Kent's Cavern.

The Poulton elk skeleton itself bore at least 17 lesions caused from sharp, hard pointed projectiles. The most likely cause of death proposed by Hallam *et al.* was that 'the animal had evidently escaped butchery to die in a pool' (Hallam *et al.* 1973: 100). Whilst this is commonly accepted as the correct interpretation of the evidence, it is useful to remember Chatterton's observation that the 'votive' deposition of entire animal corpses is not without precedents in LUP archaeology (Chatterton 2006: 104). In considering the Poulton elk he observes that 'the only barbed point found in situ was located upon the foot of the animal and appears more consistent with the intentional

⁴⁹ The earliest Creswell Crags date comes from a butchered mountain hare scapula found in Robin Hood's Cave: 12,600 (± 170) *uncal* BP (Barton *et al.* 2003: 636), which when calibrated (using Oxcal 4.4) is 15,478 – 14,187 *cal* BP. This produces an offset range for the Poulton elk of (15,478-13,783) to (14,187-14,920), which is 1695 to -733 years.

disposal of the point into the water after the animal itself had been deliberately submerged' (2006: 105). Indeed Hallam *et al.*, in proposing their escape-and-drowning hypothesis, concede that 'a lake sacrifice similar to the reindeer offerings of Stellmoor' is possible, if somewhat unlikely (Hallam *et al.* 1973: 126). The reference to Stellmoor proves to be a 1943 monograph written in German by Alfred Rust entitled *Die Alt- und Mittelsteinzeitlichen Funde von Stellmoor*, effectively silencing this line of enquiry.

For the purposes of *North of Here*, the Poulton elk undoubtedly presents a tangible LUP *story*, replete with an environmental context and an undeniable series of human-animal interactions. The interpretation put forward by Hallam *et al.* is a conservative and pragmatic one, relating as it does to the demonstrable cause-and-effect of hunting. Nevertheless, there are questions. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulty of traversing marshy terrain, it seems unlikely that a wounded animal as large as an elk would escape a group of human hunters. If they did indeed abandon the hunt, what part did the topography play in influencing their decision? Irregardless of any practical considerations, were aquatic landscapes conceived of differently by LUP peoples? Oestigaard notes, for example, that water 'represents a liminal zone ... where it is possible to transcend the earthly realm' (Oestigaard 2011: 38-9). Could this special place – if so conceived – thereby constitute a form of sanctuary for the injured animal?

Chatterton cites the 'intentional deposition of items into water' as commonplace throughout the Mesolithic (Chatterton 2006: 103), and suggests 'rituals involved in hunting activities' as a possible explanation for its occurrence (2006: 104). If the act of hunting itself was not simply governed by the pragmatic concerns that are the focus of ecological-economic theories, then I must turn to the field of anthropology to look for appropriate ethnographic examples that may guide my thinking about these issues more deeply.

A1.6. Ethnographic Analogy

For archaeologists, ethnographic analogy is the means by which insights into the lives of prehistoric peoples are sought in the ethnographic works of anthropologists, and specifically in works about Indigenous peoples who are thought to maintain similar lifeways and experience similar ecological conditions to those of the past. The ethical difficulty in making such comparisons stems from the inevitable implication that contemporary Indigenous groups are little more than prehistoric relics (*sensu* Jordan 2006: 87); it denies their complex and various histories by emphasising stasis, rather than change. The researcher seeking comparisons should not assume that a contemporary Aboriginal culture is a facsimile of an ancient one, but rather that there may be certain analogic correspondences which could have become transposed or changed, through subsequent historical processes, to arrive at their modern form:

There is general consensus that when ‘due account is taken of historical circumstances, ethnographic analogies can be a valuable tool. Indeed, archaeologists are now arguably the largest “consumers” (and producers) of research on hunting and gathering peoples’.

(Jordan 2006: 89-90)

Another difficulty in using ethnographies – at least for the purposes of *North of Here* – is that Late-glacial Britain has ‘no precise modern parallels’ (Smith 1992: 21). In other words, there is no contemporary or recent historical landscape that is quite like the British peninsula as it emerged from the ice some 15,000 years ago. It therefore follows that there is no recorded people who have experienced exactly the same environmental conditions. This has serious implications for those who think about humans ‘mechanistically adapt[ing] to their natural world’ (Jordan 2006: 91), but for those who argue that we actively construct and enculture our environment (*sensu* McFadyen 2006),

there is still much to be gleaned from ethnographies. Caution is nevertheless needed when inferring analogies from the available research.

Despite his warnings, Smith is helpful in prompting where to look: ‘North American Indians ... offer some of the best sources of analogy for Late Stone Age hunting and gathering in the British Isles. ... [and] early accounts [of] Eskimo, Aleut and Inuit ... in Alaska, Greenland and the circumpolar zone ... are especially useful’ (Smith 1992: 22). Although this advice is indeed instructive, in actuality the circumpolar north comprises a great number of diverse cultures. In the Arctic region alone there are over 40 different ethnic groups, including Saami, Nenets, Khanty, Evenk, Chukchi, Aleut, Yupik, Iñupiat, Inuvialuit and Kalaallit.⁵⁰ If this region is extended to the Subarctic zone of North America to include Smith’s ‘North American Indians’, then the list expands to incorporate an equally large and diverse number of Aboriginal peoples. There are over 90 Indigenous Peoples of Canada, for example, including Cree, Denesuline (Chipewyan), Haida, Innu (Montagnais-Naskapi), Haudenosaunee (Six Nations or Iroquois), Lingit (Tlingit), Mohawk, Nlaka’pamux (Thompson), Ojibwa, Seneca and Tsimshian.⁵¹

Faced with such diversity, and – given the limited scope of my study – it is tempting to seek relief in generalities. Are there any broad statements that can be made about ‘circumpolar’ and Native American beliefs? Sean M. Connors immediately draws attention to the problems in using such blanket concepts: ‘there is no more a homogenous Native American nature religion than there is a homogenous Native American environment’, and ‘generalizations of this sort about Native American traditions are inevitably false as they are true; even worse, they border on stereotyping’ (Connors 2000: 140). The ethical difficulties of attempting such an endeavour are

50 Source: <https://www.arcticcentre.org/EN/arcticregion/Arctic-Indigenous-Peoples> Accessed 17/09/2020.

51 Source: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people> Accessed 17/09/2020.

therefore writ large.

But even if I concentrate on a singular people, such as the Naskapi, the number of ethnographic works to be assimilated is still beyond my scope. Smith urges the researcher to seek out the earliest work from the 17th century (Smith 1992: 22), and with good reason – at this point in time the cultures of Aboriginal peoples were relatively unexposed to the influencing effects of European ideology. The problem of post-European-contact ‘contamination’ is significant – many of the first Europeans to encounter the Indigenous populations of North America were Christian missionaries whose aim was to convert the ‘savages’ of the New World to Christianity (Speck 1935: 15). Inevitably, this agenda – when combined with their inherent ethnocentric bias – seriously compromised their accounts of native life and beliefs. Moreover, the ‘missionizing’ effect – whereby a culture is aggressively exposed to new social and religious ideas – was profound, resulting in various syncretisms that subsequent anthropologists have found incredibly difficult to disentangle (Speck 1935: 28). Added to this, in the case of the Naskapi, and many other groups in what is now Canada, their first contact was with French missionaries such as Paul Le Jeune (1591–1664), Gabriel Sagard (1590–1640), and Charles Albanel (1616 –1696), whose texts are therefore inaccessible to myself, a monoglot English researcher. As with the environmental research conducted for *North of Here*, the (lack of) available literature has exercised a limiting effect on the breadth and depth of analysis that I have been able to procure.

The final, and perhaps most profound, difficulty to face when approaching Aboriginal culture relates to the way in which different societies organise their ideas. The following paragraph by Richard K. Nelson aptly addresses this issue:

While most Koyukon adults seem to concur on the basic premises of their ideology, they vary widely in their opinion about the specifics and apparently

do not feel inclined toward a rigid, systematized theology. This often left me confused, no doubt because of my Judeo-Christian background; and if my account of certain concepts is amorphous or inconsistent it properly reflects my learning experience. Koyukon people must find us painfully compulsive and conformist about our systems of belief.

(Nelson 1986: 22)

Unlike creed-based religions such as Judaism and Christianity, many Indigenous belief systems are not dogmatic in their details or assertions (Harvey 2000: 5). If, therefore, any of what follows seems ‘amorphous’, it does not necessarily derive from a lack of insight or precision – rather, it is quite possible that our own Western concepts and definitions are lacking when we approach the subtlety and flexibility of Native thought.

A1.7. Ojibwa Ontology and Personhood

In his ground-breaking study of the Northern Ojibwa, an Indigenous group from the Subarctic region below Hudson’s Bay, Canada, A. Irving Hallowell addresses what he calls the *ethno-metaphysical* problem of anthropological enquiry:

If, in the world-view of a people, “persons” as a class include entities other than human beings, then our objective approach is not adequate for presenting an accurate description of “the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else.” A different perspective is required for this purpose. It may be argued, in fact, that a thoroughgoing “objective” approach to the study of cultures cannot be achieved solely by projecting upon those cultures categorical abstractions derived from Western thought. For, in a broad sense, the latter are a reflection of *our* cultural subjectivity.

(Hallowell 1975: 144)

In a startling inversion, Hallowell is arguing that the apparently *objective* rational-materialist approach of Western scientific enquiry is actually *subjective*, and that in order to strive for true objectivity, we must incorporate the subjectivity of other cultures. This seems to me to be a good place to start thinking about LUP peoples. Given the knot of anthropological issues just discussed, and the limited scope for broad-ranging research afforded by this PhD project, I suggest that the best introduction to ‘northern’ Indigenous world-views (notwithstanding Connors’s objections to such an enterprise) is through the work of an open-minded and sensitive researcher such as Hallowell. In the case of the Ojibwa, and in similar but not identical ways, other Aboriginal groups of the north, the key concept Hallowell is introducing is one of *personhood* – the quality of being that evidences sentience, individuality and intentionality.

Hallowell’s use of the word ‘entities’ in the previously quoted paragraph is crucial. Throughout his discussion, he is careful not to use the word *spirits*, so as not to invoke a conceptual *natural-supernatural* dichotomy that may cloud our perception of Ojibwa world-view (1975: 150-1). According to Hallowell, the Ojibwa do not have a concept for ‘nature’ – there are no categorical barriers between themselves, their environment and its inhabitants; or rather, there is no *impersonal* ‘external’ world. For example, ‘*gizis* (day luminary, the sun) is not a natural object in our sense at all. Not only does their conception differ; the sun is a “person” of the other-than-human class’ (1975: 151-2). It therefore follows that if there is no *nature* for the Ojibwa, then there can be nothing *supernatural*. This is not merely a linguistic or conceptual conceit. It would be wrong to assert that those *persons* who do not occupy *worldly* positions like the sun are therefore *otherworldly* – they inhere within the Ojibwan world and concern themselves with day-to-day life, are actively experienced in dreams and visions, confer power through gifts to worthy humans, and are honoured and respected through ritual

acts. ‘The Ojibwa are a dream-conscious people’ (1975: 164); their oneiric and corporeal experiences are therefore inextricably inter-related and co-dependent. Some of the other-than-human entities they experience may have animal forms, others human, still others are undefined or ambiguous; many are capable of metamorphosis. The constant *core* of personhood is therefore not dictated by outward form, and certainly isn’t limited to a human one.

We might consider the attribution of other-than-human personhood to ‘objects’ like the sun as a form of personification, but this also misrepresents the Ojibwa way of thinking. Personification implies a process transformation – imbuing an *object* with sentience – but the Ojibwa have never perceived the sun as an object that could be so transformed; we might just as well consider their conceptions of fellow humans as personifications also. This may seem pedantic, but it is simply the explication of an essentially different ontology.

For the Ojibwa, all persons are bound-up in a relational system that comprises a complex web of inter-subjective actions and histories incorporating mythologies and sacred narratives. All persons from such stories are considered alive and relevant to contemporary life, despite having existed since mythical times. Needless to say, the veracity of such stories is never in doubt: ‘The world of myth is not categorically distinct from the world as experienced by human beings in everyday life’ (1975: 159). As such, other-than-human persons are perceived to enter into ordinary, sometimes intimate, social relations with humans: it is therefore not uncommon for the Ojibwa to claim kinship with other-than-human beings. A mythical hero, a celestial body, or even an aspect of the weather, can be considered an ancestor. Hallowell even relates an instance of a woman who asserted that one of her children was fathered by the North Wind (1975: 157).

These forms of ancestral and mythic thinking recall McFadyen's observations about the way humans enculture their environment, and are therefore extremely useful for thinking analogically about LUP peoples. These themes are nevertheless complex. Hallowell goes on to discuss ideas of 'animacy' and 'inanimacy' encoded into the Algonquian family of languages through their noun categories. Like gender cases in some languages, the application of each category appears somewhat arbitrary, 'if not extremely puzzling' (1975: 146). Hallowell cites *stones* as an odd *animate* noun-category, at least from a Western ontological perspective, but goes on to discuss how their animate status may be derived from the 'vital functions attributed to them in the belief system and the conditions under which these functions are observed or tested in experience' (1975: 147). Part of this undoubtedly relates to how a special kind of stone – flint – is perceived as a *living* other-than-human person in Ojibwa mythology (possibly due to its 'vital function' in producing fire through friction).

Perhaps this is explanation enough, but Hallowell goes on to discuss perceptual ambiguities concerning stones in everyday life:

Since stones are grammatically animate, I once asked an old man: Are *all* the stones we see about us here alive? He reflected a long while and then replied, 'No! But *some* are.' This qualified answer made a lasting impression on me. And it is thoroughly consistent with other data that indicate that the Ojibwa are not animists in the sense that they dogmatically attribute living souls to inanimate objects such as stones.

(1975: 147)

There is thus a connection made between the linguistic animate class and life, sentience and intentionality. The possible *aliveness* of stones would seem to suggest that personhood itself is not an unconditional state of being, but rather a potentiality.

Hallowell argues that the Ojibwa do not expect stones to be alive any more than we do, and yet he relates how, in certain circumstances (particularly where ritual is concerned), stones have been observed to move, or behave with animate qualities. From a Western perspective it is difficult to know what to make of this ambiguity.

According to Hallowell, a similar (but not identical) indeterminate potentiality is also apportioned to animals in Ojibwa ontology:

In action and motivations the characters in the myths are indistinguishable from human persons. In this respect, human and other-than-human persons may be set off, in life as well as in myth, from animate beings such as ordinary animals (*awésiak*, pl.) and objects belonging to the inanimate grammatical category.

(1975: 153-4)

Notwithstanding the ability of other-than-human persons to adopt animal form, it would appear that ordinary animals themselves are grouped with linguistically inanimate ‘objects’, at least in terms of personhood, or lack thereof – despite their status as ‘animate beings’. Frustratingly, Hallowell does not provide examples of inanimate objects, so it is difficult to make qualitative inferences about this aspect of the Ojibwa world-view. Given the rather ambiguous animate potentiality reserved for stones – that most apparently inert of objects from a Western ontological perspective – we might wonder why isn’t *everything* in the Ojibwa world afforded some small measure of sentient possibility? What things really are inert, and why? Later Hallowell observes that in everyday life ‘interaction with nonhuman entities of the animate class is only intelligible on the assumption that they possess some of the attributes of personhood’ (1975: 159). Surely animals, being ‘animate beings’, fall into this category? This lack of clarity is perplexing, and I am reminded of Richard K. Nelson’s comments, previously

quoted (Nelson 1986: 22). Perhaps the use of categorical distinctions – a staple of Western rational-materialist thought – is too inflexible for the task at hand? As with other aspects of Ojibwa life, the boundaries are blurred and a more subtle form of thought is revealed.

To add a further layer of ambiguity, Hallowell notes that animals have ‘masters or owners’ who are ‘entities of the person category’ (Hallowell 1975: 154). He elaborates:

Since the various species of animals on which they depend for a living are believed to be under the control of “masters” or “owners” who belong to the category of other-than-human persons, the hunter must always be careful to treat the animals he kills for food or fur in the proper manner. It may be necessary, for example, to throw their bones in the water or to perform a ritual in the case of bears. Otherwise, he will offend the “masters” and be threatened with starvation because no animals will be made available to him. Cruelty to animals is likewise an offence that will provoke the same kind of retaliation.

