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The New British Nature Writing: Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin's Ecological Archive

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the idea, as proposed in the Summer 2008 issue of *Granta*, that British nature writing is a new nature writing with a generation of writers who "share a sense that we are devouring our world, that there is simply no longer any natural landscape or ecosystem that is unchanged by humans[1]." Contemporary British nature writing is new in that it focuses on human ecology instead of natural ecology; that it focuses on the way in which humans affect nature and are affected by nature instead of the way in which non-human organisms relate to their environment. Thus, this new nature writing tends to focus on the traditional agrarian lifestyle that has been replaced by commercial agriculture, the mythical and spiritual relationship between British landscapes and people, and relationship between power, land, and struggle. The object of this thesis is to examine (1) the way in which Seamus Heaney's poetry addresses both the Northern Irish landscape and the global environment, (2) the possibility of contemporary British nonfiction, specifically that of Roger Deakin, to restore local identity and inspire action, and (3) the relation of memory to action, art to ethics. Through a close reading Seamus Heaney's poetry to-date through the theoretical lens of memory established by Pierre Nora and a reading of Roger Deakin's literary nonfiction through the lens of Heideggarian dwelling, I question the role literature plays in preserving and remembering active sites of ecological memory and in urging ethical action.

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[1] Cowley, Jason. "The New Nature Writing." *Granta* 102 (2008).

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

"I can't remember not ever having known/The immanent hydraulics of a land/Of *glar* and *glit* and floods at *dailigone*," Seamus Heaney writes in the poem "Fosterling" as he looks back on his first quarter-century of poetry (*Opened Ground*, Heaney 331). Landscape, the inescapable bogland of Ireland, vividly marks his poetry and serves as the medium through which Heaney approaches his family's, his country's, and his world's history. In much the same way, Roger Deakin's home, Walnut Tree Farm in Suffolk, England, grounds his literary exploration of Britain and the world. "While the rest of the world has been playing musical chairs all around me, I have stayed put in the same house for more than half of my life…I am located by it, just as Donne's lovers are the twin points of a compasses in his poem *A Valediction, Forbidding Mourning* (*Wildwood*, Deakin 3). There is the same distinct attachment, both literarily and physically to place in Deakin's writing as in Heaney's poetry. Just as Heaney finds his voice in the bog, Deakin finds his voice in Suffolk, in the landscape of his home. There is no Seamus Heaney, the poet, without the bog and there is no Roger Deakin, the writer, without Walnut Tree Farm. Landscape and language are inseparable in their works.

This inseparability of landscape from language in Heaney and Deakin's works is why I have chosen to view the two writers through the lens of ecocriticism. Much of ecocrciticism has lingered on this relationship between landscape and language in poetry and fiction. The genre of nonfiction, however, remains unexplored for both its rich

factual and figurative language, which is why I have included Roger Deakin's two works *Waterlog* and *Wildwood* in this thesis. In the case of American environmental nonfiction, apart from *Walden* and a few other works by Thoreau, "for all practical purposes nonfictional writing about nature scarcely exists from the standpoint of American literary studies, even though by any measure it has flourished for more than a century and has burgeoned vigorously in the nuclear age" (Buell, 8). To an even greater extent, studies of British environmental nonfiction, a genre that has flourished for centuries, essentially are nonexistent. An attempt to mine both poetry and environmental nonfiction for its literary and ecological wealth is needed in order to understand both contemporary ecocritical theory and the ecocritical cannon.

The Summer 2008 issue of *Granta* brought forth the idea of a "new nature writing," a British genre defined by both its "voice-driven, narratives told in the first person" and by its "experiment in forms: the field report, the essay, the memoir, the travelogue" (Cowley 10). Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin's works certainly fit this idea of a new nature writing. Both "have a genius for incorporating industrial and technological change into their versions of both nature and the picturesque," and both, through either poetry or nonfiction, explore the British landscape "where barely a patch of earth can be found that hasn't been adapted to a specific human use" (Raban 56). Through the genre of poetry, Heaney explores and relates County Derry, Northern Ireland, to a global readership. Poems like "Mossbawn" explore his childhood home, where "The tuck and frill/Of leaf-sprout is on the seed potatoes" (Heaney 94). Other poems relate political unrest to landscape, like "The Tollund Man." Deakin's essays explore the varied landscapes of Britain, from the Fens and its banks "contoured and

softened by reeds" where "a marsh harrier came over, its quiet, loping wings darkening the sky for a moment" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 62) to the "unruly trees of rosy-cheeked Robin pears" growing wild in the valley of the Wye (*Wildwood*, Deakin 126). In the midst of their descriptions of idyllic leaf sprout frills and low-flying birds, Deakin and Heaney do not ignore the presence of humans in their writing. Heaney's landscape is filled with turnip snedders and sloe gins, Deakin's with coppiced trees and Jaguar automobiles. What is genuinely new and different about their way of approaching the environment is that humans are not separate from nature. Instead, humans are part of nature. There is no divide between humans as creatures and marsh harriers as creatures; rather, it is human involvement within the landscape that defines the British landscape as such. The two writers choose to celebrate this involvement, thus redefining what nature writing is, as no longer the "lyrical pastoral tradition of the romantic wanderer" (Cowley 10), but a celebration of human ecology. Nature writing in this new sense is inseparable from political turmoil and human invention. Thus the question is not "are Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin British nature writers", but rather "how do we understand their kind of nature writing?" Through what theoretical and literary lens can the two writers be viewed?

The first question that must be addressed, however, is why Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin? Why a study of poetry and creative nonfiction instead a study of multiple writers within one genre—two poets or two nonfiction writers, two novelists or two dramatists? Both poetry and creative-nonfiction lack well-defined structure by which the genres can be held against, to either follow or break. Certainly the language poets of the 1960s and 1970s sought to break the referentiality of the poem by erasing the signifier-

signified relationship, by deconstructing the poem to a group of seemingly, or actually, unrelated words. These poets sought to eradicate meaning, in the traditional lyric sense, from poetry. In a way, these poets broke out from the framework of poetry. If, then, language poetry is considered a breaking away from poetry, then there must be an established poetry to break from. This traditional (Western) poetry can be loosely defined as lyric, epic, and dramatic. But within these traditional genres, poetry can take many forms from the sonnet to the pantoom to the prose poem. Poetry as such, especially after the entrance of language poetry and postmodern aesthetic, seems impossible to define. While meter and rhyme and images can and do play a large role in poetry, the permutations and variations of them and other poetic elements are endless. Poetry is a constantly evolving genre.

In much the same way, literary nonfiction does not have an overarching narrative structure. Literary nonfiction seeks to address factual narratives by means of literary devices and styles. It can include anything from the memoir to biography to personal essay, and like poetry, it thrives on the permutation and variation of these different genres. As genre of writing, it is relatively new. There is not a large pool of criticism to draw from when discussing literary nonfiction. In fact, the debate centered on literary nonfiction is in its status as "literary". This thesis, however, analyzes literary nonfiction based on the presupposed value of nonfiction as literary. I base my claim off of the literary theorist John M. Ellis' analysis of literary nonfiction: "Literary texts are not defined as those of a certain shape or structure, but as those pieces of language used in a certain way by the community" (Ellis 42).

Through the idea of literature as "pieces of language used in a certain way by the

community," I argue that poetry and literary nonfiction can and should be discussed on the same critical plane. Both poetry and nonfiction are pieces of language, and in their status as such, both poets and nonfiction writers face and respond to the literary crisis of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in their works. Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin's works are life-testimonies, works with the power to address not only the British environment, but also the reader, for "a 'life testimony' is not simply a testimony to a private life, but a point of conflation between text and life which can *penetrate us like an actual life*" (Felman 2). Heaney's poetry and Deakin's nonfiction testify not only to their lives—Heaney's autobiographical poems steeped in natural event and imagery, Deakin's first-person accounts of his encounters with the environment and society—but to something larger than their lives, the events at hand.

The second question is what is British nature writing, both historical and contemporary ("new"), and how are Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin British nature writers? Defined as such, environmental writing, or nature writing, explores the relationship between the nonhuman environment and the human environment of culture and society—either via a noninvolved voyeuristic eye toward the environment or an interconnected, ethical discussion of human involvement in a nonhuman sphere. The former suggests the writings of John Muir and other American writers focusing on the concept of the wilderness. The latter calls for the element of ethics and proposes that the natural world lies side-by-side with human agriculture and industry, that the two spheres cannot be separated and must be viewed as coexisting partners (i.e. human ecology). Much of modern environmentalism has arisen from this second framework, including the Americans Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Annie Dillard. As Buell suggests,

an "environmentally oriented work" includes all points of view from a literary framework that implicates human history in natural history to a non-anthropomorphic understanding of human accountability to the environment (Buell, 7).

Ecocriticism can be broadly defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. This relationship, however, can take many forms and carries with it varying connotations, depending on the text and the environment. While American ecocriticsm has thrived since the mid-twentieth century, the field of British ecocriticism is relatively new. British ecocriticism inherently draws from an older literary tradition than the American field and focuses on representations of the pastoral and densely populated urban areas. British literature of the past two hundred years, of course, has focused on the issues of industrialization and a rapidly urbanizing environment. American ecocriticism, on the other hand, can only draw from the American literature of the past few centuries. Frameworks central to environmentally oriented American literature include Western expansion, wilderness narratives as often viewed in mountainous landscapes, and regionally focused areas such as the New England of Thoreau and Emerson. The disparity between the social, political, and environmental histories of the two regions requires that British ecocriticism develop a cannon separate from American ecocriticism's. The themes of the two continents are so vastly different that it would be incredible to attempt to use only American ecocriticism to discuss British ecocritical and ecocentric writing. Instead, a strong British cultural and literary theory of the environment is needed to address British writing.

The pastoral heritage of British ecocriticism stems from both an ever-changing geologic history and a history of conquest and civilization. Unlike America, Britain

experienced its period of expansion in the beginning of the first century AD. Comparatively, the Roman invasion in the first century AD is equal to the American western expansion of the nineteenth century AD. Given that Britain's "wilderness" was conquered and cultivated two thousand years ago, the British idea of wilderness is vastly different than that of Americans. Jonathan Raban reminds us,

> all England is landscape – a country whose deforestation began with Stone Age agriculturalists, and whose last old-growth trees were consumed by the energy industry of the time, the sixteenth-century charcoal- burners; where the Norfolk Broads – now in danger of becoming an inlet of the North Sea – are the flooded open-cast mines of medieval peat diggers; where the chief nesting places of its birds are hedges, many of which go back to hawthorn plantings by the Saxons; where domesticated sheep have cleanly shaven every hill; where coverts, coppices and spinneys exist (or existed until the ban) as subsidized amenities for the fox-hunting brigade; where barely a patch of earth can be found that hasn't been adapted to a specific human use (Raban 56).

Given this utter humanness in the British landscape, it is not surprising that British writers approach environmental issues in unique fashion. Their writing must be synthesized somehow, and this thesis is based on the premise that "an inquiry into the environmental imagination forces us to question the premises of literary theory while using its resources to expose the limitation of literature's representations" (Buell 5). Literary theory and philosophy are two tools at hand for literary criticism to use to define or redefine British nature writing. As one of the foremost British ecocritics Richard Kerridge writes, ecocriticism "seek[s] to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to the environmental crisis" (Kerridge and Sammells 5). This thesis seeks to evaluate Seamus Heaney's poetry and Roger Deakin's prose through various theoretical frameworks in order to examine their roles as responses to the British environment.

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Brief biographies of the two writers in question will be helpful in understanding their works. Seamus Heaney was born on April 13, 1939 in County Derry, Northern Ireland. He is the eldest child in a family of nine children, and he spent the first several years of his life at Mossbawn, the family home he often references in his poems about childhood. He recalls Mossbawn as a "one-storey, longish, lowish, thatched and whitewashed house" where "somebody riding past on a bike would have seen it through a thorn hedge and a screen of young alder trees growing on a bank just behind the hedge" (O'Driscoll 3). At the age of eleven, however, Seamus passed his qualifying exam for secondary school and one year later, at the age of twelve, he moved to St. Columb's College for secondary school. After secondary school, Heaney continued on to university at Queen's University in Belfast where he studied English Literature and Language. At Queen's, the world of poetry was opened up to Heaney, and although he remembers reading poetry early on in his life—William Allingham's "The Fairies" and Wordsworth's "Fidelity" (O'Driscoll 34)—Gerard Manley Hopkins was Heaney's first major influence. "The result of reading Hopkins at school was the desire to write, and when I first put pen to paper at university, what flowed out was music, the reporting sounds and ricocheting consonants typical of Hopkins' verse" (*Finders*, Heaney 17). Eventually the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats, Hardy, Yeats, Elliot, Frost, and Hughes became major influences.

In 1965, he married Marie Devlin, the same year his first chapbook of poems, *Eleven Poems*, was published. *Death of a Naturalist* was published the following year

and at that time he accepted a post as a lecturer at Queen's University. "Everything happened so quickly and at the same time—the development of our relationship, the entry into poetry, the marriage itself. Inside three years. One excitement quickening into the other" (O'Driscoll 63). During this time in Belfast, Heaney became associated with The Group—a group of writers who met on Monday evenings at Philip Hobsbaum's flat to read and critiqued their own or another poet's work. Arthur Terry, Michael Allen, Michael Longley and later, Ciaran Carson and Paul Muldoon are writers associated with The Group.

In 1969, following the birth of his two sons, *Door into the Dark* was published, and Heaney spent 1969-1971 in Berkeley, California as a guest lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1972, he accepted a position at Carysfort College in the Republic of Ireland, and his third book of poetry, *Wintering Out*, was published. *North*, one of his most famous volumes of poetry, was published in 1975, and from 1981-1994 Heaney held a professorship at Harvard University. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995 and appointed the Ralph Waldo Emerson Poet in Residence at Harvard in 1997. Although he suffered a stroke in 2006, Heaney is still writing and reading his poetry, and his latest volume of poetry, *District and Circle,* was awarded the T.S. Eliot Prize. His other volumes of poetry include *Field Work* (1979), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Seeing Things* (1991), *The Spirit Level* (1996), and *Electric Light* (2001).

Biographical notes aside, nature is never far from Heaney's thoughts or his poetry. In the Summer 2008 issue of *Granta*, Heaney relates his relationship to a piece of birch wood gathered in New Hampshire while visiting the poet Donald Hall.

> I stood the blunted Y shape upside down so that it became a little torso agleam in its own whiteness, a *puella* forever *pubescens*, an armless, legless Venus de New Hampshire, as disinclined to move as Daphne was desperate to flee. A form which seems to ponder Rilke's response to the archaic torso of Apollo – 'You must change your life' – before answering wistfully, 'Yes, perhaps, but first you have to live it' ("The Whisper of Love," Heaney 33)

The natural world functions in Heaney's poetry as a call to memory, a call to ethical action. Although it frames his poetry as a life-testimony, it also recalls to him "but first you have to live it." From Mossbawn to Glanmore, Heaney's "silence bunker, a listening post, a holding" (O'Driscoll 325), to Belfast and Dublin, Heaney's poetry is concerned with the relationship between poetry and environment, history and memory, art and ethics.

Very little is known, unfortunately, about the other writer in question, Roger Deakin. He was born on February 11, 1943 in Hertfordshire, England and educated at Haberdashers' Aske's school in Hampstead and Peterhouse, Cambridge in English. After earning his secondary school diploma, he spent several years working as a copywriter and English teacher. In 1968, he bought the remains of a sixteenth-century house and the twelve acres of land in Suffolk where he spent the rest of his life restoring the house and tending to the lands. He named the property Walnut Tree Farm, and his friend and colleague Ron MacFarlane describes it as "a house that breathed," a house where "leaves gusted in through one door and out of another. Swallows flew to and from their nest in the main chimney"(MacFarlane).

While he spent much of his time writing, Deakin also was a founder member of the international environmental organization Friends of the Earth and he co-founded Common Ground, an organization seeking to promote localism in Great Britain. In 1999,

Deakin published his first book, *Waterlog*. The premise of *Waterlog* is to recount his adventure of swimming across England.

> My inspiration was John Cheever's classic short story 'The Swimmer,' in which the hero, Ned Merrill, decides to swim the eight miles home from a party on Long Island via a series of his neighbor's swimming pools. One sentence in the story stood out and worked on my imagination: 'He seemed to see, with a cartographer's eye, that string of swimming pools, that quasi-subterranean stream that curved across the country (*Waterlog*, Deakin 1-2).

This inspiration led Deakin to swim in every pond, stream, river, and channel he could find in Britain, from the Fens to the Fowey River to the Atlantic Ocean. He records his adventures in a series of diary-like essays, with each essay (chapter) subtitled by a date, for instance, "The Fens, 14 May" for his chapter, "Swimming with Eels." The book became wildly popular in the years following its publication and, "despite its thoroughgoing Englishness, it won admirers in Australia, Canada and Europe…[and] inspired untold numbers of readers to take to the open water" (MacFarlane).

In the seven years following the publication of *Waterlog*, Deakin worked on a new book, *Wildwood*. Much like *Waterlog*, *Wildwood* recounts a journey across Britain (and in this case, around the world). Instead of swimming, however, it focuses on "what Edward Thomas called 'the fifth element': the element of wood" (*Wildwood*, Deakin ix). "If *Waterlog* was about the element of water, *Wildwood* is about the element of wood, as it exists in nature, in our souls, in our culture and in our lives" (*Wildwood*, Deakin x). MacFarlane explains Deakin's relationship with trees as human-like,

> Trees to him were herd creatures, best understood when considered in their relationships with one another (he loved the way that oak trees, for instance, would share nutrients via their root systems when one of their number was under stress). Trees were human to Deakin, and humans tree-like, in hundreds of complicated and

deeply felt ways (MacFarlane).

Deakin himself understood the project as essential for Britain's understanding of its own environment.

> Woods, like water, have been suppressed by motorways and the modern world, and have come to look like the subconscious of the landscape. They have become the guardians of our dreams of greenwood liberty, of our wildwood, feral, childhood selves, of Richmal Crompton's Just William and his outlaws. They hold the merriness of Merry England, of yew longbows, of Robin Hood and his outlaw band. But they are also repositories of the ancient stories, of the Icelandic myths of Ygdrasil the Tree of Life, Robert Grave's "The Battle of the Trees" and the myths of Sir James Frazier's *Golden Bough*. The enemies of woods are the always the enemies of culture and humanity (*Wildwood*, Deakin xii).