(1975: 172)

This introduces the key moral concept of *reciprocity* between persons in the Ojibwa world-view, affecting all domains and aspects of their life. With regard to hunting, those entities otherwise called *animal masters* are obliged to make prey animals available to humans, provided that hunters conduct themselves in an appropriately respectful manner. If these rules of conduct are not observed, then the animal masters may withhold their charges, resulting in a failed hunt and possible starvation.

At this juncture it is worth returning to Richard Chatterton’s discussion of ritual in Mesolithic Britain (§A1.5.) [332]. He notes that the deposition of ‘barbed antler points into water’ at places like Star Carr in Yorkshire ‘may have involved actions that

were designed to offer respect to animals killed, either through a taboo against reuse or in the regeneration and maintenance of the animal kingdom from which the slain animals came' (Chatterton 2006: 104). He continues by observing that the 'deliberate disposal' of animal remains has been 'identified at lake edges, in rivers and where land meets sea' as well as other 'liminal locations such as caves' (2006: 115-6). Clearly the location-specific nature of this depositional practice has considerable time-depth, and it therefore seems reasonable to consider notions of *reciprocity* in relation to LUP life, particularly when reflecting upon the recurrence of human-butchered remains in the cave sites already discussed. Indeed, Chatterton draws on similar ethnographic analogies in support of his argument, suggesting that ideas of reciprocity with regard to hunting are 'extremely common ... among hunters of the North American and Eurasian regions' (2006: 104).

This may all seem relatively straightforward, but there are complications. Looking again at Hallowell's previous discussion of animals, it can be observed that he is careful to describe *ordinary* animals in contradistinction to humans and other-than-human persons. By implication there must also be *extraordinary* animals, and indeed Hallowell cites the bear as a special example of an animal that is 'assumed to possess person attributes' (Hallowell 1975: 160). Apart from relating a story in which a bear was treated in person-like terms by a hunter (1975: 161), he does not discuss the matter further – with the exception of the post-mortem rituals just quoted. It must be said that it is somewhat confusing to find bears discussed on the same footing as other animals with regard to ownership by animal masters. Perhaps this is an oversight, or simply a reflection of the complexity and subtlety of the Ojibwa philosophy. It may be that animal-persons can also have masters.

In considering these aspects of Ojibwa ontology, it is worth bearing in mind

Graham Harvey's observation that 'Indigenous religions are neither simple nor mere fossils from the earliest evolution of humanity' (Harvey 2000: 7). In other words, the complexity exhibited in Ojibwa attitudes towards animals and their 'masters' is possibly the result of a nexus of social, philosophical and ecological factors playing out over a significant span of time. This is not to say that LUP attitudes towards nature were, by comparison, simple – but they may have been different. It is therefore prudent to ask how reliably Ojibwa ethno-metaphysics – or indeed any Native or circumpolar system of belief – can be used as a model for Late-glacial northern Britain. In looking for these analogies, I risk both an act of cultural appropriation and equating a living culture with one that has been dead for millennia. Nevertheless, as long as I am cognizant of these ethical issues, it is still valuable to look at elements of Indigenous culture to see if they may have significant time-depth – even whilst acknowledging that such elements will have become modified – perhaps significantly so – over time.

Before leaving the Ojibwa to look at other Indigenous groups, it is a useful reminder to think of Richard K. Nelson's remarks about individual members of Indigenous groups who 'vary widely in their opinion about the specifics and apparently do not feel inclined toward a rigid, systematized theology' (Nelson 1986: 22). Inevitably, any singular account of an Indigenous world-view will be at best partial – it is only one of a multitude of stories. Far from being problematic, this creates room within which the creative practitioner can manoeuvre. Absences, anomalies and inconsistencies in these stories allow for a richer multiplicity of voices to emerge. There is no single authentic account. A diverse and, at times, contrasting, picture is to be welcomed.

It therefore should come as no surprise that anthropologists rarely agree – at least entirely – on these subjects. Kenneth M. Morrison (2000) upholds many of

Hallowell's observations about the Ojibwa. In fact he praises Hallowell's paper as a pivotal piece of scholarship in providing a new understanding of Aboriginal life – one which he perceives as overturning some of those inherent biases and prejudices that were present in previous ethnographies. Nevertheless there are differences in his account of Ojibwa ontology, and in how he develops ideas from Hallowell's text. Key among them is the Ojibwa conception of animals. Morrison commences by stating that the Ojibwa do not recognise a cosmic hierarchy. Instead, they acknowledge the similarity, rather than dissimilarity, of all beings (Morrison 2000: 26). He goes on to state that 'the Ojibwa address not only the Master of the Animals, whose cosmic purpose is animal well-being, but also the particular being' (2000: 27). This added level of interaction, not only with the animals' spirit masters, but *with each individual animal*, is a crucial distinction, and Morrison cites four other works to legitimise his assertion (Luckert 1975; Ridington and Ridington 1975; Tanner 1979; Harrod 1987). He develops his argument by noting that 'hunting is an act of communication between human and animal persons because humans need to persuade animals to give their bodies, and to assure animal persons that humans will give back to ensure animal reincarnation' (2000: 27). Crucially, Morrison is ascribing a level of individual agency to animals that is missing from Hallowell's account. Animals are explicitly *persons* who must be persuaded to consent to their own death. The reciprocity evoked here is squarely between human- and animal-persons as individuals, over and above any reassurances offered to those entities who govern animal well-being. Ultimately, intentionality is accorded to the animal, and not its master, in deciding whether to offer itself to the hunter. The image conjured is of the animal master as a guardian who can guide and influence the animals in its charge, but ultimately each individual animal is free to judge the worthiness of the human's petition.

Another key element in Morrison's account is the introduction of the notion of reincarnation. Again absent in Hallowell's paper, it adds profound spiritual depth to the interactions that are being described. This is no longer simply an act of social, here-and-now discourse between persons, but a religious exchange concerning the hereafter. From a Western ontological perspective, it could be said that the individual physical life of an animal is being contextualised by its eternal spiritual life, but clearly the Ojibwa don't oppose matter and spirit in quite the same way. The vital bargaining point for the human is in persuading the animal that they will reciprocally 'give back', thereby guaranteeing the animal's return in physical form. In its immediate context it is not made clear what this giving back entails, but looking again at Hallowell's account it is surely clear that Morrison is describing the treatment of the animal's remains. In returning them respectfully to the earth, or into water, the hunter thereby ensures the animal's reincarnation.

The differences in these two superficially similar accounts cannot be overstated. In Hallowell's text, ordinary animals are metaphysically 'set off' from humans and other-than-human *entities* such as the *animal masters*. The animal is little more than a puppet that is controlled by its master – a token to be bargained for in a conversation between two persons. In Morrison's account, animals are persons with their own individual volition, eternally reincarnated in a cycle of death and renewal. They are agential beings who need to be bargained with as much as their spiritual protectors. Is it possible to reconcile these two conflicting stories? Recalling Richard K. Nelson, clearly both are versions of the same general narrative that differ in their specifics. The ultimate outcome is the same – as long as respect is demonstrated through the appropriate deposition of physical remains. Perhaps the degree to which Ojibwa hunters apportion personhood to animals varies among the populace, depending upon each person's

encounters with individual animals and their own philosophical predisposition. To the outsider, the distinction seems clear cut, but Indigenous groups, as characterised by Harvey and Nelson, don't use absolute categories in quite the same way. It could also be the case that the Ojibwa don't conceptualise the animal and its master as truly separate identities, but as an elision of physical and spiritual – a complex amalgam that is not consciously defined and articulated. Indeed, Morrison, in interpreting Hallowell's text, could be drawing the animal and its spirit protector into a similar metaphysical mesh. He goes on to assert that:

The animals also have their own languages, and their empowering gifts of animal language to some human beings make another level of communication (here ontological correspondence) possible: in sharing power, persons share being. At this level, Hallowell documents not simply interspecies communication, but interspecies similarity in which affirmations of kinship go beyond metaphoric analogy to behavioural responsibility between humans and other-than-human persons. Every day (one should also say every night), human beings and animals communicate in dreams, a state of consciousness which bridges cosmological dimensions, including objective time and space.

(Morrison 2000: 27)

The section of Hallowell's text that Morrison alludes to describes the dream-vision of an Ojibwa adolescent in which he encounters a *pawágan* – an anthropomorphic figure that begins to dance and turn into what looks like a golden eagle (Hallowell 1975: 166). Hallowell is at pains to remark that 'this must be understood as the "master" of this species' (1975: 166). This is somewhat problematic, as Hallowell later contextualises masters – as we have already seen – in relation to prey animals and the power dynamic whereby masters can withhold or release their animal charges to human hunters. It is

difficult to see how this operates with regard to the eagle species, as it seems unlikely that they would have been hunted – at least not for food. In discussing hawks, Richard K. Nelson comments that ‘in former times they gave hawk feet to young boys, who wore them as amulets so they would acquire the hawks’ predatory skill’ (Nelson 1986: 102). It is not made clear if hawks were hunted or trapped for their amuletry power – but if so, then the same logic might apply, necessitating an appropriate negotiation with the bird’s spirit master. By contrast, however, the animal’s remains, or at least part thereof, are retained by the hunter, rather than respectfully returned. From a Western perspective, it seems odd to kill an animal in order to gain the skill it embodies, as the feat of skill required to kill it demonstrates that the hunter already possesses a sufficiency of this attribute. But if the word *skill* is exchanged for *power*, then there is an emergent sense of how the Ojibwa perceive their position in the world as at the nexus of myriad power relations. Power is entropic (Morrison 2000: 33); it flows from one being to another. Possessing hunting skill is not sufficient to secure success. It must always be negotiated with other beings. Perhaps an amulet is perceived as a more stable repository for power that can be brought to these negotiations – especially if, as in Hallowell’s example, one has already cultivated a special relationship with the animal’s presiding spirit (Hallowell 1975: 166).

A knowledge of these Ojibwa perceptions of power is vital to understanding their concept *manitu* (or *manitou*). In discussing Native religions, Graham Harvey notes that ‘some Indigenous understandings entail a diffuse, universally available and impersonal energy that wells up in “health, wealth and happiness” which is drawn on (by humans, deities, plants, animals and everyone else) in particular ways’ (Harvey 2000: 5). As we have already identified, the Ojibwa do not recognise an *impersonal* external world, and both Hallowell and Morrison agree that there is no room for such an

impersonal force – as Harvey describes it – within Ojibwa ontology. Hallowell cites British ethnographer Robert Ranulph Marett (1866-1943) as particularly responsible for promulgating the idea of a belief in ‘a magical force of some kind’ (1975: 169), a belief which he notes was refuted by Paul Radin (1883-1959):

There is nothing to justify the postulation of a belief in a universal force in North America. Magical power as an “essence” existing apart and separate from a definite spirit, is, we believe, an unjustified assumption, an abstraction created by investigators. [...] [Manitu] always referred to definite spirits, not necessarily definite in shape. If at a vapor-bath the steam is regarded as ... *manitu*, it is because a spirit transformed into steam for the time being; if an arrow is possessed of specific virtues, it is because a spirit has either transformed himself into the arrow or because he is temporarily dwelling in it.

(Hallowell 1975: 169).

Manitu, then, is not an impersonal magical force, but is rather an index of the power that other-than-human entities share. For Hallowell, *manitu* and other-than-human persons are synonymous: power and personhood are one-in-the-same (1975: 168). Morrison’s gloss on Hallowell’s text situates this power in the context of the manifold exchanges between different kinds of persons:

Hallowell rejects an older, evolutionary view which claims that an impersonal stage of reality, defined as an electrodynamic view of reality called animatism, preceded an animate view. He argues, to the contrary, that, when the power concept *manitou* is understood as knowledge and influence, the term embodies ... an awareness of the social interdependence of all persons. Far from being impersonal, then, *manitou* describes a world.

(Morrison 2000: 26)

In the person-aware world of the Ojibwa, other-than-human entities are involved in every aspect of life, are perceived to bestow special gifts and privileges to humans, and are in turn empowered through the respect that humans show them. Knowledge of the bonds of obligation and reciprocity are, in themselves, a form of power which help the individual negotiate the precariousness of life – reducing the chances of starvation and illness, and increasing those of well-being and happiness. The origin of causality is always a question of *who*, not *what* (Hallowell 1975: 170). All action is the result of interplay between human and other-than-human persons. There is neither luck nor accident (Blackburn 1975 *in* Morrison 2000: 28).

A1.8. Animals As Agents

In her 2011 paper ‘Animals as Agents: Hunting Ritual and Relational Ontologies in Prehistoric Alaska and Chukotka’, Erica Hill presents another version of the ontological narrative just discussed. In many respects it is entirely consonant with the generalities that we can derive from both Hallowell and Morrison. Indeed, Hill opens her argument by citing Hallowell, and in her reading of his text the Ojibwa ‘privileged certain animals with agency, intentionality and sentience’ (Hill 2011: 407). Lest we forget, the only animal Hallowell explicitly ascribes personhood to is the bear (Hallowell 1975: 159-60). She goes on to state that a similar concept was held by the prehistoric Eskimo inhabitants of Alaska and Chukotka, but that it extended to prey animals, especially marine mammals and caribou (reindeer). These animals were ‘capable of making decisions about when, where and how they interacted with humans’ (Hill 2011: 407). Clearly there are similarities here to Morrison’s account of animal-human relations, but Hill adds a further ambiguity:

I use the term “animal” to refer to those kinds of animals that are perceived of

as other-than-human persons. Not all animals were so perceived, and not all individuals within a certain kind of animal group – caribou, for example – are persons. But some of them are.

(2011: 407)

Hill qualifies this statement by expounding upon the ‘relational thinking’ of Indigenous ontology (2011: 408). As has been seen, power is entropic: it ebbs and flows through social interaction. In an analogous way, personhood is continually constructed – it also comes into being through inter-personal encounters. Like the animate potentiality that Hallowell ascribes to stones, animals have the possibility to become other-than-human persons. In order to do so they must exhibit the capacity to behave socially and engage responsibly. It is only social acts that ‘define an animate being as a person’ (2011: 408). This is an extremely nuanced ontological description. Hill continues:

Humans and other-than-human persons thus have no prediscursive existence; rather, they become themselves through experience, interaction and discourse. Identity and self are therefore constructs and must be perpetually constituted through social action.

(2011: 408)

Thinking again about the way Richard K. Nelson characterised Koyukon world-views as divergent in their specific details, it is possible to see this as an artefact of the way in which Indigenous peoples actively constitute and reconstitute themselves and their world. In a culture that isn’t dogmatic about its metaphysical categorisations, there is a concomitant freedom to renegotiate them on an ongoing basis. But Hill goes further, arguing that in Eskimo ontology there are no categories of being that do not have to be continually performed – *humanness* among them. There is a possibility – and a corresponding existential fear – that the boundaries between the *human* and the *other*

may become blurred. Hill cites Willerslev's observation that 'a hunter, in taking the perspective of his prey, may "lose sight of his original species identity"' (2011: 408). Like the Ojibwa, for whom the internal essence of personhood is identical regardless of external form, the Eskimo have a fluid conception of identity. The body itself is seen to be a site of potentialities – it has porosity. Transformation is possible: 'the lines between species and classes, even between man and animal, are lines of fusion, not fission, and nothing has a single, invariable shape' (Carpenter 1973; Sabo & Sabo 1985 *in* Hill 2011: 408). The difference here, then, at least in terms of how Hill articulates it, is that despite the ontological similarity – the shared personhood between humans and (some) animals – there is a continual need to define and separate oneself from others, lest identities merge and transformation happens. It would be interesting to discover how much this concept applies to the Ojibwa and other Subarctic peoples, but neither Hallowell or Morrison address this issue directly. Nevertheless, Hill groups both Arctic and Subarctic peoples together in their sharing of mythic and folkloric narratives that are 'replete with references to humans assisted by animals, marrying animals or becoming animals' (2011: 409). Moreover, she contends that:

In traditional Eskimo and Subarctic ontologies, prey species and those animals considered especially powerful, dangerous or similar to humans in key respects, occupied a privileged ontological position as other-than-human persons. Such animals could be considered kinfolk and behaved in ways that paralleled human society – living in houses, organizing themselves in social groups and engaging in exchange relationships.