Unfortunately, Roger Deakin never saw *Wildwood* published. On August 19, 2006, at the age of 63, Roger Deakin died of cancer. His final book, *Wildwood*, was published posthumously in 2007.

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Chapter Two of my thesis, "Seamus Heaney: Memory and the Ecological Archive," analyzes Seamus Heaney's poetry through the lens of memory and archive. I use Pierre Nora's work on *les lieux de mémoire* as an entry point to Heaney's work, emphasizing that Heaney's poetry serves as an ecological site of memory, a living, evolving archive of events. Through comparing disparate landscapes and events, Heaney is able to confront and address the Troubles, as well as more contemporary geopolitical issues, in his poetry. Although many of his earlier poems are concerned with the Troubles, his later work, especially in *District and Circle*, explores some of the more poignant critical issues today

like terrorism and global climate change. Throughout all of his poetry, however, the environment serves as an active site of memory, thus implicating humans and the non-human environment and creating a new sense of ecological memory.

In Chapter Three, "Roger Deakin: The Act of Dwelling in Literature," I explore the idea of an ecological site of memory in Roger Deakin's literary nonfiction. The theory of *les lieux de mémoire* is extended into the realm of ethics, however, by reading the Deakin's works in relation to the Heideggarian lens of dwelling. I argue that Deakin's two works of literary nonfiction, *Waterlog* and *Wildwood*, build on the idea of literature as living archive by extending the archive into the realm of ethics. Deakin's texts address not only the British environment, but also ask that the reader simultaneously explore the environment with the writer. In this way, Deakin's works lead to an ethically subversive lifestyle, that of dwelling—dwelling within and with the earth, humanity, and spirituality. In merging traditional nature writing with a call to ethical dwelling, Deakin reinvents nature writing and the concept of ecology into that of human ecology.

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The thesis seeks to build upon *Granta's* definition of a new British nature writing. By comparing two very different contemporary writers—one, Seamus Heaney, a poet, the other, Roger Deakin, a nonfiction writer—I will explore the tension between literature and environment, ethics and art. Can the landscape of home, through poetry, "catch the heart off guard and blow it open" (*Opened*, Heaney 411)? Is the environment a fixed point by which we can find ourselves located, just as Deakin is located by Walnut Tree

Farm? To what extent does literature compel the reader toward action, and to what extent does literary theory play a role in creating a British ecocritical perspective?

Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin approach their environments in very different ways. Certainly, poetry and nonfiction are two different genres. The meeting point between the two, the undefined space of self-referential literary memory in the midst of a temporally and spatially concrete environmental landscape, is what is compelling about their works. Throughout the thesis I hope to explore the human animal's relation to nature through the very human expression of literature. To echo Jason Cowley, "None of us wishes to imagine what might come after nature, when we are gone" (Cowley 12), but perhaps Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin's ecological archives of memory serve as a sustaining force to nature, perhaps even as a part of nature itself.

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2. Seamus Heaney: Memory and the Ecological Archive

"I would begin with the Greek word *omphalos*, meaning the navel, and hence the stone that marked the center of the world, and repeat it, *omphalos*, *omphalos*, *omphalos*, until its blunt and falling music becomes the music of somebody pumping water at the pump outside our back door. It is County Derry in the early 1940s."
-Seamus Heaney, "Mossbawn"[2]

Seamus Heaney defines his poetry as beginning with two things: an image and a word, *omphalos* and a water pump. So it is no wonder that he begins his selected prose by aligning an object and a word to show the genesis of his poetry. The word, *omphalos*, is markedly borrowed from another culture and transposed on the water pump at Heaney's childhood home in County Derry. This act of transposing one culture on another, turning an ancient Greek word into the sound of an Irish person pumping water, is characteristic of both Heaney's poetry and prose, and should not be ignored in any critical analysis of his work as a whole. This movement across centuries and countries can be seen in poems like "The Tollund Man" in *Wintering Out* and "Anything Can Happen" in *District and Circle*.

The temporal and spatial movement in Heaney's poetry is echoed in his attention to environmental detail. In his poem "Mossbawn: Two Poems in Dedication" Heaney writes

> There was a sunlit absence.
> The helmeted pump in the yard
> heated its iron

[2] Heaney, Seamus. *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2002: 3.

water honeyed

in the slung bucket
and the sun stood
like a griddle cooling
against the wall

of each long afternoon (*Opened*, Heaney 93).

Mossbawn is framed in sunlight, whether the absence of it or the all too powerful presence of it in daily activities. The memory of human events (his mother baking) at Mossbawn is tied to the memory of the natural world—"It was an intimate, physical creaturely existence" (*Opened*, Heaney 415). Heaney's childhood and the genesis of his poetry are inexplicable from the natural world. The celebration of rural work and agricultural objects, from his mother hanging and folding the line-dried laundry in "Clearances" to "The Forge" with its "hammered anvil's short-pitched ring (*Opened*, Heaney 20), marks the landscape of Heaney's work, implicating human ecology in the natural imagery of his poems. This inscription of humans in the environment is key to understanding the ecology of Heaney's poetic memory.

In another way, Heaney's poems layer the political with the ecological. For example, in "Casualty," Heaney records his cousin's death, how he was "blown to bits/Out drinking in a curfew/Others obeyed" (*Opened*, Heaney 148), but the poem quickly merges the ecological landscape with the political landscape, history with memory:

The line lifted, hand
Over fist, cold sunshine
On the water, the land
Banked under fog: that morning
When he took me in his boat (*Opened*, Heaney 149).

The memory of place, along with the memory of political violence, is inescapable in the poem. Again, in "Digging," Heaney layers images of violence with the memory of his father and grandfather digging potatoes. Or in "The Tollund Man," the tragedy of "four young brothers, trailed/For miles along the lines" is preserved in the landscape of the "cauldron bog" (*Opened*, Heaney 62-63). The implication of human events in the natural landscape is what separates Heaney from the pastoral poets of the past. Ireland is not an idyllic rural landscape, but rather Ireland is a landscape defined by human invention, human history, and human event. Read through an ecocritical lens, Heaney is creating a new nature poetry in his work, an oeuvre best understood through a theoretical lens which can capture both the spatial and temporal dimensions of non-human ecology and the spatial and temporal dimensions of the human creature.

When Heaney's work is read through a theoretical framework of memory, it becomes clear that his poetry ascribes an archival landscape to his individual memories, his country's collective memory, and, at times, the world's collective memory. This new archive responds actively and politically to the events, places, and people featured in his poems. In Heaney's work, poetry does not make nothing happen.[3] Rather, it relies on individual and collective memory to create an archive of the landscapes and events that have shaped the twentieth, and now the twenty-first century.

One way through which to approach both collective and the individual memory in Heaney's poems such as "Casualty" and "The Tollund Man" is through Pierre Nora's work on *les lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). Although Nora is not unique in his treatment of collective and individual memory, his emphasis on the spatial element of

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[3] In reference to Auden's infamous line in the poem "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," "Poetry makes nothing happen."

memory is a useful way to analyze Heaney's response to personal memory and political events. While Pierre Nora is a French historian and not a literary critic or theorist, he is interested in literature's role in memory, specifically in his article "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." His interest in literature allows not only for a cross-disciplinary analysis of Heaney's work, but also for a deeper exploration of the literary element of Nora's theory. Through merging the two disciplines, a political tenor emerges in poetry marked by an individual's struggle with memory.

Pierre Nora's article, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*" is primarily concerned with, as the title states, the fundamental difference between memory and history. He explores the spatial dimension of memory as opposed to the temporal restriction of history, claiming that

> Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists (Nora 7).

Insofar as the current geopolitical atmosphere is announced, "at a particular historical moment," and subsequently introduced as problematic, "memory has been torn…in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory," Nora establishes sites of memory (*les liex de mémoire*) first as critical in understanding both collective and individual memory and, secondly, as fundamental to understanding the political and cultural framework of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In invoking the image of tearing, he also introduces the element of violence, that memory has been

violently ripped from its power, that it can bridge spatially and temporally different sites and events.

What, then, does it mean for memory to exist or not to exist in a site where "a sense of historical continuity persists?" First, the question of memory and of history must be established. Memory is not archival in the traditional sense of the archive; it does not build memorials, it is not stationary or rooted to a particular recorded time. Rather, it is defined by the individual's interpretation of a collective event. While it can be sited in a war memorial (statue or building), it depends upon the individual's response to it as a site of memory. A state cannot ascribe memory to a location, but an individual can ascribe memory to a location based on the interplay of individual and collective memory at the site. "Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieux de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura" (Nora 19)[4]. In this way, imagination and symbolism, ritual and pilgrimage, form the backbone of memory. While memory is concerned with the sites commonly understood as historical—a war memorial, a marriage ceremony, the city of Mecca—it is rooted in the play between the will to remember, to enact, the event of memory (or the place of memory, as it may be), and in the creation of a self-referential memory. "Contrary to historical objects, however, *lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs" (Nora 23), and in the self-referentiality of the site, the complete understanding of memory can be found. It is in this way that memory defines itself by the play between history and imagination at the site or event, the *lieux de mémoire*, of itself.