(2011: 409)

Such generalisations about diverse groups of people would seem to flout Sean M. Connors's previously quoted statement against the danger of stereotyping (Connors

2000: 140), but Hill cites an impressive list of anthropologists to add ballast to her argument, including Bogoras, Dowson, Hallowell, Helander-Renvall, Hultkrantz, Jordan, Kwon, Losey, Morrison, Paulson, Petrov, Saladin d'Anglure, Shepherd and Zachrisson & Iregren. Additionally, she cites Fienup-Riordan, Ingold and Jordan in reaffirming the notions of *respect* and *reciprocity* bound-up in ideal human-animal dynamics.

As with her previous account of Eskimo notions of personhood, Hill's description of the mutual obligations of human and animals is incredibly nuanced. For example, whereas Hallowell and Morrison describe the possible problems that humans may encounter in not honouring their obligations, Hill notes that it is dangerous for *both* parties (2011: 409), although exactly *how* this danger manifests for animals she does not say. As per Morrison, Hill also expounds upon the afterlife of animals, explaining why the respectful treatment of individual animals is so integral to their onward journey. After an animal is taken by a hunter, its spirit continues to preside over its corpse, sometimes for days, thereby allowing the animal to experience how it is treated after death. This 'latent sentience' enables the animal to observe the placement of its body, how its skin or hide is removed, and how its carcass is butchered. Any lack of respect observed in the execution of these tasks may result in severe consequences for the hunter. Effects could include hunger, illness and social disorder, and, as with the Ojibwa world-view, there is nothing incidental or meaningless for the Eskimo in these contexts. A post-hunt accident would be considered a form of retribution by the affronted animal's spirit, and immediate remedial action would be deemed necessary in order to placate it and hasten its onward journey. Hill notes that 'should songs, offerings and propitiation fail, a shaman might be consulted' (2011: 409).

Moreover, Hill highlights how demonstrations of respect in the treatment of a

slain animal's body are not sufficient in and of themselves – taboos must also be observed, and chief among them is the requirement of humility in the hunter's comportment and language. Boastfulness is forbidden. This would seem to be contra to Peter Jordan's suggestion that 'prestige is sought through competition' in hunter-gatherer communities (Jordan 2006: 92). Rather, as Hill outlines, the ideal practice of Eskimo hunter-gatherers incorporates an implicit acknowledgement of the insignificance of any one individual's role: as per Morrison (2000: 27), hunting is a process of communicating respect, it is a collaborative activity between humans and animals. This is evidenced by the fact that even 'hunting gear and watercraft' are deemed to have personhood in Eskimo ontology, therefore contributing on their own terms to the collective dynamic (Hill 2011: 408).

This communal aspect of the hunt is writ large in Eskimo life. Even those not directly involved must behave respectfully in thought and deed. Hill notes that women's roles in hunting have been largely ignored by archaeologists, but in the Arctic world women are perceived as having a profound effect upon hunting success (2011: 410-11). She cites Søbø in remarking that 'their thoughts and chants could attract animals, whilst menstrual blood and impurities associated with pregnancy and parturition could drive them away' (2011: 410). Once killed and transported home, women are responsible for the proper treatment of the animal in the domestic setting, and generosity in sharing meat with other families is considered vital in demonstrating respect. For women, eating certain parts of the animal is considered taboo, and observance of such taboos is vital if the reincarnated animal will re-offer itself to a woman's husband.

This issue of reincarnation and the continued availability of animals to the Eskimo hunter is a complex one. As has been seen, if an individual animal is treated with dignity it will continue to offer itself to a hunter throughout the cycles of its

lifetimes, but the Eskimo also believe that an animal will additionally communicate its good or bad treatment to others of its kind. It is not clear if this is done at the level of (living) animal to animal, i.e., when an animal reincarnates, it relates its experience directly to other members of its species. The alternative involves some kind of spiritual agency, and it is here – possibly – that room is made for the evolution of the idea of *animal mastery*. In this context, one of the functions of the animal master is to serve as a conduit for, and messenger of, individual animal's moral conscience. In contrast to the inter-animal method, the conception of a guardian spirit is a much more effective means of disseminating 'news' on the treatment of animals by humans, thereby better ensuring the well-being of the species as a whole. It seems not too much of a cognitive leap from the idea of an individual animal's 'latent sentience' to that of a species-level presiding spirit. Given the harshness of life in the circumpolar north, it is feasible that the idea evolved as a means of accounting for poor hunting success in the Arctic during lean times in the natural cycle of animal populations. It is possible that, from this initial position, further powers were gradually ascribed to these entities, such as the ability to withhold animals from hunters, as previously described in Hallowell's account of the Ojibwa.

Hill notes that belief in such beings is found across Siberia and throughout Arctic Alaska and Canada (2011: 409), citing Tim Ingold as one of her references. Ingold's theory on the origins of mastery is rather different than the one just proposed, however:

... The most likely place to find it is surely in the structure of the human domestic group, and above all in the relations between its male and female members. Though I cannot prove it, I would speculate that hunting societies in which the sexual division of labour contains a strong element of subordination

of women to male heads of households will also entertain ideas about (masculine) spirit masters who are supposed to guard and control their (feminine) wild animal charges in an analogous way. Certainly such subordination is rather characteristic of the northern hunting societies with which we are concerned.

(Ingold 1986: 254)

Notwithstanding the already discussed sexual division of labour in Eskimo culture relating to hunting, the 'Eskimo Type' of social structure is conventionally conceived of as bilateral – favouring neither the male nor female line – although there is considerable flexibility in absolute form across the Eskimo/Inuit cultures of the Arctic region (Graburn and Strong 1973: 156). The assertion that women are subordinate in such contexts might therefore be called into question, but Graburn and Strong note that social hierarchies develop in both sexes due to the competition for mates, usually outwardly demonstrated in rivalries of various kinds (1973: 163). This very much affirms Jordan's characterisation of prestige relations in hunter-gatherer groups, and calls into question the frequency at which Hill's *ideal* behaviour is performed. In the circumstances that Graburn and Strong outline, competition is limited to the young who are actively seeking a mate, so it is possible that more ideal behaviour is resumed outside of this highly charged arena. Nonetheless, they outline how competition among women may result in the unsuccessful becoming servants of others, which demonstrates a clear sustained subordinate position (1973: 164). The difficulty in all of this, of course, comes from not knowing how prevalent such occurrences are, and whether these contemporary contexts can be applied with certainty to an indeterminate point in the past when animal mastery concepts were beginning to be developed.

With regard to the gender of the spirit masters, Hill states that – far from being

exclusively male – they were more often than not female:

Among the Iñupiat and some Canadian Inuit, a “caribou mother” managed the herds and ensured their proper treatment by humans (Ellanna & Sherrod 2004, 161-2). In the eastern Canadian Arctic, Sedna, mistress of sea mammals, was believed to be responsible for hunting success. When distressed by violations of hunting taboos or by the suffering of her charges – usually seals and walrus – Sedna responded by keeping the animals with her rather than releasing them to hunters; she might also send sickness, bad weather and starvation (Sabo & Sabo 1985; Laugrand & Oosten 2008).

(Hill 2011: 409-10)

Hill also notes how Sedna, in the form of Samna, was borrowed by the Chukchi of Chukotka (far eastern Russia) from their coastal dwelling neighbours the Siberian Eskimo, and converted into a ‘tundra-dwelling mistress of reindeer’ (2011: 410). Apart from demonstrating syncretism in action, it is also worth noting that the Chukchi already had a ‘master of animals’, *Keretkun* – proving, perhaps, that cosmological developments do not strictly operate along the lines of simply delineated logic, but are the result of a complex of socio-geographical factors.

Hill is at pains to emphasise, as per Hallowell and Morrison, that discourse with such other-than-human entities was part of the daily matter of life and should therefore not be considered supernatural or religious in character. Rather, it was an essential part of living in the world, and cultivating good relations with what Westerners might call *nonempirical phenomena* was a necessity for each individual to ensure their continued well-being. Hill goes on to describe how the use of personal ornaments, and especially amulets, was one of the ways in which the Arctic hunters of Alaska and Chukotka ‘expressed and performed these intersubjective relationships’ (2011: 412). Crucially,

these elements of material culture can sometimes be preserved in the archaeological record, thereby confirming the ‘significant time-depth’ of this kind of practice (2011: 413). They are usually either in the shape of an animal, or are constructed from animal parts (chiefly bone or ivory). Items catalogued from the circumpolar regions include canid skulls, dried birds, the teeth of seal, bear, walrus and Arctic fox, various animal skins, stones and beads. It is worth noting that identifying teeth as amuletry objects is difficult due to the way they were often attached with a strand of (perishable) sinew or baleen, rather than being perforated. In Hill’s analysis, the use of skulls functions either by invoking an animal’s spirit and summoning it to the hunter (presumably for spiritual assistance in the hunt), or – as has already been seen, by channelling the characteristic behaviour or skill of an animal. Most of the animals used in such contexts would be of the predatory kind, but she also speculates as to the use of amulets made from specific prey animals in hunting magic, using the sympathetic principle of *like attracts like*. Here the amulet is used as a spiritual lure to attract more of its kind, and it is even thought that such objects could also be used to immobilise the hunter’s prey (2011: 415).

I find this a fascinating area of enquiry, not least because, in some respects, the retention and use of animal bones seems contra to the human-animal contract of mutual respect, whereby the bones of an animal are returned to earth or water in order to placate its soul and ensure reincarnation. Perhaps the creation of an amulet required special bargaining with the intended animal in order to make it permissible, or was perceived as a gift resulting from carefully cultivated good relations, or kinship bonds. Conversely, it could be that the transgression was deemed worthwhile in exchange for the power the amulet conferred – as previously discussed, amulets might have been perceived as a means of holding onto power that is otherwise fluid in nature. Of course, it is quite possible that, just as the retention of inedible parts like skins and furs was

permissible, so too was the withholding of teeth, skulls or other elements of the skeleton – as long as *some part* was symbolically returned to earth or water. The overriding sense from various authors is that wastefulness, above anything else, is considered disrespectful by animals and their guardians. How this is defined is perhaps negotiable. For example, butchery – albeit mandated by strict rules of etiquette (2011: 409) – necessitates not only the disarticulation of the skeleton, but also the rupture of individual bones in order to access the highly important marrow contained therein. Added to this, as has already been seen from the archaeological record, animal skeletons were the source of raw material for tools and weapons – it is therefore debatable how much of the ‘entire’ skeleton can ever be returned in respectful deposition. With respect to both weaponry and amulets, it is interesting to speculate about the process of appropriating animal parts to empower the *human animal* to kill, but here Hill reaffirms the fluid nature of human and animal bodies as perceived by Arctic peoples:

The concept of “embodiment” is especially applicable here, with material culture functioning as the catalyst and medium through which human bodies manifested the other-than-human natures already contained within them. Physical matter need not be fundamentally converted; nor are these changes transformative or metamorphic in the sense that the presence of one eliminates the other. Rather, as Carpenter (1973: 284) suggests, “all relevant forms are always present”. Each person – human and prey animal – contains a multitude of bodily potentials that shift, retreat and emerge depending upon context, the behaviour of the hunter and the material culture he employs. Singing, thinking and wearing – a visor in the shape of a bird beak, for example, or the hide of a caribou – summon from within the person the required trait or kinetic ability.

(2011: 416)

The mention of a *visor* here expands the discussion to include masks, which has relevance for the interpretation of the LUP bone-carving from Creswell Crags, ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’, thought to depict a human masked figure (§A1.4.) [327]. In light of the above, it is possible to think of masks as granting humans the sight or perspective of another species. This *in-sight* could be seen as a form of *becoming animal*, rather than simply a borrowing of certain attributes, and could have a wide range of functions beyond hunting – for example, the strengthening of human-animal kinship bonds through empathic inter-species communication. In this respect, Pin Hole Cave Man’s therianthropic form could represent the performance of human-*being*-animal, rather than some kind of hybrid human-animal entity. Hill remarks that there is a similarity between Amazonian ‘perspectivist’ and circumpolar ontologies relating to the way in which outward bodily forms are seen as interchangeable ‘coverings’ that confer certain powers (2011: 410). From this point of view, elements of various animals’ exteriors are like clothing – to be worn in certain contexts and tabooed in others. There are analogues of this idea in various folk-tales, such as the Selkie myth, in which animals are perceived to shed their skin, revealing an inner ‘human’ form. This is not, strictly speaking, a transformation, but a revelation of inner essence. As already discussed, the perception that humans and (some) animals are *essentially* identical is thought to be a common Subarctic ontological belief: ‘Since animals are considered to be human beings who have donned masks and costumes that created their animal forms, people are united with the animals by virtue of the fact that they are all actually human beings’ (Walens 1981: 23 in Morrison 2000: 32). In this sense, the human use of masks is an act of correspondence, and it is interesting to speculate whether their deployment was the usual way of mediating human-animal encounters. In other words, just as we expect animals to wear their ‘masks’ in ordinary encounters, so too may animals expect us to wear ours.

A1.9. The Alive World of the Koyukon

The aforementioned Richard K. Nelson is credited with a detailed and sensitive study of the Koyukon, an Indigenous group of Alaska's northern boreal forests. His initial characterisation of their world-view is worth quoting in full:

Traditional Koyukon people live in a world that watches, in a forest of eyes. A person moving through nature – however wild, remote, even desolate the place may be – is never truly alone. The surroundings are aware, sensate, personified. They feel. They can be offended. And they must, at every moment, be treated with proper respect. All things in nature have a special kind of life ...

(Nelson 1986: 14)

'Wild, remote, even desolate' might apply to the Arctic-tundra type biome of Late-glacial Britain, and this characterisation of an 'aware' landscape is therefore incredibly useful in imagining how LUP people might perceive an environment newly emerged from the ice. The 'special kind of life' that Nelson describes is analogous to concepts of personhood and animacy that I have already outlined. Noticeably, Nelson does not qualify his statement – *all*, rather than *some*, things in nature have life.

Nevertheless, the Koyukon do ascribe certain qualitative differences to life as it inheres in various beings. According to Nelson, only humans have a *nukk'ubidza*, 'eye flutterer' or *soul*, which is different from the *spirits* of animals. Nelson confesses that he found it difficult to obtain clear understanding on this subject, and it is worth remembering his own commentary (that I keep returning to in this discussion): *there is difference in opinion on ontological specifics in non-dogmatic cultures*. Nevertheless, he makes a crucial observation that the human soul appears 'less vengeful' than its animal counterpart (1986: 20). Animals are clearly perceived as exacting retribution as a consequence of humans transgressing interspecies moral codes. Nelson also remarks

that only the human soul attains immortality in a special place after death (1986: 20). To my mind, this statement would seem to show the clear influence of Christian theology on Indigenous beliefs, but unfortunately he does not probe the matter any further.

The differences between human and animal souls are contextualised by reference to what are called *Kk'adonts'idnee* ('Distant Time') stories; a large corpus of oral mythic cultural material that covers every aspect of Koyukon history and the orientation of its people within the natural (and supernatural) world. Nelson is careful to resolve the natural-supernatural divide in an identical way to Hallowell, advising that for the Koyukon there is no separation – 'spiritual forces' are directly involved in the material, physical world – nevertheless Nelson continues to use these terms, indicating that perhaps we lack an alternative vocabulary for meaningfully discussing other-than-human entities.

One of the key Distant Time stories describes the origins of humans and animals. According to Koyukon belief, today's animals were human in the *distant time*. Humans and animals only became differentiated following a great natural disaster. Unlike the Christian flood story, the Koyukon version describes how only the animals survived with the aid of Raven, the creator of the world, but were thereby transformed into their present bodily forms. Raven then recreated humans and the two societies led their separate lives thereafter. Nevertheless, the Koyukon believe that traces of humanness lingers in animals – for example, animals understand human language and behaviour, have human-like emotions, and are easily offended when treated without respect. Much of this accords with what has already been encountered, but it is interesting to hear it relayed in the context of mythic narrative, rather than anthropological exposition. As already noted, the Ojibwa world-view is similarly situated at the nexus of myth and sacred narrative, the veracity of which is never in doubt.