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[4] Emphasis added

This self-referentiality inscribed in memory is drive behind Seamus Heaney's poetry. In the writing of a poem, one records an image (an event, the way something looks, etc.) on the page. Once the image is written onto the page it becomes a separate entity than the original image (as possibly experienced in real life). When Nora refers to the self-referentiality of memory, he is referring to the seperateness of the memory from the original event, however "original" may be defined. In some cases there is no origin, spatially and temporally, to an image or event. Instead, it is an amalgamation of several images or events that becomes to be understood as one distinct memory. *Lieux de mémoire* function in this realm of self-referentiality simply because they are the memory extracted from its distinct temporal image. The memory becomes rooted in a place, in a site, and it is in the play, in this case the poetic play, between space and time that memory becomes understood as self-referential and evolving. Once committed to the page, Heaney's poems become self-contained and without reference to an "exact" event. While he may allude to specific events—the Tollund Man, his cousin's murder, 9/11—the events are understood through the poems' figurative language and poetic form. The Tollund Man and 9/11 find meaning through this archiving of memory in poetry. The archive allows these sites of memory to remain present-tense in the individual and the collective consciousness.

History, then, stands in opposition to memory because history is the stagnant "reconstruction…of what is no longer" (Nora 8). History relies on an external reference as much as it relies on a concrete temporal structure. Time is not questioned in history; it is the given, and although Nora establishes a dichotomy of history and memory, neither history nor memory is better than the other. History merely serves to establish a temporal

narrative to memory. Historiography, on the other hand, has corrupted history over the course of the past century. It has become a critical and revisionary force displacing both memory and history in the world's collective consciousness.

> [Historiography] seizes upon the most clearly defined objects of tradition—a key battle, like Bouvines; a canonical manual, like the *Petit Lavisse*—in order to dismantle their mechanisms and analyze the conditions of their development. It operates primarily by introducing doubt, by running a knife between the tree of memory and the bark of history (Nora 10)

The corruption of history by historiography is why memory appears torn to the contemporary consciousness. Memory is evolutionary, it changes and builds without erasure, but historiography requires that memory stagnate in the annals of history. Living, evolving memory has become foreign, in the same way that much of poetry has become foreign to the modern mind. Poetry can serve to bridge the gap, the tear, that historiography has caused between memory and history.

What form then does memory take? Nora argues that because memory is alive, because it is fixed in a state of evolution, that memory is concrete in the physical world. "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects" (Nora 9). The *lieux*, the sites, can be the utterly mundane—a garden hoe, a drink at a pub, the color of sky at noon—to the supernatural—Jupiter waging war among the gods, a man preserved in a bog for a thousand years. The gravity of the object or event in terms of memory is that each thing, each occasion is purposefully remembered and reinterpreted through each individual. The remembrance and the interpretation invokes will and imagination into the process of memory, thus changing the memory, allowing it to evolve, with each remembrance. *Lieux de mémoire* can be anything from the portable

object (a censer) to the topographical object (maps, sites of tourism), the monumental site (a war memorial) to the architectural site (the palace of Versailles), and the functional experience (the academe) to the pedagogical tool (a dictionary). Each *lieux* depends on the individual's invocation of imagination to create a true memory.

Seamus Heaney's poetry, then, functions as an archive of sites of memory, an archive of *les lieux de mémoire*. From the very explanation of his literary evolution—"I would begin with the Greek word *omphalos*"—to his famous poem, "Summer 1969," Heaney reveals an ecological richness within his writing that stems from memory. Much of this figurative language, however, is steeped in violent overtones. This complex literary relationship between nature and violence in Heaney's poetry hints at the tear in memory that Nora describes—the violence is not just the experiential violence in a horrific event ("The Tollund Man"), but is also the interpretation of a non-violent act through images of violence ("Digging"). In his work, Heaney does not merely attempt to reconstruct a historical pastoral life that once existed in Ireland; rather, he is relives every turn of the turnip snedder and every cry of the tarred and feathered Irish through a self-referential poem. The memory housed in the poem becomes a new memory—a memory that can only be understood through the reading and verbal enacting of the poem itself. Through this reading or enacting, the memory remains alive, or remembered in its evolving, yet specifically situated state. The objects, events, and landscape of the poem are inescapably rooted in themselves—"Wordsworth's Skates" is about Wordsworth's skates and the act of skating—and the enacted memory refers only to the memory within the poem. "Wordsworth's Skates" is not a factual retelling of Wordsworth's love of ice skating, but it is an emotionally driven, figurative response to how Wordsworth might

have skated. This connection between the emotional imagination and memory is essential to Heaney's poetry.

Heaney himself relates the way his poetry functions in relation to memory in his critical article, "The Sense of the Past.[5]"

> To an imaginative person, an inherited possession like a garden seat is not just an object, an antique, an item on an inventory; rather it becomes a point of entry into a common emotional ground of memory and belonging. It can transmit the climate of a lost world and keep alive in us a domestic intimacy with realities that might otherwise have vanished…Our place, our house, our furniture are present then not just as neuter backdrops but become influential and nurturing; our imagination breathes their atmosphere as rewardingly as our lungs breathe the oxygen of the air (Christie 118).

The connection Heaney emphasizes between imagination, object, and memory can be directly related to Nora's theory of memory. Objects in Heaney's poetry absorb a "nurturing" quality," they "keep alive in us a domestic intimacy with realities that might have otherwise vanished." Poetry, as an archive of landscape and event, becomes a living archive. Each site of memory, each garden seat, allows for the memory of the garden seat to live in each reading, each oral performance of the poem. The anxiety that creates archive fever is assuaged in this gentle reminder that the world of the garden seat need not vanish. Instead it can remain, alive, in memory.

Heaney, of course, began his poetic journey with an action—digging. In "Digging," Heaney relates his act of writing to his father's (and his father's father's) act of digging potatoes. The poem is framed by the image of writing, and the final lines of the poem are often recited—"Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests./I'll

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[5]The *History Ireland* issue in which this appeared (Winter 1993) could not be located, so a secondary source was used.

dig with it" (*Opened*, Heaney 4)—but the remainder of the poem is actually the most intriguing. After the opening couplet, Heaney moves to sound—"Under my window, a clean rasping sound/When the spade sinks into the gravelly ground"—, then sight—"till his straining rump among the flowerbeds/Bends low"—, to remembrance—"The old man could handle a spade./Just like his old man" (*Opened,* Heaney 3). The inward movement from the sound of digging to the memory of his grandfather digging turf is a spiral action repeated in many of his poems. Once the memory circles closer to Heaney himself—"Once I carried him milk"—, he is able to internalize the memory in his imagination (*Opened*, Heaney 3). "The cold smell of potatoe mould, the squelch and slap/Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge/Through living roots awaken in my head" (*Opened*, Heaney 3). At this imaginative internalization, the site of memory "awaken[s]" his need to write. Although he has "no spade to follow men like them," Heaney realizes he can dig with his pen (*Opened*, Heaney 3).

Lieux de mémoire run throughout this poem and cannot be pinned down to one event or one object. Through the creative process of this poem, Heaney creates a site of memory with the pen and the act of writing. As he writes, he internalizes the act of writing to the degree that it is not just an art form or a way to communicate a phrase to an other, but rather, it is the gun, the object of action that awakens his creative process and legitimizes the memories stored in each poem. The image of the pen as a gun is an interesting first image when considering Heaney's oeuvre to date. Throughout the course of his writing career, Heaney has struggled with issues of violence and atrocity—primarily the Troubles in Ireland in the 1960s. By using the image of the gun in the second line,—"The squat pen rests; snug as a gun" (*Opened*, Heaney 3)—Heaney not

only introduces the violent political events he struggles with in his later collections, but also introduces the idea that writing is action in the face of atrocity. The pen rests "snug as gun" and is waiting to be put into action, waiting to record the events, into the site of a poem.

From the gun, Heaney moves to the spade—a simple tool for digging in a vegetable garden. This object, however, becomes more than a tool because it provides entry into the creative memory of his father digging potatoes, which then links to his grandfather drinking milk while digging, which then moves to the metaphorical realm of the author digging with his pen. These images grow spatially proximate to Heaney while at the same time disintegrating temporally. Nothing temporally distinguishes Heaney as a boy delivering milk in a paper bag to his grandfather from Heaney as a man sitting down to write this poem.

This break between spatiality and temporality is what repairs the chasm between memory and history. Heaney recalls specifically historical events—his father digging potatoes, giving his grandfather a bottle of milk, the decision to write a poem—while at the same time invoking the emotional imagination: "The curt cuts of an edge/Through living roots awaken in my head" (*Opened*, Heaney 3). As the poem deteriorates temporally until all events are laid even on the plane of the poem, the images begin to mix with one another until the poet feels called to write.

In much the same way, Heaney invokes memory in "The Tollund Man." The poem juxtaposes a man sacrificed over one thousand years ago in the present-day state of Denmark to the fertility goddess Nerthus and the present-tense (in the poem) Irish Troubles. In the image of "the man killing parishes" (*Opened*, Heaney 63), Heaney finds

justification for the analogy and solace in the temporal distance of the two events. Building to a crescendo with *North*, Heaney parries back and forth between the two weights of beauty and atrocity and cannot quite find a meeting point between the two. In "The Tollund Man," however, the common ground he seeks is found.