The character of the Raven as a creator ‘deity’ is so different from Judeo-Christian theistic conceptions as to be worthy of comment. Far from being a figure of worship, he is depicted in *Kk’adonts’idnee* stories as an ‘omnipotent clown’ and a lazy trickster, continually recreating his world to suit his whim. For example, when creating rivers he originally made them run in both directions, but changed this when he saw that it made life too easy for humans. Consequently the Koyukon have an ambivalent attitude towards ravens themselves – what Nelson describes as a ‘kind of jocular respect’ whilst also ‘mocking their personality but still awed by their spirit power’ (1986: 19). It is worth noting here that the concept of ‘worship’ is *not* something that I have encountered in any of the many anthropological discussions of circumpolar world-views. This surely stems from the non-hierarchical ontologies that prevail in these cultures – despite observable differences in power evinced by all kinds of persons, and differing amounts of sentience and intentionality, there is no absolute system of ranking within their cosmologies. There are no barriers to communication between their various actors. In turn, this might be seen as reflective of the consciously collaborative nature of such societies – despite (or because of) the incredible difficulty in trying to derive sustenance from such harsh climates, the ethic of sharing is proven to be the most successful environmental adaption. In such paradigms, if a hunter fails to secure game he and his family can rely on the support of kin groups and extended family, as well as the broader tribal network of allies. Hence much of life is dedicated towards reaffirming the connectedness of society: ‘Native American prayer acts are commonly invocations of kinship, at once earnest petitions and reminders of interdependence. [...] These traditions recognize the ontological similarity and the interdependence of all beings’ (Morrison 2000: 34). Prayer is therefore not a form of worship in the Judeo-Christian sense, but a means of ensuring here-and-now social integration. Respect and reciprocity, as has been seen, are the key moral concepts, and there is no requirement for worship in

a social universe that is predicated on equality.

In those Arctic and Subarctic world-views that I have examined so far, the Koyukon seems to be the most unrestrained in the ascription of life, sentience and ‘spirit’ to the world at large. According to Nelson, animals, plants, earth, weather, sky, and even the air, are spiritually invested (Nelson 1986: 31). Unlike in other ontologies, such as the Ojibwa’s, this is not a potentiality, but a given fact. Perhaps this is reflective of the relative abundance of life in boreal forests when compared to the barren lands further north – the Arctic tundras and regions of permafrost where growth is limited to a few months of the year. In Koyukon Alaska even the primordial elements are imbued with spirits and sentience, and there are concomitant rules of conduct that must be observed. Certain landforms, too, have special powers, and must be treated respectfully.

The earth itself is the source of a ‘preeminent spiritual power called *sinh taala*’ (1986: 26), a power which can be channelled for medicinal use by ritual specialists, the *diyinyoo* (‘shamans’). Nelson’s language here is ambiguous – it is not clear the degree to which this is an impersonal ‘force’ akin to Marett’s characterisations of *manitu* and Harvey’s universal life energy (§A1.7.) [338]. Nonetheless, the word ‘spiritual’ implies an origin in *spirit* – some kind of other-than-human, non-anthropomorphic entity. How much, then, should it be envisaged as something diffuse and impersonal, as opposed to a supernatural agency that resides within the earth? Nelson also mentions a ‘nebulous but still threatening power [that] is associated with many places on the land, bodies of water, or stretches of waterways’ (1986: 35). Again his use of the word ‘power’ is ambiguous. Until now, I have only examined the notion of power in relation to how it is shared between human and other-than-human persons. In such contexts, the power itself only arises in social situations – in encounters between humans and others, some of whom might be called spirits. But here Nelson conjures something more disembodied

and abstract, perhaps simply because he is discussing places, localities – the earth itself. His lack of specificity reflects a categorical problem for Western ontologies – we have no accurate language for discussing ‘things’ that don’t have recognisably tangible and discrete bodies. Moreover, in terms of our prevailing rational-materialist paradigm – there is no need to name something that we believe does not exist. But do we therefore risk ascribing a different order of being, or non-being, to ‘phenomena’ that we do not understand?

Elsewhere, Nelson discusses the ‘abiding spirits’ of ‘living things’ in the context of trees that are capable of providing spiritual protection from ‘malevolent spirits’, and they are sought out to sleep under when hunting or travelling (1986: 29, 49). Later he describes ‘spirit forces’ that surround the Koyukon people ‘in nature’ – a term that is an uneasy amalgam of the sentient and the impersonal. In the last chapter of his book, Nelson summarises the ‘tenets of Koyukon ideology’, wherein he asserts that:

Spirits of natural entities appear to be vaguely conceptualized. Koyukon people are somewhat obscure about spirits, especially the less powerful ones. This does not imply that they are unimportant, but it seems to indicate that precision is unnecessary. [...] Vagueness and individualism pervade Koyukon belief.

(1986: 229)

But is this vagueness and imprecision real, or an artefact of ruptures that exist between languages? Is it possible to accurately convey the subtleties of meaning from one language to the next? What, for example, can we make of the poetic, but opaque, transliteration of *nukk’ubidza* into ‘eye-flutterer’, meaning *soul*?

Perhaps there is a clue to the relationship between personal and impersonal in Graburn and Strong’s characterisation of the Eskimo deity *Sila*:

More variable was a belief in another all-powerful spirit, who controlled the

weather and sometimes land animals. This was *Sila*, the ‘great outside’, the weather. This more impersonal force had less direct concern with individual Eskimo’s lives, but where anthropomorphized is seen as male, residing somewhere above.

(Graburn and Strong 1973: 168)

Sila is at once an all-powerful spirit and an impersonal force – these different aspects coming into play according to the requirements of the individual and the mode of interaction, without there being any overall incongruity. In the Ojibwa world defined by Hallowell and Morrison, there is no room for the impersonal – there is only *who*, and not *what*. In relation to the Koyukon, at least, perhaps such conceptual rigidity does not accurately reflect how individuals interact with their world. Hill’s conception of Eskimo ontology doesn’t allow for such categorical absolutes either – everything, including personhood, is continually negotiated. Perhaps there are analogues here with the Koyukon, and how they construct different degrees of personality/impersonality according to context, with what might appear to be imprecision from our external perspective.

Issues such as these are complicated when anthropologists who study the same Indigenous groups do not agree on crucial matters of interpretation. Nelson cites earlier studies by Jetté (1911) and Loyens (1966) as examples of ethnographic works that draw different conclusions than his own. Both Jetté and Loyens argue for a ‘collective spirit for each species’ rather than an individual spirit for each animal (Nelson 1986: 22). By contrast, Nelson’s own teachers ‘envisioned no such “keeper spirits” overseeing whole species’ (1986: 22). Like Hill, Nelson raises the notion of a *latent sentience*, which he argues can linger from several days to several years, depending on the power of the spirit involved. In the case of powerful spirits, organic remains that aren’t disposed of

through deposition, such as furs or hides, are therefore considered ‘conscious substances’ that require continual respectful treatment for predefined periods of time (1986: 231). Could this be a way of understanding the power of amulets – as a part of an animal in which sentience still resides?

Nelson goes on to describe how an animal’s spirit returns to an ‘animal house’ after death, containing other spirits from its species. If an animal has been mistreated at the hands of humanity, this knowledge will then be communicated to other spirits residing there. Although he does not explicitly discuss reincarnation, such a process of renewal is implicit in Nelson’s descriptions of the actions of shamans who are capable of making dream-visits to animal houses where they persuade the animals to revisit Koyukon lands, and thereby re-offer themselves to hunters (1986: 22). The concept of animal houses neatly obviates the need for spirit guardians or masters, and therefore somewhat undermines my previously formulated theory about the origins of animal mastery. However, in a later passage Nelson invokes Sullivan in describing how shamans enlist spirit helpers in order to negotiate with the ‘protective spirit of the caribou’ (1986: 30). Perhaps, then, animal masters can be seen as an analogue of the shaman’s own spirit helpers – as spiritual mediators. It therefore seems possible that both animal houses and animal masters could still co-exist, and even that the latter might have evolved out of the former.

A1.10. Animal Mastery

Perhaps the most thorough and provocative examination of the concept of animal mastery is undertaken by Tim Ingold in his essay ‘Hunting, sacrifice and the domestication of animals’ (1986). He begins by arguing that:

It is by no means true, as is sometimes asserted, that the hunter generally

encounters animals as beings on equal terms with himself. In the majority of instances, individual animals are regarded merely as the manifestations of an essential type, and it is the type rather than its manifestation that is personified.

(Ingold 1986: 247)

Here we are firmly in the territory of Hallowell's *ordinary* animals, and Ingold illustrates his point by alerting us to distinctions in naming conventions – in myths, stories and dream-encounters, Eagle, Fox, Hare, Caribou, etc, are beings of a 'higher order', representative of all the animals of their kind – in other words, they are the animal masters. Ingold bolsters his argument by calling upon Åke Hultkrantz's discussion of the different 'types' of souls in Indigenous theology, of which there are many, but which Ingold distills to two: the *life-soul*, which animates the body and only leaves it in death, and the *free-soul*, which is at liberty to leave the body during dreams and visions. Ingold argues that whilst all ordinary animals have a life-soul, their free-soul is bound-up in the identity of their animal master – it is not singularly theirs, like in human beings, but is rather a collective species soul, embodied by the animal master itself. As such, ordinary animals are not persons, and their measure of sentience and intentionality is suitably limited. Ingold cites Jetté's similar qualification of *yega* within the 'Coyukon' (Koyukon) (1986: 248) – but, as I have remarked, Nelson takes exception to this distinction. Nevertheless, this is a compelling description of mastery, as the master is not conceptualised as a separate spiritual entity – as a cosmic guardian or mediator – but rather as an amalgam of all the souls of a particular animal species. As such, the master's ontological position allows 'him' to control the disposition and movements of 'his' animals. Ingold illustrates his thesis with recourse to Speck's account of the Naskapi, and the 'Caribou-Man', who lives in a huge cavern inside a mountain and 'owns the wild herds':

Caribou-Man dispatches his charges on their annual migrations, having already determined which animals, and how many, are to be taken by which particular hunters. After the hunt, the souls of the slain animals return to base, where they are reincarnated in order to be dispatched again next time around. The master, according to Speck's account, is visualized as a white and bearded human being, though he may also take the shape of an enormous caribou. His cavern, together with all the country around about, is strictly out-of-bounds to human hunters; those who have inadvertently strayed too close have returned with terrifying tales of a world where everything is of gigantic size and ferocious appearance. Others have not returned at all.

(1986: 250)

Ingold is clear to emphasise the cyclical nature of this annual life-and-death narrative. Crucially, he argues that the slaughter of the caribou is essential in releasing each animal's soul so that it can be 'reclothed with flesh' (1986: 250). The relationship between humans and the animal master, as far as Ingold is concerned, is one of reciprocity: the humans are dependent on the master in releasing animals to them, and the master is reliant upon human 'acts of killing' which ensure the regeneration of his herds. This is a startling point, as it re-contextualises death as a creative, recuperative act. Moreover the act of killing is perceived as a necessity, not simply to satiate human hunger, but to ensure the continued well-being of the animal species in question. In Naskapi ontology, this is a symbiotic relationship.

Notwithstanding the eloquence of Ingold's argument, as already discussed there are those who make different assertions about the nature of human-animal relations, and the degrees of sentience, intentionality and personhood ascribed to *ordinary* animals. Rane Willerslev, in discussing these issues in relation to the Yukaghirs of Siberia,

advises that Ingold's qualitative distinction between animals and their masters do not apply to the Yukaghirs themselves:

Although hunters do not usually distinguish between an animal and its associated spiritual being, the hunters I spoke to always insisted that the animals do not simply derive their personhood from their master-spirits, but that both are persons in their own right.

(Willerslev 2007: 74)

But, for Ingold, ordinary animals are merely the manifestation of a type – they possess no inherent individuality, and no self-governance in their actions. Their fate is determined in advance by their master (at least in terms of how Speck described it for the Naskapi). This no longer seems like a non-hierarchical world. Yet Ingold describes the animal master as effectively being constituted from the souls of individual animals, and so it is possible to perceive mastery as a kind of collective soulhood, rather than as an autocracy by a dominant over-spirit. It could be seen as a kind of hive mind – a connected spiritual identity; a central intelligence linking all members of a particular animal society. In this way, far from being inferior, animals could be seen to possess intrinsic power – an ability to communicate with each other in ways that humans are simply unable.

In a recent personal communication, Ingold advised that his ideas on mastery have evolved over the intervening 34 years since his essay was published. His position now is more nuanced with regard to levels of agency and personhood within ordinary animals, and he directed me to his subsequent essay, 'Totemism, animism and the depiction of animals' (Ingold 2000a). In it, he still maintains that 'spirit masters ... control the disposition of animals, for their release to human hunters' (2000a: 115), but qualifies this assertion later by allowing that 'there is considerable variation in detail'

among circumpolar beliefs regarding ‘the way in which living beings are generally thought to be constituted’ (2000a: 123). Furthermore, he discusses the real-world implications of these issues (in relation to the Povungnituk Inuit of Quebec and the Cree of northeastern Canada⁵²) in a passage that examines levels of intentionality in caribou. Instead of characterising the caribou as a passive vessel in the thrall of its controlling spirit master, he relates how the individual animal is perceived by the hunter as *deciding* whether or not to ‘consent to be taken’. The rules of respectful conduct in the circumpolar world therefore do not permit the hunter to kill an animal that does not offer itself freely, and there are severe consequences for those who transgress.

‘Consent’ is negotiated in the moment, and is a subtle interaction between two beings who ‘reveal their identities and intentions through their behaviour’ (2000a: 122). Nevertheless, the general rule is that a caribou is considered to give consent if it stands its ground and stares ‘directly at its pursuer’ (2000a: 121). Any deviation from this behaviour is generally considered to be a refusal, and hunters must proceed with extreme caution. A caribou that is taken without consent is said to become *nasaittuq*, ‘hoodless’ – and is depicted in Inuit art with the skin and fur covering of its head ‘pulled back to reveal a wolf-like visage, with round eyes, a long, thin snout and bared fangs’ (2000a: 122). This potential to become hoodless obtains for all caribou, and any animal so-transformed must not be eaten. Ingold describes killing without consent as effecting a role-reversal, whereby the hunter becomes hunted by the vengeful animal (spirit). Given the difficult environmental conditions that prevail in the circumpolar world – and the general difficulty involved in finding food – it is a wonder that such exacting hunting protocols are observed. Clearly any act of concealment or subterfuge on the part of the hunter would set up a non-consensual dynamic, and the hunter is therefore

⁵² Ingold doesn’t refer to the Povungnituk by name, but the artwork of Davidialuk Alasuaq, who was from Puvirnituq on the Povungnituk River.

ultimately obliged to announce his presence in a way that brokers direct confrontation and the ensuing permission-seeking exchange. Nevertheless, in his essay ‘Culture, nature, environment: Steps to an ecology of life’ (2000b), Ingold observes that the caribou’s stopping and turning to look at its pursuers appears to be a predictable behavioural adaptation (specifically to predation by wolves, but extended to humans), in which the ‘facing down’ of its opponent allows the animal precious moments to recover before final flight (2000b: 13). It can therefore be seen that most caribou will be perceived to ‘offer themselves’, and those that appear not to are exceptional.

A1.11. Animic Ontology

Ingold contextualises the foregoing discussion in what he terms an ‘animic’ ontology, which he asserts applies to ‘native peoples of the circumpolar North’ (2000a: 113), and, indeed, Hallowell, Morrison, Hill and Nelson also describe world-views that share many common factors: notions of *other-than-human personhood* and *reciprocity* being at the heart of each. But even within this small survey there have also been subtle, and not so subtle, differences – sufficient certainly to uphold Connors’s warnings about the persistence of cultural and spiritual universals in the north (Connors 2000: 140). Nevertheless, Ingold expertly encapsulates the subject by noting how the act of living in the animic world is perceived to necessitate drawing ‘upon the vitality of others’ (Ingold 2000a: 113) – a process that is mediated by the respect for all life, and that is consensual in its ideal form, because it acknowledges the cyclical nature of life, death and regeneration. In this world-view, external form is ephemeral – it is changeable, easily transferred and absorbed – but inner essence always endures, to be endlessly physically reconstituted. The act of killing – when governed by taboos and rules of conduct – does not have the same implications as it does in our Western systems of belief. *Death-giving*

is not a transgressive act of finality. It is considered a necessary and recuperative process in the animic world-view; an integral mechanism for ensuring the flow of vitality in the world. (1986: 250, 2000a: 113).

A1.12. Bear Ceremonialism

As historic and prehistoric circumpolar peoples are known to have been hunter-gatherer societies, the focus of this research so far has largely dwelt on their relationship with *prey* animals, but there is one other animal that is worthy of special consideration. In his analysis of the pre-LGM site at Goat's Hole Cave, Paviland, Wales, Stephen Aldhouse-Green notes that the bear 'may have been an object of reverence, even sacrifice' for Upper Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 231). He goes on to remark that 'the use of [Goat's Hole] Cave by hibernating bears could, itself, have been influential in a mystical perception of the site'; therefore situating the ursine species in the same context as Aurignacian human ancestors (2000: 233). Aldhouse-Green does not discuss the matter any further, but he is possibly alluding to the complex of beliefs and rituals known in the field of anthropology as 'bear ceremonialism'. The landmark study on the subject, 'Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere', was published by A. Irving Hallowell in 1926, and nearly a century later it still remains the field's key work, such is its scope and level of scholarship. According to Hallowell, the practice of bear ceremonialism is evidenced in one or more of the following behaviours:

- 1) the hunting of bear, with restrictions on the time of year and methods of killing
- 2) the custom of talking to the bear during the hunt, including 'calling it out' of its den
- 3) the use of conciliatory speeches, addresses of apology, and the attribution of

the kill to a scapegoat

4) the use of post-mortem ceremonies and customs

5) the use of taboo names for the bear, including circumlocutions and synonyms

‘Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere’ predates by some years the already discussed ‘Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and world-view’ (first published in 1960), in which Hallowell introduces the concept of *personhood*. Nevertheless, in this earlier study he makes tentative gestures in this direction by observing that in many of the ‘native tribes’ of North America, Asia and Europe, ‘animals are believed to have essentially the same sort of animating agency which man possesses’ (Hallowell 1926: 7). Remembering his later distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* animals, then the bear, being ‘held in special esteem’, is most certainly the latter (1926: 22).

It might therefore seem odd that an animal so identified should be hunted at all, and indeed the sometimes elaborate beliefs and practices surrounding the kill itself would seem to betray the working of an instinctual, deep-felt ethical anxiety. But care is needed, here, not to impose moral judgements about the nature of killing, and indeed Hallowell pre-empts his later concerns with such issues by forewarning his readers about ‘the inapplicability of our concepts’ when examining ‘primitive thought’ (1926: 10). Needless to say, the word ‘primitive’ here, with its pejorative connotations, is unfortunate, and, moreover ironic, given that it is precisely *this* kind of culturally determined concept that Hallowell is urging his readers to abandon. Such positions were prevalent in the time that Hallowell produced his monograph – Frank G. Speck, for instance, writing nearly a decade later, identified the Naskapi as ‘an exceptionally crude and simple people’ (Speck 1935: 5). Statements such as these must surely lead us to question the level of insight that can be garnered from ethnographies whose authors

have seemingly so little regard for their subjects, but it is perhaps unfair to characterise Hallowell in such a light. For example, he highlights the ‘assumed superiority’ that ‘Euro-American’ society confers upon itself in relation to the animal world; members of the latter which he characterises as ‘sentient beings’ (Hallowell 1926: 6). He then goes on to contrast the ‘paucity’ of beliefs about animals held by Euro-Americans in contrast to the ‘rich’ and ‘varied’ ideas of Indigenous peoples. Crucially, he does not ridicule such ideas, but argues that they can only be properly understood when accompanied by a knowledge of their ‘philosophy of nature’ (1926: 6). To my mind, the equating of Indigenous ontological thought with *philosophy* is a conscious attempt to elevate what might previously have been characterised by anthropologists as *superstition*. In this context, the problematic term ‘primitive’ may simply reflect the usage of what was considered appropriate terminology within early twentieth century ethnographic writing. This does not excuse its usage by Hallowell, but it may absolve him of the accusation of *conscious* prejudice.

Returning to the hunting of the bear, Hallowell observes that it is a formidable creature requiring great bravery to overcome (1926: 35). It therefore stands to reason that the difficulty and danger to life involved in confronting the bear may have resulted in adaptations to minimise that risk – hence the prevalent custom of hunting the bear towards the end of winter, when its hibernating fat reserves are particularly low and the animal itself is especially weak (1926: 33 n82). Here Hallowell notes considerable variation in the enactment of this confrontation, although there are a number of salient attitudes. First among them is the effective ambushing of the bear whilst still in its den, but others also include ‘calling out’ the bear and killing it as it emerges, and still others require the bear to be engaged in combat as a kind of trial of strength (1926: 33-43). In many of these divergent practices the bear is addressed by circumlocution, and the

variety here is worthy of note. Common among such names are ‘cousin’, ‘grandfather’, ‘grandmother’, ‘elder brother’, ‘chief’s son’, ‘old man’ and ‘four legged human’ – all of which seem to seek the reaffirmation of kinship and ancestral bonds. Again, it may seem odd to us to express such *personal* affiliations during an act of killing – but of course *personhood*, and therefore *respectful* treatment, is at the heart of such important encounters, and the careful use of names is an explicit means of demonstrating that very respect. By using names that acknowledge *sameness*, hunters pay the utmost honour to the animal, and the inverse correlative of this are names that are taboo, because they would be offensive to the bear during such an encounter (1926: 44). These taboo names are often the generic terms that each Indigenous culture has for the bear – and it must therefore be the very impersonal nature of such words that renders them dangerous. This context-dependency of names can even stretch to different naming conventions being adopted pre- and post-mortem, which is in turn predicated on the idea – already discussed – of an animal’s *latent sentience* after death, which therefore requires the demonstration of respect to be continued – hence there are names that ‘must never be used before his carcass’ (1926: 45).

In some circumstances, this respectful treatment seems to be transformed into anxious entreaties to the bear itself:

The Thompson River Indians begged their prey to come out and be shot, and the grizzly, especially, was petitioned not to be angry with the hunter nor fight with him, but to take pity on him, in short, to give himself up.

(1926: 53-4)

Perhaps this fear of the bear’s anger is reflective of the circumpolar ethic of consensual killing, already discussed. Indeed, much of the wider demonstrations of anxiety by different native groups could be perceived as an index of the bear’s attitude to being set

upon. The animal rarely, if ever, shows ‘consent’ in such an unequivocal way as the caribou. In fact, Hallowell observes that bears often ‘whine in a pleading way’ when subdued, such that ‘tears may even appear in their eyes’ (1926: 149). It is therefore understandable that such a complex of varied beliefs and practices has accreted around this most human-like of animals.

A1.13. Respect, Reverence, Veneration, Worship?

It will be noted that Aldhouse-Green suggests an attitude of *reverence* for the bear in Palaeolithic cultures, although he doesn’t qualify this statement or cite any archaeological or anthropological evidence to support it (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 231). With regard to historical circumpolar peoples, Hallowell contends that ‘the terms used to describe the psychological attitude of these aborigines toward the bear vary considerably. Some describe it as respect, others as reverence, veneration, or worship, but one and all are in agreement that, among the animals, bears are held in special esteem’ (Hallowell 1926: 22). But *reverence*, *veneration*, and *worship* all imply a hierarchical ontology that ultimately honours a god, or many gods, over the lives of others. In the circumpolar world-views already discussed, it is *respect* and not *reverence* that governs existence, and respectful behaviour denotes a non-hierarchical, inherently social, universe that is composed of various kinds of *persons*. In such ontologies there are undoubtedly differences in power between various *agents*, but there are no fundamental categorical distinctions between them that prevent their entering into social discourse. *Worship* therefore has no place in such ontologies, and I would argue that attributing this mode of thought – with reference to the bear or any other entity – is a misreading of Indigenous beliefs. In supporting this judgement, I return again to Hallowell’s own assertion regarding the inapplicability of *our* culturally predetermined

thoughts and prejudices when looking at other cultures (1926: 10, 1975: 144). Hallowell was specifically referencing our supposedly rational modes of enquiry, but this extends to the whole gamut of ontological beliefs – what E.J. Michael Witzel calls our ‘personal māyā’ (Witzel 2010: 14) – which therefore includes theistic religious paradigms (such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity) that are hierarchical in their cosmological descriptions. In my view, worship and veneration govern such *hierarchical universes*, whereas respect governs the *social universes* of circumpolar Indigenous peoples.

Perhaps in stressing these distinctions I am guilty of the categorical absolutism that I have already demonstrated – through the work of Richard K. Nelson – to be ineffectual when approaching Indigenous thinking. In establishing an argument, emphasis is often sought through the use of contrast, but such conceptualisations inevitably prove to be problematic when trying to come to more nuanced understandings. The fluidity of thought (in other areas of belief) that Nelson and others have observed would seem to accord with the degrees of gradation that Hallowell delineates when referencing attitudes towards the bear: *respect*, *reverence*, *veneration*, *worship*. Perhaps aspects of all these orientations can operate within the social universe without disrupting its essentially egalitarian nature, although these terms would need to be carefully defined and appropriately disentangled from their functioning in other theistic ontologies. Nevertheless, the critical observation, as far as I see it, is that *respect* operates in both directions; it is something both given and received, and, like power, its flow is vital in maintaining good relations between all persons, both human and other-than-human. It could perhaps be argued that respect *underwrites* other modalities such as reverence and veneration, and that they come into play during encounters with *special* persons who are perceived to possess great power, thereby inducing the feeling of *awe*. With regard to the bear, the extent and fervour in the

subsequent ritual treatment of the animal's remains could be an index of the awe felt by a particular tribal group – but it is also worth remembering that the animal itself is largely communicated with using familial terms whilst still alive, and even with other, more ambivalent, language out of earshot (Hallowell 1926: 45). If this is a form of worship, it is far from the form enacted before the omniscient gods of monotheistic religions. As a final note on the matter, it is useful to remember that the concept of an omniscient god was of prime concern for the early Westerners who first contacted circumpolar hunter-gatherers. The aforementioned 'missionizing effect' was not inconsiderable, and writers such as Speck are unequivocal as to its implications:

To the influence of missionary priests, I am now inclined to believe, may be attributed the concept of an anthropomorphic supreme deity [...] it would seem quite impossible now to produce proof in support of the opinion that this concept is an Aboriginal one.

(Speck 1935, 28-9)

Indigenous cultures, when forcefully exposed to new ideas, cannot help but adapt, and in this case it would appear that some of the hierarchical constructs of Christianity, namely the notions of supremacy and omniscience, were absorbed. In the case of the Naskapi, as Speck argues, this precipitated the concept of *Tcetcimāntu*, a human-like 'Great Spirit'. In terms of my previous discussion, I would suggest that the associated practices of veneration and worship may also have been absorbed and reconstituted in rituals reserved for pre-existing *persons of power* in Indigenous ontologies. Hence the perception of the worship of bears among native groups may equally result from both culturally determined preconceptions on the part of later ethnographers, *and* the syncretising effect of earlier missionary efforts.

I would therefore propose that an earlier Palaeolithic version of bear

ceremonialism, if it existed at all, would have operated well within the parameters of a social universe, free from the later culturally contaminating effects of colonialism. Whereas previously I have characterised *reverence* in contradistinction to *respect*, I would now concede that, in certain circumstances, reverence may follow as a direct corollary of awe, resulting from an appreciation of the power exercised by special persons. Nevertheless, I would characterise such reverence as essentially an extension of respectful behaviour between persons who are fundamentally similar, rather than as indicative of categorical differences of being, such as that between a human and a deity.

A1.14. Sacrality

In discussing the archaeology at Paviland Cave, Aldhouse-Green suggests that the site itself may have been a ‘locus consecratus’, a place of pilgrimage over many thousands of years, during which time its sense of ‘sacredness’ was a constant (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 243-244). I suggest, however, that the word sacred itself is problematic, especially in the way that it unnecessarily delimits what we might call *spiritual* thought. This is particularly true as *the sacred* is often defined in counterpoint to *the secular*, but it is debatable if such binary oppositions have any currency when discussing Palaeolithic modes of thought. As I have already demonstrated, circumpolar Indigenous groups like the Koyukon believe that:

The surroundings are aware, sensate, personified. They feel. They can be offended. And they must, at every moment, be treated with proper respect. All things in nature have a special kind of life ...

(Nelson 1986: 14)

Later in his discussion, Aldhouse-Green does acknowledge that ‘the sacred and the profane were inextricably intertwined’, but his focus is still explicitly upon sites of

‘holy revelation’ (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 233). But to partition off one particular area of the landscape as *sacred* is, in my view, to misunderstand how the whole of nature can be perceived as sentient, and therefore requiring respectful treatment. Indeed, as we have seen, even *nature* itself as a concept has no relevance in such ontologies (Hallowell 1975: 151-2), as it creates separation where none exists. Humans are inextricably part of the world they inhabit.

Sacredness itself is a difficult concept in such contexts because some of its connotations include *reverence*, *veneration*, and *worship*, which, as I have just argued, implicitly reflect a hierarchical ontology that honours a god, or many gods, over the lives of others. If the word *sacred* is used, then it needs to be clearly defined. In the context of Goat’s Hole Cave, the term can perhaps be used to connote a concentration of power, significance or meaning, free from the associations of theism. Caves were clearly special places, but this does not negate the sacredness of the rest of the landscape.

Indigenous ideas concerning the sacrality of the landscape-at-large are evident in ethnographies. The following description of Inuit beliefs, summarised by Timothy Insoll, is worth quoting in its entirety:

Lowenstein (1993) describes how among another Inuit group, the whale hunting Inuit of the Tikigaq peninsula in northern Alaska, existence was related around the sacralising of the earth, and also how the very peninsula itself was considered to be the body of a whale-like creature killed by the primal shamanic harpooner. For our purposes here, practically this meant that when whales were killed, dismembered, and stored underground they were thought of as joining the mythic whale’s body. [...] Lowenstein (ibid.: 33) also refers to the use of whalebone in the construction of *iglus* and *qalqis* (ceremonial

houses). [...] Furthermore, and although Lowenstein does not make this point, it could be suggested that the use of whalebone as a building material within the earth might also have significance, returning perhaps once again to the notion of the sacrality of the whale as the giver of life, and its metaphorical conception as the very land itself. Thus the whale, the primary focus of subsistence activities amongst this Inuit group, has to be considered as much more than the focus of economic logic.

(Insoll 2004: 72)

Insoll is making the point that in some circumstances, the animal comprising the main source of food and material resources to hunter-gatherers is also central to their mythology, cosmogony and notions of sacredness. This particular example would also seem to concur with the previously quoted case of the Koyukon, for whom *all* of nature is imbued with sentience and power. The interesting difference here is that the whole of the earth is sacralised through being subsumed into the mythical body of a singular species. A form of mythopoeic synecdoche. Descriptions such as these draw the conversation away from a focus on the ‘exploitation’ of animals for purely subsistence or mercantile purposes (e.g. Djindjian 2015) into more complex and nuanced territory. Fruitful comparisons might arise between the Tikigaq Inuit’s construction of ceremonial houses and the so-called *mammoth bone dwellings* found in Gravettian sites in Europe (Djindjian 2015: 47), or the funerary assemblages of Dolni Věstonice, Brno and Předmosti, in which human remains were interred beneath constructions composed of mammoth scapulae (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 237-8). Surely something more is going on here than the outward demonstration of wealth and prestige?

Aldhouse-Green describes a wealth of grave goods at the Paviland site, but perhaps it is possible to view such assemblages without dwelling on their economic

worth. The gifting of objects between members of different kinds of groups could be perceived as evidence of a *social universe* which requires all its actors to demonstrate respect and to cultivate reciprocal relationship, thereby completing the circuit through which power moves away from, and returns to, individual actors. The death of a *person*, whether an animal or a human, can be perceived as a critical moment during which displays of respect are paramount. If indeed artefacts are a currency of respect between humans, it therefore follows that Palaeolithic grave goods (or at least a good majority of them) could be construed as the gifts of others who are making gestures of respect, rather than as a catalogue of artefacts ‘owned’ by the deceased. The ‘trading’ – of at least certain kinds – of artefacts could therefore be perceived as a means of strengthening social ties and acknowledging mutual obligations, rather than as a simple economic activity. It must be said that discussions of Palaeolithic inhumations often cite grave goods as evidence of wealth and therefore social inequality. Some even suggest that the ‘abandoning of ... goods in the tomb is generally part of a strategy of deliberately removing wealth from the exchange network, which prevents the gradual loss of their value caused by the introduction, through production or exchange, of new objects to the system’ (Vanhaeren and d’Errico 2005: 118). Unfortunately, a detailed discussion of inequality in Palaeolithic Europe is beyond the scope of this study, but perhaps I have shown that – in at least some contexts – grave goods could be viewed as having different kinds of value than those proposed by Vanhaeren and d’Errico, reflective of the social universe out of which they may have arisen.