While the poem evokes guilt, not nostalgia like "Digging," it does work within the same frame. One of Nora's emphases about *lieux de mémoire* is that they can take any shape or form—as long as they invoke imagination and purposeful remembrance. Imagining himself as the Tollund man, Heaney feels Nerthus as she "tightened her torc on him/And opened her fen" (*Opened*, Heaney 62). He does not merely sympathize with the fourth century B.C. man; instead, through the act of writing, he feels the man's death, he recounts what it was like to be sacrificed to the fertility goddess, drowned in the bog, his skin immortalized by the peat. A memory not his own, Heaney owns the memory of the Tollund man—resurrects him and gives him voice to recall his death. He becomes the Tollund man. This is the penultimate marriage of history and memory in the sense of the *lieux de mémoire*.

On another level, this is a poem grappling with the violence of the present tense, of "The scattered, ambushed/Flesh of labourers,/Stockinged corpses/Laid out in farmyards" (*Opened*, Heaney 63). Heaney is writing about an event before it has time or distance to be fully understood. It is this chasm between event and understanding, this separation of the event from its time and place, that allows Heaney to bring both events together. The Tollund man is wrenched to the surface of both the bog and of time in this poem. His resurfaced body, "Naked except for/The cap, noose, and girdle" (*Opened*, Heaney 62) allows for resurfacing of "four young brothers, trailed/For miles along the

lines" (*Opened*, Heaney 63). If it were not for the memory of a distant spatial and temporal event, Heaney would not be able to write about the atrocity of four boys dragged behind the rail cars of a speeding train.

As in "Digging," Heaney finds himself at a point of action in "The Tollund Man." In the second section of the poem, Heaney writes:

> I could risk blasphemy,
> Consecrate the cauldron bog
> Our holy ground and pray
> Him to make germinate
>
> The scattered, ambushed ashes
> Flesh of labourers,
> Stockinged corpses
> Laid out in the farmyards,
>
> Tell-tale skin and teeth
> Flecking the sleepers
> Of four young brothers trailed
> For miles along the lines (*Opened Ground*, Heaney 63).

His almost plea for the Tollund Man "to make germinate" Ireland's dead is, ironically, answered in the poem. Although Heaney finds himself ending the poem without any closure, the poem takes a life of its own in its own site of memory. The historical events surrounding the four teenage boys dragged behind a train are unimportant compared to the memory Heaney creates by juxtaposing their plight with the Tollund man's plight some centuries before. While the Tollund man cannot breathe life into the slaughtered innocents, Heaney's poem does. It writes the memory of the events of the Troubles into a living archive that finds itself constantly read and reinterpreted.

This unique chimera of events translated and transposed through Heaney's writing and his own construction of the two events is later echoed in "The Flight Path"—"If I do

write something,/Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself" (*Opened*, Heaney 385). Often understood in terms of politics, the emphatic statement, "I'll be writing for myself," serves to underscore the fact that Heaney's poetry is not pushed by politics. Rather, it is driven by himself, by his memory, not his nation's. Heaney's interpretation of the historical Tollund man is his. In writing for himself, Heaney is able to bridge the spatial (Denmark to Ireland) and temporal (4th century B.C. to 20th century A.D.) divide between the two and repair the Tollund man in a space of memory, as a site of memory.

Heaney's latest volume of poetry, *District and Circle*, breaks from many of the formal and tonal elements of his previous volumes, but continues to explore the spatial element of memory. The opening poem of the volume, "Turnip-Snedder" recalls the spade from "Digging." "The handle turned/and turnip-heads were let fall and fed/to the juiced up inner blades" (*District*, Heaney 3-4) echoes "The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft/Against the inside knee was levered firmly" (*Opened*, Heaney 3). There is a poetic mysticism within the memory of the spade and snedder understood through both the annual repetition of digging potatoes—"Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds/Bends low, comes up twenty years away" (*Opened*, Heaney 3)—and the annual "turnip-cycle" (*District*, Heaney 4), and this mysticism in "The Turnip-Snedder" repeats the mysticism of a continually evolving and reinvented memory begun in his first volume of poetry.

Another poem in *District and Circle*, "Polish Sleepers," recalls an inherent, if not melancholic, nostalgia of childhood that is marked by images of violence. The railroad cars conjure forth memories of Heaney's childhood when he would listen to trains pass by from Castledown to the next town. Within the poem, however, Heaney struggles with

the imposing force of these foreign objects lodged in his garden, and grapples with the ultimate meaning of inherent violence, both ecological and political, in his childhood memory. Throughout the poem, he bridges temporal and spatial gaps while remaining rooted to his garden, his home, in county Derry.

"Polish Sleepers" begins with a description of the sleeper cars being rooted in the ground of a garden in Heaney's childhood home in Northern Ireland. The cars are "block-built criss-cross and four squared" (*District*, Heaney 6) in the landscape, and are foreign remnants of a former lifestyle moored in a modern environment. The cars are different than the garden because they are structures of an industrial world abruptly set into a natural landscape. Even more so, the railroad cars are Polish, not Irish, and their presence stands in opposition to the host culture. A pervading sense of alienation is further echoed in the following line, "We lived with them and breathed pure creosote," (*District*, Heaney 6) creosote being the main preservative in the wood of the cars and smelling strongly of oil or tar, and in this way the cars pollute their surroundings. Nothing about this situation can be redeemed until the cars begin to be "fringed with hardy ground-cover and grass" (*District*, Heaney 6), but even this fringe of nature cannot sever the intrusive nature of the sleepers. Heaney still sees them as a "half-stockade" between some historical or industrial other and the pastoral landscape of Ireland (*District*, Heaney 6).

The violence Heaney ascribes to the train cars continues into the second half of the sonnet. Instead of merely existing as an ominous piece of the landscape, the cars become actively violent, if only in Heaney's imagination. "But as that bulwark bleached in sun and rain/And the washed gravel pathway showed no stain" Heaney begins to

imagine the "tarry pus" of the cars carry to the garden his own thoughts, "Wafts of what conspired when I'd lie/Listening for the goods from Castledown" (*District*, Heaney 6). The cars are not actually staining the garden, and only Heaney's imagination mars the landscape, but the memory of imagining the cars destroying the garden with tar is what constitutes the memory. Eventually, instead of the cars affecting the landscape, the landscape affects the cars: sun and rain, ground-cover and grass. The imagined stream of tarry (tar) pus "Accruing, bearing forward to the garden," dark as it may be, is immediately assuaged by "Each languid, clanking wagon" passing by from Castledown (*District*, Heaney 6). Even as Heaney views the derailed train cars as menacing and foreign, he is comforted by the sound of trains passing nearby, and after the trains pass, the hostility found in the Polish train cars disappears and is replaced by "*rust, thistles, silence, sky*" (*District*, Heaney 6). In the end, the rust and the thistles merge into one silent landscape.

Although anxiety of the foreign objects—the sleeper cars—is eventually lessened by the familiar Irish freight trains passing by the garden, forty-one years after he published "Digging," Heaney still struggles with the element of violence in the day-to-day experience. Heaney cannot escape the presence of the sleeper cars, so he creates a narrative of destruction, of the cars polluting the garden, for if the cars polluted the garden then, maybe, they would be removed. This new narrative inscribed in the memory of the sleeper cars becomes the memory of the sleeper cars. The imagined smell of tar wafting towards Heaney becomes the sensory experience of the memory. Through the poem, the memory becomes its own referent, understandable only through the reading of the poem. The tarry pus never flows, however, and the gravel remains dry, so Heaney

is left with only one option: reconciliation. He achieves this reconciliation through the sensory day-to-day, habitual, experience of thinking in the garden, and through this experience, he comes to a mutual understanding with the sleepers—"afterwards, *rust, thistles, silence, sky*" (*District,* Heaney 6).

While the mystical quality of objects and their role in memory is continued into his latest volume of poetry, Heaney's poetry broadens its scope from Ireland to the global landscape. "Anything Can Happen," a poem written post-9/11 treads lightly on the matter at hand—a terrorist attack on the United States—and frames itself in Horatian lore. The collapse of the World Trade Center towers is understood through Jupiter's lightning and Fortune's swoop. Much like "The Tollund Man," Heaney understands tragedy through spatial and temporal distance: "The Heaven's weight/Lifts up off Atlas like a kettle-lid" (*District*, Heaney 13). Startlingly, the poem affects a casual tone missing from "The Tollund Man" by addressing itself to a "you." The affect of placing the second person "you know" next to the myth of Jupiter while writing about a horrific tragedy serves to displace sentimentality and historical memorialization. Instead of building a static monument with names and dates inscribed on the side, Heaney constructs through this poem a living, breathing memorial to all atrocities, past and present. He reminds us that "Anything can happen, the tallest towers/Be overturned, those in high places daunted,/Those overlooked regarded" (*District*, Heaney 13). All temporal boundaries are broken in this poem, and the space of disbelief and grief opened by collapse of the "tallest towers" is expanded to include the specific event itself, as well as all horrors before it and to come.