A1.15. A Common Palaeolithic Culture?

Hallowell argues that, notwithstanding the large diversity of cultic responses to the bear, there is sufficient equivalency between inland Eurasian and North American hunter-

gatherer societies to propose a common origin in an ancient ‘Old World’ ‘Boreal culture’ (Hallowell 1926: 161). He prefers this to what he terms the ‘psychological interpretation’, which argues that the human brain will respond in a generally uniform way to the same stimuli, and therefore predicts the simultaneous evolution of similar cultural phenomenon in widely dispersed Indigenous societies. Hallowell specifically connects bear ceremonialism to an ‘ancient Asiatic culture, later disseminated in America by migrant caribou [reindeer] hunters’ (1926: 161). Drawing on the work of Clark Wissler (1870-1947), he argues that the reindeer was in effect ‘the accidental carrier of a culture’ (1926: 157). Recent studies of Native American mitochondrial DNA would seem to bolster Hallowell’s thesis, as they have revealed genetic links with earlier Asian populations, suggesting that the New World was populated by hunter-gatherer groups crossing the Bering Land Bridge between north-eastern Siberia and north-western Alaska, shortly after the LGM (Reich *et al.* 2012: 373). This has significance for *North of Here*, as if I am to reliably draw upon Eurasian and North American ethnographies I need to demonstrate a connection between LUP proto-British culture and the ‘Old World’ common origin proposed by Wisler, *et al.* and Hallowell.

Stephen Oppenheimer identifies a number of ice age refugial centres in Europe through the genetic legacy of their populations: Eastern Europe (the Ukraine & Moldova), south Central Europe (Italy), and the regions either side of the Pyrenees (Franco-Cantabria). He argues that DNA evidence shows LUP proto-British populations coming from two of these centres: *Eastern Europe* and *Franco-Cantabria* (Oppenheimer 2007: 114-155). The former of these populations he describes as ‘thriving communities’ of ‘expert mammoth-hunters’, well-adapted to the ‘treeless Arctic landscape’ that covered most of central and eastern Europe during the ice age. It is certainly not unreasonable to suggest that they would also have hunted other cold-

tolerant species such as reindeer. He adds, ‘this landscape, known as steppe tundra, is similar to parts of northern Siberia today’ (2007: 117) – a place where the reindeer still features prominently as a source of food. The peoples of the Franco-Cantabrian refuge were emphatically reindeer-hunters (Jochim *et al.* 1999: 133), and are commonly identified with the Solutrean and later Magdalenian European cultures (Jochim *et al.* 1999: 130; García *et al.* 2011: 37; Pala *et al.* 2012: 915). Is it possible, therefore, that these refugia could represent the isolated remnants of a common Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer culture? For the purposes of *North of Here*, I think such a supposition has sufficient credibility.

The emblematic Late-glacial British culture is the Creswellian, named after the Creswell Crags complex on the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border. Pettitt *et al.* argue that the Creswellian is simply a north-western extension of the Late Magdalenian, with a subset of the latter’s material culture (Pettitt *et al.* 2012: 276). This is important, I feel, because it stresses the connectedness of ‘British’ Late-glacial populations to that of the broader European continent – they are diffusions from European glacial refuges. It is therefore appropriate that Pettitt *et al.* use the term ‘British Final Magdalenian’ in an attempt to re-situate these north-western sites within the larger continental matrix. Pettitt *et al.* don’t simply argue for a continuity of tradition in lithic culture, but also in parietal art: ‘British groups were drawing from the same broad artistic repertoire as their continental contemporaries’ (2012: 278). Meanwhile, Jochim *et al.* cite a number of sources (Barton *et al.* 1994; Gamble 1991; Jochim 1983, 1987; Straus 1991) in arguing that ‘the florescence of cave art during the Solutrean and Early Magdalenian may reflect increasing territoriality and ritual mediation as responses to the social problems of demographic circumscription in the refugium’ (Jochim *et al.* 1999: 133). Clearly the issue of population density did not apply to Late-glacial Britain in the same way as it

may have in the Franco-Cantabrian refuge, but does this account for the differences in scale and complexity between the rather modest Late-glacial British examples of art at Creswell Crags and the rich depictions of early Magdalenian life at Lascaux, in south-western France? With respect to earlier pre-LGM pioneers, Aldhouse-Green speculates how ‘a long-distance dispersal group moving across what was probably a *terra tenebrosa*’ might have ‘lost contact with its parent population’ and discarded ‘aspects of its material culture’ (Aldhouse-Green 2000: 232). Does Creswell Crags constitute an example of such discard – a shift away from the visual expression of ‘ritual mediation’?

Pettitt *et al.* also include portable art among the complex of Magdalenian material culture, and, with reference to ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’, previously mooted as a masked human or therianthrope, a simpler interpretation of a ‘rearing bear’ is proposed (Pettitt *et al.* 2012: 277). If so, this would lend credence to the idea of the ursine species being important to the peoples of Late-glacial Britain (or at least to the person who made this carving), and therefore of the possibility of nascent bear ceremonialism at this time-period. Many of the Late-glacial sites in Britain contain bear remains, but none, as far as I am aware, show evidence of the cut-marks that would indicate humans directly interacting with them (either as part of subsistence or ritual activity). At Victoria, Sewell’s and Kinsey caves in Yorkshire, Late-glacial bear remains are found that have been gnawed by wolves in the same assemblage as other fauna showing human-made cut-marks (Lord *et al.* 2007). This would seem to argue against the bear being singled out as a *special* other-than-human person, but as E.J. Michael Witzel remarks elsewhere, ‘the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence’ (Witzel 2012: 33). Furthermore, archaeological dating techniques are not fine-grained enough to confirm that human activity in these caves was exactly contemporaneous with their inhabitation by bears, or their subsequent use by scavenging wolves. It is entirely plausible, for example, that the

remains of ritually slaughtered bears were not left in cave sites at all, but disposed of elsewhere – for example in trees or on specially erected poles (Hallowell 1926: 135-40). One of the reason for such ritual actions was precisely to prevent the remains being scavenged by other animals, which was deemed to be offensive to a bear's spirit (1926: 136). Lord *et al.* assign a natural death during hibernation as the cause for the examples previously cited (Lord *et al.* 2007: 681), and I have been unable to ascertain if bear ceremonialism – as practised in the historical period – extends to the special treatment of animals *not* specifically killed by hunters. Ultimately, therefore, the extant LUP remains in Britain are ambiguous in that they neither refute nor prove the existence of bear ceremonialism.

Looking further afield, however, there is evidence of the use of ochre applied to the 'head and paw regions' of bears found in Upper Palaeolithic Belgian caves (Germonpré & Hämäläinen 2007: 20). The authors confirm that such treatment of ursine remains have their parallels in ethnographic evidence, and Hallowell also confirms the use of ochre in historical ursine ritual contexts (Hallowell 1926: 70 n281, 76, 138) as well as the occasional use of caves to deposit remains (1926: 78). Germonpré & Hämäläinen's study covers the periods c. 26,000 BP (Goyet Cave) to 12,850 BP (Trou de Chaleux Cave), suggesting a continuity of practice over several millennia in which bears were treated as *extraordinary* animals.

Given that genetic evidence clearly demonstrates LUP proto-British populations as deriving from continental Europe (Oppenheimer 2007), and that the Creswellian can be thought of as part of the broader European Magdalenian culture (Pettitt *et al.* 2012), it follows that they were inheritors of a cultural apparatus that included 'proto bear-ceremonialism' (Germonpré & Hämäläinen 2007), as well as significant attitudes towards other animals such as the mammoth (Aldhouse-Green 2000). Indeed,

Germonpré & Hämäläinen aver that many of the Late-glacial fauna would have had ‘significant symbolic value’ to Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers (Germonpré & Hämäläinen 2007: 3). When this evidence is tallied with artistic representations of animals, such as the incredible zoomorphic sculptures of felid/human hybrids from Hohle Fels and Hohlenstein-Stadel, c. 40kya, it reveals significant time-depth to the central role that animals played in human imaginative life. For the purposes of *North of Here*, it is perhaps immaterial where or when such ontological orientations began. It is simply enough to say that they were in place, and that their traces – illuminated through ethnographic analogy – can be found in the rituals and practices of later Indigenous cultures.

A1.16. Shamanism

The therianthropy suggested by hybrid human-animal figures such as those already mentioned, as well painted examples like the so-called Trois-Frères ‘sorcerer’, has led some scholars to infer shamanist beliefs and practices in Palaeolithic peoples (*sensu* Vitebsky 2000: 57). A core shamanistic belief is that every *person* in the world, including ‘animals, trees, streams, mountains, heavenly bodies, even man-made objects like knives and drums’ have their analogue in the spirit world (Vitebsky 2000: 58), and that in an inherently social, intersubjective cosmos, these spirits actively affect events in ordinary reality – events that involve human beings. Moreover, this spiritual dimension of reality is not conveniently accessible by ordinary people – it requires a ritual specialist, a shaman, who accesses it through trance-induced altered states of consciousness. Trance can be attained in different ways, including psychoactive drugs, fatigue, sensory deprivation, intense concentration, auditory driving, migraine, schizophrenia, hyperventilation and rhythmic movement (Lewis-Williams and Dowson

1988: 202). Auditory driving, along with rhythmic movement, in the form of a shamanic dance using a drum, is a key method employed in circumpolar worlds, as evinced by rock carvings in Siberia that are several thousand years old and ‘show recognizable modern Siberian shaman’s costumes, complete with reindeer-antler helmets and drums stretched over a distinctive style of wooden framework’ (Vitebsky 2000: 57).

Crucial to the shamanic world-view is the concept of a ‘tiered cosmos’ in which the ordinary physical reality is often perceived to occupy a middle position, with multiple layers both above and below that house the spirits of various agencies, including the living and the dead (Anisimov 1963: 165). Once the state of altered consciousness is achieved, a key shamanic process is ‘soul flight’, during which the practitioner journeys through the different layers of the cosmos in order to aid the living, usually by negotiating with, or fighting, an other-than-human entity:

In many societies the shaman’s journey across the landscape or the sea echoes the movements and experiences of hunters but also enlarges and intensifies them. Just as the hunter may try to share the mentality and being of his quarry by dressing in its skins and smelling, calling and moving like an animal, so the shaman may undertake a soul flight in order to locate game animals. But the shaman may also go further and experience turning into an animal, possibly even living for a while as a member of that animal’s community and then using this knowledge to encourage members of the species to give themselves up to the community’s hunters, or to become the shaman’s own spirit helper.

(Vitebsky 2000: 57)

Studies have been made of subjects undergoing altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988), wherein certain, uniformly experienced neurological ‘entoptic’ phenomena have been observed – specifically ‘phosphenes’ and ‘form

constants' (1988: 202), which manifest as various patterns:

- (1) a basic grid and its development in a lattice and expanding hexagon pattern,
- (2) sets of parallel lines, (3) dots and short flecks, (4) zigzag lines crossing the field of vision (reported by some subjects as angular, by others as undulating),
- (5) nested catenary curves (in a developed form the outer arc comprises flickering zigzags), and (6) filigree or thin meandering lines.

(1988: 203)

Lewis-Williams and Dowson contend that these simple, ephemeral patterns, experienced during trance, are reproduced in various examples of Upper Palaeolithic parietal art, and thus demonstrate the deep history of shamanism – and trance – in world culture. Their argument is founded on historic examples of cave art that exhibit this phenomena by the San people of South Africa, whose shaman (‘*n/umk”au*’) entered trance to, among other things, cure the sick, make rain and control animals (1988: 204-5). The parietal art from Late-glacial Britain, discovered in 2003 at Church Hole and Robin Hood caves (Creswell Crags) comprises ‘representations of a deer, highly stylised females or birds and vulvae [...] engraved into the bedrock’ (Pike *et al.* 2005: 1649), although there is also a singular series of nine vertical marks in parallel, which could correspond with category 2 of the entoptic phenomena identified by Lewis-Williams and Dowson. Criticisms of this approach have included the observation that the aforementioned six basic categories of shapes cover nearly all the possibilities for non-figurative art, which therefore *requires* them to be present at least *somewhere* in Palaeolithic mark-making (Bahn *in* Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1998: 217). It is therefore rather surprising to discover that Palaeolithic art specialist Genevieve von Petzinger finds only three sites that contain a convincing amalgam of symbols – Chauvet, Pech-Merle and Le Trois-Frères – convincing because they contain five of the

six basic signs in combination with a hybrid animal-human representation (von Petzinger 2016: 258). Clearly von Petzinger is rather exacting in what she considered necessary evidence – she notes, for example, that sets of parallel lines (as per Church Hole Cave) occur in 60 percent of the sites overall. It must also be noted that even the critics of Lewis-Williams and Dowson acknowledge, as per E.J. Michael Witzel, that the *absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence*, and that ‘most scholars would agree that shamanism and hallucination ... probably played a role in this period in Eurasia’ (Bahn in Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1998: 217-8; *sensu* von Petzinger 2016: 82). This is highly relevant for *North of Here*, because the admittance of proto-shamanism in the LUP generates a significant metaphysical framework for creative exploration.

An element of shamanic culture that may shed light on *ritual discard* – as evidenced in the archaeological record – is the process of initiation, with its emphasis on transformation and rebirth. According to Vitebsky, humans rarely elect to be shamans, but are ‘chosen by the spirits themselves to serve them’ (Vitebsky 2000: 60). The young candidate is often made aware by the choosing spirit through dreams, and can be tormented and even driven insane by visions in which they are dismembered and devoured by spirit animals (2000: 60). The novitiate is *stalked* by the spirit until they submit, which, of course, echoes the *pursuit* and *consent* that is vital in animic hunter-hunted dynamics. These visions prefigure the ordeal of transformation that the prospective shaman will undergo as part of their initiation, wherein they are ‘dismembered and reassembled as someone greater and more complex than before’ (2000: 60). Thus the shaman, as spiritual overseer of a group, has endured what each animal goes through in being hunted and butchered. I would argue that the reciprocity at the core of circumpolar ontologies is founded on this singular destructive-regenerative

experience. As the other-than-human spirits disarticulated but then *restored* the shaman's body, so must the hunters restore the animal's body after it is butchered. Ritual discard, in which the animal's bones are ceremonially disposed of in a way that prevents them being scavenged, is thus thought to effect that restoration. The worlds of animals and humans are therefore shown to be strangely mirrored and intractably co-dependent.

The initiation experiences of shamans reflect the process of butchery in stunning detail:

A naked man was sitting there fanning the fire with bellows. Above the fire hung an enormous cauldron as big as half the earth. When he saw me the naked man brought out a pair of tongs the size of a tent and took hold of me. He took my head and cut it off, and then sliced my body into little pieces and put them in the cauldron. There he boiled my body for three years.

(2000: 60-1)

This out-of-body form of self-witnessing can be seen to be analogous to an animal's posthumous *latent sentience*, as characterised by Hill (2011: 409). The killing of animals is – for a group's shaman – an emphatic reminder of the ordeal of their shamanic initiation; of death, butchery and – importantly – reconstitution. The *creativity* bound up in Ingold's *animic* characterisation of death-giving is therefore not simply the reflection of a belief in cycles of animal reincarnation; it is also emblematic of the shaman's psychological death and rebirth. Human and other-than-human lives are inextricably imbricated. When thinking about the Upper Palaeolithic, could the use of ochre, as found on bear remains in Belgium (Germonpré & Hämmäläinen 2007), symbolise the bloody compact between human and animal – the destructive-regenerative exchange that is thought vital to the continued flow of life energy in circumpolar ontologies?

A1.17. Masks

Further insights into ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’, the ‘masked human figure’ (Armstrong 1929: 28) found at the LUP Creswell Crags complex, can be obtained by looking through the prism of circumpolar ontologies, and of shamanism in particular. A somewhat similar figure from the caves of Magdalenian France is useful in this respect. ‘He’ is crudely drawn, wears ‘a bird mask’, and has an ‘erect penis’ (Halifax 1979: 17). Halifax argues that both the mask and erection identify him as a (Palaeolithic) shaman who is undergoing trance. If Halifax is right, then Armstrong’s original characterisation of ‘Pin Hole Cave Man’ as ‘a masked human figure in the act of dancing a ceremonial dance’ (Armstrong 1929: 28) is a perceptive one. Dance, or ‘rhythmic movement’ (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988: 202) is indeed one of the ways in which trance is achieved; and Witzel, in arguing for a truly ancient ‘Pan Gaeian’ version of shamanism, avers that ‘ecstatic dancing’ was within their repertoire, but that ‘shamanistic drumming’ was not (Witzel 2012: 382).