In addition to specifically political events, Heaney also explores environmental degradation on a global scale in "Höfn." The poem describes the Vatnajökull glacier outside of Höfn, a fishing town in Iceland as it melts, presumably due to global climate change, and the implication this event has on both the landscape and the people in the area. While most of Heaney's poems that explore catastrophic events focus on events that occur quickly and with no warning—"Anything Can Happen" or "Casualty," for example—"Höfn" examines the psychological implications of an environmental catastrophe that occurs on such a vast spatial and temporal scale that it cannot be comprehended by spatial or temporal boundaries.

The poem opens with the declaration, "The three-tongued glacier has begun to melt," but is immediately followed by a question, "What will we do, they ask, when boulder-milt/Comes wallowing across the delta flats/And the miles deep shag ice makes its move" (*District*, Heaney 51). The premise of the poem seems simple enough: the glacier is melting and no one can stop it. With glacier melt comes rising sea-level, and with a rising sea-level comes flooding. Given that Höfn is a harbor town (on the shoreline of Iceland), it will be affected by both the initial melt water and the subsequent change in sea level. The town will be flooded.

Heaney does not examine the reasons or scientific explanations behind the melting glacier, but instead decides to focus on the situation at hand. Instead of politicizing the event through the poem, he views it as a present-tense event that affects the peopled environment. While the people frantically question, "What will we do," Heaney reflects back on his experience of viewing the glacier. "I saw it, ridged and rock-set, from above,/Undead grey-gristled earth-spelt, aeon-scruff" (*District,* Heaney 51).

The sixth line—"Undead grey-gristled" etc.—emphasizes the scale of the glacier itself as compared to the fishing town in the stress-syllable kennings, and this emphasized line serves as a turning point in the poem. Instead of fearing the melt, Heaney writes, "I feared its coldness that still seemed enough/To iceblock the plane window dimmed with breath/Deepfreeze the seep of adamantine tith" (*District,* Heaney 51), suggesting that, from a removed view—a air plane—the glacier ought to still be feared for its vast size and sheer freezing power. Even further, though, Heaney ends with the line [I feared] "Every warm, mouthwatering word of mouth" (*District*, Heaney 51). If nothing else, closing the poem with the fear of "mouthwatering word of mouth," signalizes the inherent distrust of the catastrophic psychology Heaney hears in the Icelanders' words.

Within this poem, the connection between humans and nature is extremely apparent, but the nature of that relationship is a bit more complex. Heaney begins by stating a fact—the glacier is melting—and then reiterates what the townspeople of Höfn are saying about the melting glacier—what will we do? This first half of the poem seems completely rational given the circumstance, but Heaney is not content to allow the poem to root itself in confusion and disbelief. Instead, in a turn atypical to much of literature which institutes hierarchies of humans to animals/nature, Heaney reinstitutes power to the glacier, to the nonhuman figure in the poem. Instead of focusing on the melt, Heaney dedicates over half of the poem to the glacier's power to "deepfreeze the seep of adamantine tith" (*District*, Heaney 51).

In one way, by centering the poem on the ominous freezing power of the glacier, Heaney upsets the traditional interpretation of violence. While he fears the "coldness that still seemed enough/To iceblock the plane window," and not necessarily the "boulder-

milt," Heaney celebrates the imagined frozen landscape (*District*, Heaney 51). The ominous glacier is more so when melting, and the "undead grey-gristed earth-pelt, aeon-scruff" recalls an era of stability. The intrusive image of violence, then, is "every warm, mouthwatering word of mouth," and this environmental violence represents a new form of ecological memory in Heaney's poetry. In "Digging," the pen holds the power to kill or to dig; in "Höfn," the spoken word holds the power to melt.

The power to melt, then, is also the power to forget. Nora claims that "There are *liex de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (Nora 7). He links the disappearance of the *milieux de mémoire* to the disappearance of cultures with vast reservoirs of collective memory (the peasant culture, for example), and this "fundamental collapse of memory is but one familiar example of a movement toward democratization and mass culture on a global scale" (Nora 7). To a large extent, "Höfn" is equally about both the collapse of the natural environment and the collapse of the cultural environment. The weapon to be feared is not a gun or a bomb or the freezing cold; rather it is the power of the misconceived word—"every mouthwatering word of mouth." After the collapse of the Icelandic mythology, in which glaciers are viewed as sacred, the environment of memory was lost. Heaney attempts to find a site of memory, a place in which the glacier is sacred, but instead he only finds villagers concerned with material welfare. Heaney is not denying the environmental condition of the glacier—that the world is experiencing climate change and warming—but he is emphasizing the power of the word in spreading ethically irresponsible panic. The questions of "what will we do" are not answered. The responsibility of the villagers to their environment is ignored. In the villagers' words, the

glacier is encroaching upon them. In Heaney's view, the villagers are encroaching upon the glacier, and he leaves the reader with the image of the glacier freezing the words of mouth.

Throughout all of his poems, however, Heaney emphasizes his craft. In "Digging" he asserts the power of poetry. His pen is "snug as a gun" in his hand (*Opened,* Heaney 3), and while he cannot join the tradition of potato digging, he can take part in it by writing about it. Again, in "The Tollund Man," writing and language are emphasized—"Not knowing their tongue/…I will feel lost,/Unhappy and at home" (*Opened*, Heaney 63). Without understanding the foreign language, he feels unmoored, but, at the same time, "at home." The displacement of the poet from his language is much like the displacement of a person from his memory. Memory functions inside of itself, within its own referent-reference relationship. *Lieux de mémoire* form a reality of their own that can only be referred to inside of themselves. The *lieux de mémoire* of "The Tollund Man" is not only the violence of the Tollund man and of the Troubles, but also of the separation of comprehension and language. It is only within this zone of confusion that sense can be made—only in Denmark can Ireland make sense or be beautiful enough for poetry.

An element of violence is also contained within these images of power. The image of the pen as a gun in "Digging" does not only emphasize the power of poetry, it also alludes to the violent events explored through Heaney's oeuvre. Given the period in which Heaney began his literary career, violent events are unavoidable in his poetry. The Troubles was characterized by random and extreme atrocity, and even to this day both Ireland and the world is changed by violent events. As a poet, Heaney does respond to

these events. He responds in interesting and atypical ways, however. His pen is a gun, he will write only for himself, he finds solace and understanding in foreign countries and distant time periods. The memory of the violent event is reworked through time and place so that it becomes accessible to the poet. Immediacy is not always the answer.

The language of memory is equally important in Heaney's work. "Turnip-Snedder" and "Anything Can Happen" in *District and Circle* are less concerned with language, than other poems in the volume like "Wordsworth's Skates." While "Turnip-Snedder" plays with language, as evidenced by the kennings and rich images, and "Anything Can Happen" uses literary allusion, "Wordsworth's Skates," like "Digging," asserts the value of writing itself. Poetry scores the earth like Wordsworth's skates scored the ice on the Windermere, and all that remains of both is a trace in one's memory. What Heaney remembers of Wordsworth skating, in Heaney's imagination, is not the stars or the birds, not the actual skates themselves, but "the reel of them on frozen Windermere/As he flashed from the clutch of earth along its curve" (*District*, Heaney 24). The action, the "reel" and the faint trace of the skates on the ice is all that matters in Heaney's imagined Wordsworth and in Heaney's own writing, and the relation of the poem to an other image or event in history is inconsequential. The poem becomes its self-referential reality, existing as a living memory that reinstates itself with every reading or oral enacting. Writing is not passive, rather it is an active, reeling force, that leaves a trace for generations to come.

Pierre Nora's theory of memory and history, via *les lieux de mémoire*, serves as a framework through which to explore Heaney's rich and varied forms and tones.

Heaney's writing is fundamentally concerned with writing. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he said

> I credit it ultimately because poetry can make an order as true to the impact of the external reality and as sensitive to the inner laws of the poet's being as the ripples that rippled in and rippled out across the water in that scullery bucket some fifty years ago (*Opened*, Heaney 417).

It is through this medium of poetry that the external world (history) and this inner law of the poet's being (memory) can come together in the evolving, imaginative sphere of the poem to create a *lieux de mémoire*, a site of memory that functions as an ecological archive—an archive that exists solely in the poem and in the reading and rereading of the poem. It is through the spade and the ice skate, Horace's poetry and the Tollund man, that poetry harbors a living memory of both landscape and events. The turnip-snedder is no longer an artifact; instead, it is a fully functional element of the turnip-cycle "from seedling-braird to snedder" (*District*, Heaney 3).

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3. Roger Deakin: The Act of Dwelling in Literature

Lieux de mémoire, or sites of memory, are not static markers of memory. In that they are ever-changing and determined by an individual's encounter with the memory, these *lieux de mémoire* must spur the individual toward action. Memory and action are inseparable from each other in a site of memory. It is in this dual function of memory—in being a concrete, spatial site and in being an impetus toward action—that poetry and creative nonfiction both serve as a specific archives of memory, archives grounded in the iteration and reiteration in the act of reading literature. In poetry, it is easy to shy from the political, like Heaney's—"If I do write something,/Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself"—which is often interpreted as his refusal to involve poetry in politics, but with a more thorough reading, however, it becomes apparent that Heaney is actually couching the political in his own personal memory in "The Flight Path." This move from grand political gesture to personal memory in Heaney's poetry is also characteristic of much of contemporary environmental nonfiction. In another way, Roger Deakin's two nonfiction books, *Waterlog* and *Wildwood*, explore British ecological identity through intense, personal memories and experiences, and these sites function as *lieux de mémoire*, combining both memory and the call for action, for ethics.