One of the key functions of the shaman’s role whilst experiencing trance is to negotiate with those spirits who represent certain diseases, or who have been offended by human actions, or who are simply malevolent in their disposition towards humanity. The shaman rarely enters into such negotiations alone, as there are various allies who may be called upon. In this context, the mask’s function is not one of concealment or transformation, but one of *summoning* (Hultkrantz 1967: 100). According to Hultkrantz, this also extends to wearing ‘dresses and costumes alluding to the guardian spirit’ (1967: 101). Such practice, he asserts, equally obtains for the Siberian shaman as it does for North American medicine-men such as the Iroquois and Tlingit. Hultkrantz goes on to cite Krause’s (1956) observation that, on seeing the spirit, the shaman may enter into ‘a wild dance around the fire’ (1967: 100), which would seem to correlate well with

Armstrong's characterisation of 'Pin Hole Cave Man'. Clearly the latter had consulted ethnographic works in deriving his hypothesis.

The use of masks in circumpolar cultures is not limited to the shamanic practitioner, although in many instances their broader employment is mediated by the shaman's experiences. One such example is the Kelek, or masked dance of the Yup'ik; an Eskimo people from Alaska. In this ceremony, the spirits that are part of the shaman's private visions are invited into the broader human world; and the mask therefore has the function of making them visible (Fienup-Riordan 1994: 315). Kelek masks are commissioned by the shaman for the dance, and participants in the Kelek believe that these masks grant them supernatural vision (1994: 216). Each mask-wearer looking through its eye-holes sees other masked figures dancing. They are momentarily given access to the shaman's realm; 'eyes into a world beyond the mundane' (1994: 316). Dances such as the Kelek can be seen as a way of promoting social and spiritual integration; between the shaman and the broader social group, and also between the human and other-than-human.

A1.18. The Shamanistic Tree

The cosmological idea of three worlds – upper, middle and lower – is common to circumpolar cultures. In some, such as that of the Evenks of Siberia, these three worlds 'are all alike, as the upper and lower worlds are copies of the middle one, the earth' (Vasilevich 1963: 48). These worlds are nevertheless connected by the concept of a *shamanistic tree* whose roots are in the lower world, and whose topmost branches are in the upper world (Anisimov 1963: 88). This tree forms the 'road from one world to another' along which, through trance, the shaman may travel (1963: 96). Witzel argues that this tree is an analogue for the human spinal column, through which shamanic

‘heat’ uncoils and rises upwards during trance:

Clearly the parallelism between the internal movement up the spine and the external one by flight – using the rainbow snake, a bird, or another animal – constitutes a very old concept that must go back to Gondwana times, c. 65kya; in Siberian shamanism it is substituted by climbing the (world) tree.

(Witzel 2012: 387)

Witzel’s assertion of the extreme old age of this phenomena therefore makes it highly relevant when thinking about LUP proto-shamanism. Returning to Siberian analogues, according to Anisimov, each clan has its *own* tree:

The concepts of the fate and life of the clan and of the welfare of the clansmen are connected with this clan tree; the clan tree is the dwelling-place of the souls of clansmen, who, according to one variant, live in it in the form of small birds and feed on its buds, or according to another, live in a special clan nest. The clan souls form, as it were, one clan tree, the collective soul of the clan.

(Anisimov 1963: 96)

It is worth noting in passing that this connection between human *soul-birds* and the collective *soul-tree* is somewhat analogous to concepts of individual animal souls and a collective animal soul or *master*. In other Siberian shamanic traditions, there is a tree called ‘Tuuru’ (possibly the one-in-the-same clan tree) in which initiate shamans psychically live before *fledging*. ‘The higher the nest is placed in this tree, the stronger the shaman will be who is raised in it, the more will he know, and the further he will see’ (Campbell *in* Halifax 1979: 17). Halifax identifies this as the *World Tree*; the ‘axis of the world’ (1979: 15), which has a much wider currency in global mythology than the circumpolar region, including the Eddic Yggdrasil and Vedic Plaksa tree (Witzel 2012: 133). It should be noted that Witzel’s use of brackets in conflating the shamanistic and

‘(world) tree’ (Witzel 2012: 383) seem to indicate equivocation, and indeed it is difficult to extricate the *shamanistic*- and *world*-trees from each other. To further complicate the issue, there is another related concept that is of particular relevance to *North of Here*: the *world pole* or *pillar*.

A1.19. The World Pole or Pillar

Witzel identifies both the world tree and pole/pillar as emanating from an original mythological source, namely the creation myth in which the sky and the earth emerge lying flat, such that nothing can exist between them. This requires a means of prising – and keeping – them apart: a so-called ‘prop’ (2012: 131), which may manifest as a tree, pole, pillar, mountain or giant. This function is even attributed to the Milky Way by some cultures.

Åke Hultkrantz argues that this function of supporting the sky is perceived as increasingly necessary the further north an Indigenous group resides, due to the ‘vastness of the open sky in the desolate Arctic regions’ (Hultkrantz 1996: 36). Needless to say, the lack of trees in the tundric Late-glacial Britain would reveal a suitably open and panoramic night-time sky. Added to this, Hultkrantz cites Müller (1982) in arguing that the eminently observable ‘sharply vertical, celestial axis’ about the polar star readily suggests the idea of a ‘heavenly post’ (1996: 37) in northern regions. In other words, the nightly rotation of the heavens about the North Star plays directly to the idea of a vertical mythological prop or axle necessary to facilitate such motion. When thinking about this idea for the LUP, it is worth mentioning that a different pole star than the current one, Polaris, would have presided. This is due to a phenomenon known as *axial precession*, whereby the earth rotates on its polar axis once every 25,772 years, with the terrestrial effect of the heavens seeming to cycle through a host of different

pole stars. The following table lists eight significant stars in the sequence, with their dates rounded to the nearest millennia:

α umi	Alpha Ursae Minoris (Polaris)	0/26,000 BP
α dra	Alpha Draconis (Thuban)	5,000 BP
τ her	Tau Herculis	10,000 BP
α lyr	Alpha Lyrae (Vega)	14,000 BP
δ cyg	Delta Cygni	16,000 BP
α cygni	Alpha Cygni (Deneb)	18,000 BP
α cep	Alpha Cephei (Alderamin)	21,000 BP
γ cep	Gamma Cephei (Errai)	24,000 BP

As can be seen, during the LGM (27,000 – 21,000 years BP (Chiverrell & Thomas 2010: 535)), Polaris will have been followed by Errai, Alderamin and Deneb, and the Late-glacial would have featured Delta Cygni followed by Vega. Both Vega and Deneb are large magnitude stars; Vega in particular is the fifth brightest star in the sky, and the second brightest that is visible in the north; meaning that c. 14,000 BP, in the early Late-glacial, the ‘pole star’ would have been an unmissable feature of the night sky.

A1.20. Summary

The foregoing discussion synthesises evidence and theory from the fields of environmental science and archaeology in order to paint a broad, general picture of Late-glacial Britain, including its flora and fauna. It then goes on to contextualise the LUP return of humans with the most appropriate available ethnographic data drawn from the circumpolar regions. The necessity of conducting this research prior to the commencement of creative writing cannot be understated. The environmental and archaeological information grounds the poetic imagination in an authentic, real-world

setting. The anthropological material provides invaluable insight into northern hunter-gatherer ontologies, thereby facilitating further creative thought about the lifeways and cosmogonies of LUP peoples.

Recalling my earlier discussion of the shamanistic tree, the comparative mythographer Joseph Campbell made the following observation: ‘The higher the nest is placed in this tree, the stronger the shaman will be who is raised in it, the more will he know, and the further he will see’ (Campbell *in* Halifax 1979: 17). This seems to me to be an apt metaphor for my own creative process during this programme of PhD study: the construction of a scholarly edifice from which to view the distant past, and then to spring forth from, in poetic flight. Pragmatically speaking, the bulk of this research material has been deemed too large to include within the body of the thesis itself, and so a highly condensed ‘digest’ has been written that introduces the key themes explored within the creative writing itself. Nevertheless, this more substantive commentary has been appended to the work, to provide a fully elaborated and discursive context for the poetry.

A2. Glossary

Allerød A brief warm climatic fluctuation occurring during the Late-glacial period (See *Table 1* [406]).

Aurignacian An archaeological division of the Early Upper Palaeolithic occurring c. 40,700 – 30,700 Cal BP.⁵³ Named after the *Aurinac* site in France.

BP Before Present. Logically, if somewhat counter-intuitively, standard practice dictates that BP cannot literally mean ‘before the present day’, as the present is continually changing. It is therefore commonly agreed to mean before the year 1950, a date representing the inception of the radio-carbon dating technique.

Bølling A brief warm climatic fluctuation occurring during the Late-glacial period (See *Table 1*).

Cal Calibrated. Radiocarbon ‘years’ are not exactly equivalent to solar years, as there are fluctuations in the amounts of Carbon-14 isotopes in the atmosphere over the course of millennia. Calibration is achieved by applying radiocarbon dating to organic material of known age – usually extremely long-lived bristlecone pine or coral samples. The resulting ‘calibration curves’ – a plot-line of the difference between the actual age and radiocarbon age – can then be used to correct the radiocarbon dates obtained from organic material of unknown age.

Devensian The name in Britain for the most recent period of glaciation (called the Weichselian in Europe, see *Table 1*).

Glaciation A cold stage during an ice age characterised by the growth of glaciers.

Interstadial A period of colder climate, in contrast to a *stadial*.

⁵³ Source: A. Lang and P. Preston, ‘The Palaeolithic Period’, *The Handbook of British Archaeology* (2008: 18)

Last Glacial Maximum The period during the most recent *glaciation* during which ice sheets were at their maximum extent (See *Table 1*).

Late-glacial The period of climatic amelioration following the *Last Glacial Maximum*, and preceding the Post-glacial period (See *Table 1*).

Late-Upper Palaeolithic The final stage of the ‘Old Stone Age’ or Palaeolithic, prior to the Mesolithic, approximately concurrent with the *Windermere Interstadial* and *Loch-Lomond Stadial* (See *Table 1*).

Loch-Lomond Stadial The name in Britain given to the third brief *stadial* period occurring during the climatic amelioration after the *Last Glacial Maximum*. Synchronous with the Younger Dryas (See *Table 1*).

Magdalenian An archaeological division of the Upper Palaeolithic occurring c. 16,500 – 10,500 *uncal* BP.⁵⁴ Named after the *La Madeleine* site in France.

Older Dryas Second brief cold period occurring during the climatic amelioration after the *Last Glacial Maximum* (See *Table 1*).

Oldest Dryas First brief cold period occurring during the climatic amelioration after the *Last Glacial Maximum*, characterised by the proliferation of *Dryas octopetala*, Eight-petal mountain avens, a cold-tolerant plant species (See *Table 1*).

Pioneer Vegetation Those species of plants to recolonise barren or disturbed environments. In the context of glaciology, pioneer vegetation is the first to return to a landscape after the retreat of ice sheets.

Quaternary The current and most recent period of the Cenozoic Era of geological time, commencing approximately 2.588 million years ago.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Source: Jochim *et. al.* 1999.

⁵⁵ Source: International Chronostratigraphic Chart, <http://www.stratigraphy.org/icschart/chronostratchart2013-01.pdf>. Accessed 27/03/20.

Stadial A period of warmer climate, in contrast to an *interstadial*.

Windermere Interstadial The name in Britain given to the warm phase following the *Last Glacial Maximum*, so called after evidence found at Windermere in northern England (See *Table 1*).

A3. Tables

In the interests of clarity the following tables have been split across two facing pages.

Table 1: Time Divisions

<i>Time (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Time (Cal) BP</i>	<i>Epoch</i>	<i>Glacial Stage</i>	<i>Stadial (S) / Interstadial (I)</i>
9000	10000	Holocene	Flandrian	
10000	11700			
11000	12900	Pleistocene	(Late) Devensian	Loch-Lomond (S)
12000	13800			Windermere (I)
13000	15400			
14000			Devensian (UK) / Weichselian (N. Europe)	Dimlington (S)
15000				
16000	19000			
17000				
18000				
19000				
20000				
21000				
22000	25000			
23000				
24000				
25000	29500			

Table 1: Time Divisions (cont.)			
<i>Time (Cal) BP</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Biostratigraphy</i>	<i>Archaeology</i>
10000	Post-glacial		Mesolithic
11700			
12900	Late-glacial	Younger Dryas	Late-Upper Palaeolithic
13800		Allerød Older Dryas	
15400		Bølling	
	^ Last Glacial Maximum v	Oldest Dryas	Upper Palaeolithic
19000			
25000			
29500			

Adapted from Preston, 2008. 'The Mesolithic Period', *The Handbook of British Archaeology* (Eds. Roy and Lesley Adkins and Victoria Leitch).

Table 2: A Vegetative Chronology for North-West Britain

<i>Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Stadial / Interstadial</i>	<i>Pollen Zone</i>	<i>Cumbrian Zone</i>	<i>Southern Lake District</i>
(Boreal) 9000		V1c V1b V1a	C10	
(Boreal)		V	C9	
(Pre-Boreal) 10000		IV		
(Dryas 3 / Younger Dryas)	Loch Lomond Stadial	III	C8	<i>Artemisia</i> (V7) <i>Salix herbacea</i>
11000	Windermere Interstadial		C7	<i>Empetrum</i> (V6)
Allerød 12000		II	C6 C5	<i>Koenigia</i> Plants of open soils Reduction in birch trees (V5) <i>Betula pendula</i> (V4ii) <i>Betula pubescens</i>
(Dryas 2 / Older Dryas) (Bolling) 13000		Ic Ib Ia	C4	<i>Juniper</i> (V4i)

Table 2: A Vegetative Chronology (cont.)				
<i>Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Mountainous Lake District</i>	<i>Cumbrian Lowlands</i>	<i>Greater Britain</i>	<i>Biome</i>
(Boreal) 9000			Pine Hazel	Boreal Forest
(Boreal)			Hazel Birch Pine	
(Pre-Boreal) 10000			Birch Pine	Park Tundra
(Dryas 3 / Younger Dryas)	<i>Artemisia</i> (V7)	<i>Artemisia</i> (V7)	<i>Salix herbacea</i>	Tundra
11000	<i>Empetrum</i> (V6)	Breakdown of plant communities		
Allerød 12000	Plants of open soils, incl. <i>Lycop. selago</i> (V5) Tree birches (V4ii) Juniper	<i>Betula pendula</i> <i>Betula pubescens</i> (V5) <i>Betula pubescens</i> (V4ii)	Birch	Park Tundra
(Dryas 2 / Older Dryas) (Bolling) 13000	<i>Lycop. selago</i> <i>Betula nana</i> (V4ib) Juniper (V4ia)	<i>Betula pubescens</i> <i>Gramineae</i> (V4i)	<i>Salix herbacea</i>	Shrub Tundra

Table 2: A Vegetative Chronology (cont.)

<i>Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Stadial / Interstadial</i>	<i>Pollen Zone</i>	<i>Cumbrian Zone</i>	<i>Southern Lake District</i>
(Dryas 1 / Oldest Dryas) 14000	Windermere Interstadial	1a		Pioneer Vegetation (V3)
			C1-3	Pioneer Vegetation + <i>Betula nana</i> + herbs (V2)
				Pioneer Vegetation (V1)
15000				Full Glacial

Table 2: A Vegetative Chronology (cont.)				
<i>Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Mountainous Lake District</i>	<i>Cumbrian Lowlands</i>	<i>Greater Britain</i>	<i>Biome</i>
(Dryas 1 / Oldest Dryas) 14000				
				Glacial / Peri-glacial
15000	Full Glacial with varved clays forming in lakes			

Adapted from Pennington, 1970. 'Vegetation History In The North-West Of England: A Regional Synthesis', *Studies In The Vegetational History Of The British Isles*, ed. by D. Walker and R.G. West (Cambridge University Press).

As dates are *uncal* BP, refer to *Table 1* for a sense of the appropriate *cal* BP date, and therefore a real-world chronology.

Table 3: A Vegetative Chronology Of The Late-Glacial Period In Cumbria

<i>Chronozone (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Blelham Bog and L.W.B. Windermere (436m o.d.)</i>	<i>Burnmoor (254m o.d.)</i>
10000 Younger Dryas	<i>Juniperus</i> <i>Gramineae-herbs</i> <i>Artemisia-Rumex</i> <i>Rumex-Artemisia</i>	<i>Juniperus</i> <i>Artemisia- Empetrum- Compositae</i> <i>Rumex-Artemisia</i>
11000 Allerød	<i>Cyperaceae- Selaginella</i> <i>Betula- Juniperus- Filipendula</i>	<i>Cyperaceae- Rumex</i> <i>Betula- Juniperus- Filipendula</i>
11800	<i>Betula-Rumex</i>	<i>Betula-Rumex-Empetrum</i>
12000	<i>Betula</i>	<i>Betula</i>
Bølling	<i>Juniperus</i>	<i>Juniperus-Rumex</i>
13000	<i>Rumex- Gramineae- Rubiaceae- Artemisia</i> <i>Salix herbecea- Cyperaceae</i> laminated clay	<i>Rumex- Salix spp.</i> Secondary pollen + <i>Pinus</i> laminated clay

As dates are *uncal* BP, refer to *Table 1* for a sense of the appropriate *cal* BP date, and therefore a real-world chronology.

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Binomial</i>	<i>Common (C) / Rare (R)</i>	<i>Earliest Late- / Post-glacial Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Location</i>
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	R	19950 (12400)	Castlepook Cave, Cork (Gough's Cave, Somerset)
Aurochs	<i>Bos primigenius</i>		12800 – 11900	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	C		
Bank vole	<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>			
Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>		12800 – 11900	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Bison	<i>Bison priscus</i>			
Brown bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	C	14275	Kent's Cavern, Devon
Common shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>		13000 – 12500	Cat Hole, Glamorgan
Dormouse	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>			
Elk	<i>Alces alces</i>	R	13250 – 12000	High Furlong, Lancashire
Field vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>			
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>			
Irish elk	<i>Megaloceros giganteus</i>	C	15170 (12850)	Ballybetagh, Dublin (Brandesburton, Yorkshire)
Lynx	<i>Lynx lynx</i>	C	12400	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Mole	<i>Talpa europaea</i>		<i>Post-glacial</i>	
Mountain hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	C	12600 – 12290	Robin Hood Cave, Derbyshire

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula (cont.)

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Source (Earliest)</i>	<i>Extinction Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Source (Extinction)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Arctic Fox	Hist.B.M. 21 (43)	N/A		
Aurochs	Hist.B.M. 33	c. 3245	Hand.B.M. 574	
Badger		N/A		Present from 250 <i>kya</i> (Hand.B.M. 419)
Bank vole		N/A		
Beaver	Hist.B.M. 33	c. 1200 AD	Hand.B.M. 572	Date inferred from context.
Bison		<10000	Hand.B.M. 572	
Brown bear	Hist.B.M. 43	c. 1000 AD	Hand.B.M. 573	
Common shrew	Hand.B.M. 54	N/A		
Dormouse		N/A		
Elk	Hist.B.M. 35	3925	Hist.B.M. 75	Present 31000 BP at Kent's Cavern (Hand.B.M. 574).
Field vole		N/A		
Hedgehog		N/A		
Irish elk	Hist.B.M. 38 (36)	10600	Hist.B.M. 59	
Lynx	Hist.B.M. 43	1770	Hist.B.M. 75	Prob. extinct by early Mesolithic. The 1770 BP date is surely an outlier.
Mole	Hand.B.M. 46	N/A		
Mountain hare	Hist.B.M. 41	N/A		Present from 75 <i>kya</i> (Hand.B.M. 164).

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula (cont.)

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Binomial</i>	<i>Common (C) / Rare (R) / Extremely Rare (XR)</i>	<i>Earliest Late- / Post-glacial Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Location</i>
Musk ox	<i>Ovibos moschatus</i>	XR	18213 ±310	Northants
Norway lemming	<i>Lemmus lemmus</i>	C	12800 – 11900	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>			
Pygmy shrew	<i>Sorex minutus</i>		Probably Post-glacial	
Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>		10050	
Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		12800 – 11900 (12530)	Gough's Cave, Somerset (Misbourne, Bucks)
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		12800 – 11900	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>			
Reindeer (caribou)	<i>Rangifer tarandus</i>	C	13050 (19500)	Pin Hole Cave, Derbyshire
Roe deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>			
Sabre-toothed cat	<i>Homotherium latidens</i>	R	12600 – 12290	Robin Hood Cave, Derbyshire
Saiga antelope	<i>Saiga tatarica</i>		12380 ±160	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Steppe pika	<i>Ochotona pusilla</i>		10300	Soldier's Hole, Somerset
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminia</i>			
Tarpan (wild horse)	<i>Equus ferus ferus</i>	C	12800 – 11900 (19500)	Gough's Cave, Somerset (Barnwell Station, Cambridgeshire)

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula (cont.)				
<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Source (Earliest)</i>	<i>Extinction Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Source (Extinction)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Musk ox	Hand.B.M. 572	18213 ±310	Hand.B.M. 572	
Norway lemming	Hist.B.M. 33			Date inferred from context.
Otter		N/A		
Pygmy shrew	Hand.B.M. 61	N/A		Present from 2 mya. (Hand.B.M. 61)
Pine marten	Hand.B.M. 371	N/A		
Red deer	Hist.B.M. 33 (39)	N/A		
Red fox	Hist.B.M. 33	N/A		Date inferred from context.
Red squirrel		N/A		
Reindeer (caribou)	Hist.B.M. 33 (39)	9700 [England] (8300 [Scotland])	Hand.B.A. 25 (Hand.B.M. 574)	Present from c. 40,000 BP. (Hand.B.M. 574)
Roe deer		N/A		
Sabre-toothed cat	Hist.B.M. 44	Late-glacial	Hist.B.M. 44	Date inferred from context.
Saiga antelope	Hand.B.M. 572	<10000	Hand.B.M. 572	
Steppe pika	Hist.B.M. 51	<10000	Hand.B.M. 572	
Stoat		N/A		
Tarpan (wild horse)	Hist.B.M. 33 (39)	c. 9770	Hand.B.M. 573	

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula (cont.)

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Binomial</i>	<i>Common (C) / Rare (R) / Extremely Rare (XR)</i>	<i>Earliest Late- / Post-glacial Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Location</i>
Water shrew	<i>Neomys fodiens</i>			
Water vole	<i>Arvicola terrestris</i>		12800 – 11900	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>			
Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		Post-glacial	
Wild cat	<i>Felix sylvestris</i>		Post-glacial	
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>		12400	Gough's Cave, Somerset
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>		Late-glacial or Younger Dryas	Chelm's Combe, Somerset
Wood mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>			
Woolly mammoth	<i>Mammuthus primigenius</i>		12700 ±160 (19500)	Condover, Shropshire (Barnwell Station, Cambridgeshire)

Table 4: Late- and Post-glacial Fauna of the British Peninsula (cont.)				
<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Source (Earliest)</i>	<i>Extinction Date (Uncal) BP</i>	<i>Source (Extinction)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Water shrew		N/A		
Water vole	Hist.B.M. 33	N/A		Date inferred from context.
		N/A		
Wild boar	Hand.B.M. 574	c. 1700 AD	Hand.B.M. 574	
Wild cat	Hand.B.M. 434	N/A		Extinct from England c. 1880. Small populations in N Scotland.
Wolf	Hist.B.M. 43	c. 1500 AD	Hand.B.M. 573	
Wolverine	Hist.B.M. 43	Unknown		
Wood mouse		N/A		
Woolly mammoth	Hand.B.M. 572 (Hist.B.M. 23)	c. 12000	Hist.B.M. 58	19500 date derived from context (Hist.B.M. 23).

Compiled from the following sources:

Hist.B.M. *The History of British Mammals*, Derek Yalden, 1999

Hand.B.A. *Handbook of British Archaeology*, Adkins & Leitch, 2008

Hand.B.M. *Handbook of British Mammals*, Corbet & Harris, 1991

Dates are *uncal* BP, unless otherwise stated. Calibrated dates could not be obtained, as no \pm error range is stated in the sources. Where two dates are given, and the second is in parenthesis, this reflects variant information, usually from two different sources. Refer to *Table 1* for a sense of how *uncal* dates compare to *cal* dates.

Table 5: Sites and Dates for Fossil Evidence for the Late-Glacial Re-occupation of the British Isles

<i>Site</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates (Uncal) BP</i>	
		<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>
Gough's Cave	Somerset	12530 ±150	9080 ±150
Creswell Crag:	Derbyshire		
Robin Hood's Cave		12600 ±170	10390 ±90
Pin Hole Cave		12350 ±120	-
Church Hole Cave		12240 ±150	-
Mother Grundy's Parlour		12190 ±140	6705 ±140
Aveline's Hole	Somerset	12380 ±130	8740 ±100
Sun Hole	Somerset	12378 ±150	12210 ±160
Three Holes Cave	Devon	12350 ±160	11520 ±150
Kent's Cavern	Devon	12320 ±130	8070 ±90
King Arthur's Cave	Herefordshire	12210 ±120	12120 ±120
Fox Hole Cave	Derbyshire	12000 ±120	11970 ±120
Leman & Ower Banks Point	North Sea	11740 ±150	-
Porth Y Waen	Shropshire	11390 ±120	-
Dowel Hall Cave	Derbyshire	11200 ±120	-
Sproughton	Suffolk	10910 ±150	10700 ±160
Elder Bush Cave	Staffordshire	10600 ±110	9000 ±130
Ossom's Cave	Staffordshire	10590 ±70	-
Flixton	Yorkshire	10413 ±210	-

Table 5: Sites and Dates for Fossil Evidence for the Late-Glacial Re-occupation of the British Isles (cont.)

<i>Site</i>	<i>Dates (Cal) BP</i>		<i>Notes</i>
	<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>	
Gough's Cave	15276 – 14157	10651 – 9724	Human bone, c. 14,700 BP. Carefully incised reindeer and mountain hare bones.
Robin Hood's Cave	15478 – 14187	12618 – 11891	Engraving of a triangular 'vulva' typical of the Upper Palaeolithic period. Horse's head engraved on bone.
Pin Hole Cave	14966 – 14061	-	Undated anthropomorphic figure engraved on woolly rhinoceros bone.
Church Hole Cave	14902 – 13802	-	Engraving of deer, vertical lines and stylised figures. Unknown bone with 19 v-shaped notches.
Mother Grundy's Parlour	14846 – 13789	7842 – 7324	
Aveline's Hole	15018 – 14065	10149 – 9540	
Sun Hole	15091 – 14046	14921 – 13790	
Three Holes Cave	15101 – 13882	13745 – 13115	
Kent's Cavern	14991 – 14021	9271 – 8644	
King Arthur's Cave	14836 – 13799	14805 – 13616	
Fox Hole Cave	14146 – 13531	14097 – 13522	
Leman & Ower Banks Point	14014 – 13313	-	
Porth Y Waen	13487 – 13097	-	
Dowel Hall Cave	13318 – 12839	-	
Sproughton	13156 – 12627	13066 - 12102	
Elder Bush Cave	12758 – 12103	10496 – 9691	
Ossom's Cave	12734 – 12473	-	
Flixton	12751 – 11406	-	Location for the slightly later Mesolithic/Post-glacial site of Star Carr, finds from which include the red-deer frontlet 'headdresses'.

Table 5: Sites and Dates for Fossil Evidence for the Late-Glacial Re-occupation of the British Isles (cont.)

<i>Site</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates (Uncal) BP</i>	
		<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>
Thatcham	Berkshire	10365 ±170	6550 ±130
Earl's Barton	Northamptonshire	10320 ±150	9240 ±160
Messingham	Lincolnshire	10280 ±120	-
Three Ways Wharf	Greater London	10270 ±100	-
Inchnadamph	Sutherland	10080 ±70	-
Kendrick's Cave	Gwynedd	10000 ±200	-

Table 5: Sites and Dates for Fossil Evidence for the Late-Glacial Re-occupation of the British Isles (cont.)			
<i>Site</i>	<i>Dates (Cal) BP</i>		<i>Notes</i>
	<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>	
Thatcham	12720 – 11508	7669 – 7173	
Earl's Barton	12675 – 11411	11075 – 9961	
Messingham	12609 – 11411	-	
Three Ways Wharf	12585 – 11626	-	
Inchnadamph	11928 – 11326	-	
Kendrick's Cave	12470 – 10876	-	Geometrically engraved <i>Equus</i> mandible, nine perforated and incised ungulate teeth, six haematite-stained incised deer bones.

All **uncal** BP dates from Smith, Christopher, 1992, *Late Stone Age Hunters of the British Isles* (London: Routledge) pp. 183-189

All **cal** BP dates calculated using the OxCal Radiocarbon Dating Calibration System Version 4.4 (<https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>) using the 95.4% probability and the IntCal20 Curve. BP dates generated by adding 1950 to the cal BC dates generated by OxCal. Dates verified 21/09/2020.

Table 6: Sites and Dates for Evidence for the Late-Glacial Occupation of the NW England

<i>Site</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Dates (Uncal) BP</i>	
		<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>
Kinsey Cave	North Yorkshire	12535 \pm 55	11270 \pm 110
Victoria Cave	North Yorkshire	12490 \pm 50	10220 \pm 110
Poulton	Lancashire	12200 \pm 160	11665 \pm 140
Bart's Shelter	Cumbria	11600 \pm 70	-
Kents Bank Cave	Cumbria	11025 \pm 45	9100 \pm 35
Sewell's Cave	North Yorkshire	10810 \pm 50	10715 \pm 75
Kirkhead Cave	Cumbria	10700 \pm 200	
Lindale Low Caves	Cumbria	-	-
Blenkett Wood	Cumbria	-	-
Dog Holes	Lancashire	-	-
Merlewood Cave	Cumbria	-	-

Table 6: Sites and Dates for Evidence for the Late-Glacial Occupation of the NW England (cont.)			
<i>Site</i>	<i>Dates (Cal) BP</i>		<i>Notes</i>
	<i>Oldest</i>	<i>Most recent</i>	
Kinsey Cave	15127 – 14445	13406 – 12923	Earliest: bear skull. Most recent: reindeer antler artefact (Lord, <i>et al.</i> 2007)
Victoria Cave	15012 – 14332	12472 – 11404	Horse with cut marks: 12325 (±50) BP. Earliest: bear mandible. Most recent: reindeer antler point artefact (Lord, <i>et al.</i> 2007).
Poulton	14920 – 13783	13804 – 13193	Full elk skeleton with associated hunting projectiles (Hallam, <i>et al.</i> 1973: 110).
Bart's Shelter	13595 – 13318	-	80 LUP implements inc. shouldered point, reindeer & elk remains (Barrowclough 2010: 61). Elk dated but no indications of human butchery (Smith, <i>et al.</i> 2013: 542).
Kents Bank Cave	13081 – 12837	10375 – 10193	Datable elk, horse and human remains. Earliest: elk. Most recent: human (Smith, <i>et al.</i> 2013: 543).
Sewell's Cave	12833 – 12718	12818 – 12496	Earliest: horse tibia. Most recent: horse metatarsal (Lord, <i>et al.</i> 2007).
Kirkhead Cave	13084 – 12004	-	20 Federmesser flint blades (Smith <i>et al.</i> 2013: 542). Dated antler fragment (Salisbury 1992: 3).
Lindale Low Caves	-	-	14 intact 'LUP' flint tools. 'The most northerly Pleistocene exploitation site in Britain' (Salisbury 1992: 3).
Blenkett Wood	-	-	Possible LUP tools (Barrowclough 2010: 61).
Dog Hole	-	-	Human remains including skull of the (Mesolithic) Tilbury type. Late-glacial faunal assemblage including Irish elk, Siberian vole and Arctic lemming (Salisbury 1992: 1-2).
Merlewood Cave	-	-	'A number of human bones ... together with an extant faunal assemblage'. Undated. (Salisbury, 1992: 1)

All **uncal** BP dates are referenced in the notes.

All **cal** BP dates calculated using the OxCal Radiocarbon Dating Calibration System Version 4.4

(<https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal/OxCal.html>) using the 95.4% probability and the IntCal20 Curve. BP dates generated by adding 1950 to the cal BC dates generated by OxCal. Dates verified 21/09/2020.

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