More than anything, the *lieux de mémoire* in Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin's works are or are inspired by their respective landscapes. Heaney's landscape is pastoral Ireland; Deakin's is modern-day England. The authors' landscapes' connections to memory, however, provide a compelling commentary on their oeuvres. Without living

memory, the landscape of County Derry or Suffolk becomes a mere "neuter backdrop" to imaginative representation. Throughout Heaney's poetry and prose, Heaney brings his readers rich, visual and oral images that immediately transport the readers to rural Ireland. In much the same way, Deakin narrates the sensual environmental experience of walking or swimming across Britain. The landscapes that Heaney and Deakin reproduce in poetry and prose are easily understood through Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, but one other way through which to approach them is through Heidegger's theory of dwelling.

In his article on dwelling, "Building Dwelling Thinking," Martin Heidegger analyzes the idea of dwelling and its relationship to building and environment. He begins with the simple assertion that "We attain to dwell, so it seems, only by means of building" (Heidegger 145). The meaning of this phrase, however, is more complicated than it at first appears. Not every building is a place of dwelling, for dwelling is reserved for the act of sheltering or making "home" in. The workplace, a bridge, or a library may all be locations in which a person exists or spends a good portion of time in or on, but they are not considered dwelling places in contemporary understanding. Even houses themselves do not necessarily signify places of dwelling, "yet those buildings that are not dwelling places remain in turn determined by dwelling insofar as they serve man's dwelling. Dwelling and building are related as ends and means" (Heidegger 146). This equation of ends and means, however, cannot contain the entirety of the concept of dwelling, for "To build is in itself already to dwell" (Heidegger 146), a phrase Heidegger substantiates by tracing the etymology and construction of the German word *bauen* (to build).

Bauen originates in the Old German *buan*, which means to stay in one place, but Heidegger argues that the contemporary form of the verb *bauen* has lost this remaining force instituted by *buan* over time. Instead of signifying a physical object or location, building, via dwelling, requires action—the act to remain, the choice to stay in one place. A building, insomuch as it is built, is characterized by the state of dwelling as signified by the original word *bauen*. To build, then, is to remain, to dwell within the built environment. Thus, one cannot dwell without performing the action of dwelling. "The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling" (Heidegger 147).

A remnant of this original meaning of *buan* is retained in *nachbar* (neighbor). Neighbor, in English, stems from the Old English *neahgebur: neah* meaning near and *gebur* meaning dweller. "the Nachbar is the *Nachgebur*, the *Nachgebauer*, the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby" (Heidegger 147). Thus, *buan* signifies within *bauen* both the act of dwelling within a building and also the practice of dwelling—the nature of dwelling. This nature of dwelling can be found in the phrase *ich bin* (I am) as read through the Old German *buan*—"*ich bin, du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell" (Heidegger 147). The nature of human existence then, is that of dwelling. I am; I dwell.

At the same time, however, building can also be seen as cultivating, as dwelling with nature, for one cannot fully dwell in a built environment and not dwell with the natural world. "*Bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he dwells…*also* means to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine" (Heidegger 147). Building, then, is both constructing and cultivating (preserving). Further analysis of the Saxon *wuon* supports this understanding of dwelling as

preservation. *Wuon*, like the Old German *buan*, means to remain in one place. The Gothic Saxon verb form, *wunian*, however, means to be at peace or to remain at peace. The obvious connection between Old Saxon and Gothic Saxon in the definitions of *buan* and *wunian* is the word "remain." Both words signify a constant remaining force in their definitions of dwelling, but *wunian* layers the element of peace with dwelling, further implicating cultivation and preservation in the definition of dwelling. Furthermore, the Saxon word for "peace" *friede*, which means the free, and the free in German is *das frye*, where *fry* means "persevered from harm and danger" (Heidegger 149). This preservation signified in dwelling means to spare. "To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature" (Heidegger 149).

In this definition of dwelling, it is not enough to preserve. "Rather, dwelling itself is always a staying with things" (Heidegger 151), a staying within the earth, the sky, the divinities, and humankind—Heidegger's fourfold. Staying within the harmony of the fourfold and not sacrificing one for the other, is preserving the fourfold in "its essential being, its presencing" (Heidegger 150). Simply put, to preserve the earth is to save it and to not subjugate it to human will and desire. To dwell within the sky is to leave "to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessings and their inclemency" (Heidegger 149). To be free with the divinities is to be the divinities, and to dwell with humanity is to dwell within oneself and within the capability and inevitability of death.

Preserving, in its nature, signifies the staying with the fourfold, in that preserving requires a dwelling which brings a presencing of the fourfold. This presencing, a bringing forth of the fourfold into their own nature, is the cultivation and construction

inherent in dwelling. Cutting down an oak tree and building a house brings forth a presencing of the oak tree—if it is done within an awareness of the fourfold and not practiced in a domineering manner. Tilling the soil and planting vegetables is, in another way, a presencing of the earth through the soil and vegetables, the sky through the seasons and the sun, the divinities through the bringing forth of life where there once was none, and humankind through the working of and nourishment of the human body. In this way, dwelling performs the unity of the fourfold and allows for the presencing of things as they are through cultivation and building.

This presencing of nature through objects is Roger Deakin's narrative in both *Wildwood* and *Waterlog*. Even a cursory glance at his chapter titles reveals this theme—"The House Sheds: Camping," "Among Jaguars," and "Swimming with Eels," among others. It is in this presencing of the landscape and ecology of Britain that Deakin finds in writing an ecological archive of memory. Both the history and the memory of a specific place is recorded and relived in Deakin's work. A reader cannot simply read a chapter of *Waterlog* or *Wildwood* and then walk away from the book unchanged. Instead, the narrative, the art of the story, of storytelling, compels the reader to experience Deakin's experience with him and then rethink the natural world and the reader's relation to it. Elaine Scarry suggests that "the heart of the story often resides with those who are receiving rather than issuing instructions," and Deakin's works seem to function in this "volatile" writer-reader relationship (Scarry 245). While Deakin "paints" the picture of Suffolk and the Fens, he relies upon the reader to imagine the scene with him. He needs the reader to see the water "polished, deep green and gold, shining from its velvet bed of crowfoot and fine gravel" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 210), to feel the water "seize…like a

thermal glider" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 287), and beyond the images, he transfers the subtext of dwelling to reader. In a way that mere history cannot, the inscribed memory of Deakin's works in turn become inscribed in each subsequent reader's memory. The writing itself is presenced in the reader much like the environment in presenced in the writing, and while this is certainly not a unique experience limited to Deakin's work, it is significant in that dwelling, as ethical action, not simply emotion or experience is the subtext. To read Roger Deakin is to dwell within the writing and then, subsequently, to dwell within the immediate environment.

Sites of memory transformed into sites of action; history rediscovered as memory, inscribed in the people, objects, and landscape of Britain; the inescapability of humans from the natural world—these are what Roger Deakin is concerned with in his literary nonfiction. The presencing of objects and places in the human life is the connective tissue of Deakin's ecological archive. The environment is not free of human presence and human interaction. In fact, humans do not stain the environment or contaminate it. There is no ethical black and white in Deakin's natural world. Instead, humans, for better or for worse are implicated in ecology, and the human history of tools, art, and sustenance is what changes Deakin's work into an ecological site of memory concerned with sites of memory. While the places, rituals, and things that Deakin writes about are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, they are also sites steeped in a call to dwell, a call to read and then to act.

Much like Heaney's garden seat, Deakin finds in objects both an innate site of memory and of dwelling. As a nature writer, or a writer concerned with the natural world and the impact human beings have on the environment, Deakin is rare in his celebration

of the created object. *Wildwood* can largely be considered a genealogy of wood products. This fascination with objects can be seen in his love for swimming pools, sheds, art, cars, and even the simple pencil. That the objects Deakin writes about are products of nature—the walnut veneer in a Jaguar automobile, the wood casing of a pencil, the enclosed water of a swimming hole—is what makes them both sites of memory and calls to dwell. The everyday interaction with these objects is the reliving of a collective memory, even if we take for granted the pencil on our hand or a roof over our heads, and this relived memory, when considered, when fully brought to consciousness, requires an ethical dwelling with or within the object. When the history of a frequently used object is known, cradle-to-grave or cradle-to-cradle (original resource to the disposal of the object, cradle-to-grave being raw material to a landfill and cradle-to-cradle being raw material to a recycled material), it is impossible not to consider the object ethically. One might be less inclined to carelessly throw away a pencil if the origin of the pencil—a tree—is known. It is in this way that dwelling occurs.

The most quintessential form of Heideggarian dwelling can be found in Deakin's second chapter in *Wildwood*, "The House-Sheds: Camping." The chapter opens with the sentence, "I have a weakness for sheds or huts of all kinds, no doubt inherited from the bothy my father built for me and my animal familiars at the end of the garden when I was about six" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 9). Beyond the obvious connection of house-sheds to Heidegger's discussion of buildings in "Building Dwelling Thinking", Deakin's sentimental and nostalgic "weakness" reveals an inherent sense of dwelling found within both Deakin's philosophy and his writing. The chapter describes both the built hut and the natural environment, as well as the historical, cultural, and natural value to be found

in both landscapes. To Deakin, the hut does not simply exist on the edge of the natural world, it inhabits it, and allows him to inhabit it—to dwell within nature. The hut bridges the barrier between human construction and ecological processes, it allows for the fundamental preservation and construction dwelling requires in the Heideggarian sense.

The hut itself is a shepherd's hut "perched on iron wheels" and "lined with close-grained pine boards stained a deep honey-amber by years of woodsmoke seeping from the stove" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 9). It has "a barreled tin roof and wooden ceiling, so that when it rains the whole vessel sounds to the tattoo" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 10) and the walls are

> paneled with pine, tongued and grooved horizontally. Each time a nail has pierced the deep amber wood it has bled a black rusty stain that has crept along the grain and blurred, as though the wood or the wagon itself were travelling at speed" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 11).

The wagon is always exposed to nature and "the open door frames a wall of green: the hawthorn, maple, blackthorn hedge, the dipping wands of an ash, nettles, the graceful flowers of grasses. All stir in the hot breeze" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 11).

The rich, imagistic descriptions emphasize Deakin's innate sense of dwelling in the natural landscape. The hut is not simply made of wood, rather it is paneled with pine boards, and these pine boards are not two-dimensional, but they are "tongued and grooved horizontally," stained "honey-amber." Deakin is aware of the character of the building, as well as the history and situatedness of it—the concrete rootedness of the hut in the landscape. Years of woodsmoke have stained the walls, the door is always open to the greener world beyond, the hut is part and parcel a familiar with the woods, much like

the woods were a familiar to Deakin as a child. The hut leaps from constructed building to a space of dwelling, a function of connected nature and human creation. It organically incorporates the plants and animals surrounding it, thus incorporating the inhabitant with the "outside" realm.

Deakin psychologizes his attraction to the hut much in the terms of interconnection:

> Why do I sleep outdoors? Because of the sound of the random dripping of rain off the maples or ash trees over the roof of the railway wagon, or the hopping of a bird on the wet felt of the roof, or the percussion of a twig against the steel stove-chimney. Out there, I hear the yawn of the wind in the trees along Cowpasture Lane. I feel in touch with the elements in a way I never do indoors (*Wildwood*, Deakin 12).

In the "out there," Deakin finds connection with himself and with nature. He "feel[s] in touch with the elements" in a way he never does in the built environment of towns and cities. Of course this could be considered escapism, but Deakin speaks of a hut on his own property, next to his house. The hut is, in a sense, an extension of his home. A temporary extension, an extension that can be uprooted and moved elsewhere, but an extension of his home dwelling. The wood which supplied the panels—pine—and the wall of green beyond the doorframe are presenced in the sense that their full implication in ecological, physical, and human cycling (human cycling in the sense of use and reuse of resources) is understood. The pine was harvested over a century ago in a nearby forest, well-used and continuing to be used as a temporary dwelling. The trees outside the hut, as well as the hut itself, provide food and shelter for the "crow flying in big circles above the pasture" and "the roe-deer rubbing herself against one corner of the hut" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 11).

Dwelling, of course, does not require building or making, the human intrusion into a prior landscape. Insofar as Heidegger defines it by cultivation, preservation, and a "staying with things" (Heidegger 151), it can also be awareness, the act of listening and seeing, and the willingness to assimilate otherness into the human condition. If nothing else, this is the crux of Deakin's two texts, that humans need intimacy with the natural world in order to fully understand what it is to be human. While he does not write this specific manifesto, the catalogue of his adventures and daily walks and swims in England narrates the underlying urgency of awareness. One encounters the urban or polluted rarely in *Waterlog* and *Wildwood*, but the preciousness and fleetingness of the British landscape is inscribed in the text. One feels that the days of sleeping in railway wagons in the country and swimming in a local stream will soon be gone and all that will remain will be the archive of the text, the archive of Deakin's feelings and experience of the landscape, of what we may never experience or do.

It can be argued that Deakin's attention to detail and awareness of his landscape in his texts goes beyond a cataloguing or archiving of the landscape and functions instead as a call to the reader to dwell. He writes,

> Most of us live in a world where more and more places and things are signposted, labeled and officially "interpreted." There is something about all this that is turning the reality of things into virtual reality. It is the reason why walking, cycling and swimming will always be subversive activities. They allow us to regain a sense of what is old and wild in these islands, by getting off the beaten track and breaking free of the official version of things (*Waterlog*, Deakin 4).

Deakin's text calls for the reader to become subversive in the physical and ethical senses, to not just read his words, but to relive them through the reader's own experience. By

imagining the old and wild that is so central to Deakin's works, the reader is compelled to behave likewise. The call to walk, cycle, and swim is subversive in that it requires lightly mediated interaction between human and nonhuman environment. Physically, one is closer to the rest of nature when participating in Deakin's activities; ethically, one is preserving the rest of nature and presencing it within one's thoughts. Dwelling, as the relationship between thought and action, is, in Deakin's words, subversive.

In much the way that Heaney's poems become self-referential, inscribing evolution and renewal into memory, Deakin's texts call for the "breaking free" of the "signposted, labeled and officially 'interpreted.'" Instead of framing his texts as a nature writing centered only upon nature apart from humans, Deakin emphasizes the inescapability of humans from nature in the very structure: he is walking or swimming across Britain, and these activities are politically and socially subversive in that they center the focus of day-to-day life on a new sense of awareness and freedom.

One of the more poignant chapters in *Waterlog* recounts Deakin's everyday experience of swimming in the moat at his house in Suffolk.

> Rain in the night has made the moat wonderfully fresh and clear. I walked across the wet lawn and went down step by wooden step into the inviting water, because I didn't want to disturb the insect, mollusc and amphibian city, already far into the rhythms of its day, by diving" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 75).

From the first moment of entry into the water, Deakin sets the scene of a clear and cool moat filled with various and vibrant life, both plant and animal, and even more importantly, we as readers gain a sense of awareness and presencing of the ecosystem by the fact that he says he does not dive into the moat, but rather steps into the water, so as

not to disturb the environment. When Heidegger emphasizes the four-fold quality of dwelling, he is referencing a unity much like Deakin's action and emphasis in this one sentence. There is a regard for the wholeness of the ecosystem—both in Deakin's presence, that of the swimmer and of the wooden steps and of the moat itself, and in the ecosystem's presence, that of the insects, mollusks, and amphibians. There is also something extremely conversational about Deakin's writing, especially in the way that he involves the reader—"Swimming somewhere familiar is quite as addictive as a familiar walk, or bike ride, or sleeping in your own bed" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 73). The "you" includes the reader in the archive of the text, emphasizing the importance of reiteration through action, the reiteration of the subversive activity of being aware of the environment and participating in the presencing of it.

Reiteration and reenactment are also seen in Deakin's examination of Oak Apple Day by the villagers of Great Wishford, an account which reveals live, evolving, and acted memory in the site of ritual. He describes Oak Apple day as the "annual reassertion of rights to collect wood in the Royal Forest of Grovely by the villagers of Great Wishford in accordance with a charter granted to them in 1603" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 85). Although the charter affirms the right to collect wood, it also patronizes the villagers by requiring the entire village to " ' go in a dance' to Salisbury Cathedral six miles away once a year in May and claim their rights and customs in the forest with 'The Shout' of the words 'Grovely! Grovely! Grovely! and all Grovely!' " (*Wildwood*, Deakin 86).

While the right to gather wood by the armful or cartload was exercised by some villagers until recently, it has evolved into an excuse for celebration. Every year on Oak

Apple Day, green boughs of oaks are cut and carried into the village to decorate the doorway of each house, including the village church. The boughs are then judged and prizes awarded by the committee of the Oak Apple Club, which was founded in 1892 "to stand up for the wood rights and to perpetuate the May celebrations" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 87). After gathering the wood, the celebration continues to include dancing—"four women in the rural costume as worn by Wishford women in 1825, holding bundles of hazel and oak sticks above their heads, danced a stately measure to the music of a squeeze box" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 89)—shouting, drinking, and a large bonfire.

This ritual with clear pagan overtones exists as a *lieux* in that it is a site—in this instance a ritual, not an object—that repeats itself and continually evolves into an event with separate significance from the "original" event. The original event of Oak Apple Day, however, is not clear. The villagers of Wishford have exercised the right to collect wood since the beginning of the village. The charter, a reaction to prevent the violent expulsion of the villagers from the royally owned forest, merely recognizes the right, and while it was drawn up in 1603, it only reiterated the existing right. Furthermore, in that the charter patronized the villagers by forcing them to march six miles to Salisbury Cathedral, it also only granted the right to dead wood—and only as much as could be carried out of the forest in one's arms or in a small cart. The gentry disputed the charter and attempted to bar the forest from the villagers for years until the Oak Apple Club was formed in 1892 to protect and promote Oak Apple Day. Even at the formation of the Oak Apple Club, however, collecting wood in the forest was not a necessity. Other forms of heat and light were beginning to be readily available and Oak Apple Day, if nothing else, was a memorial to the hundreds of years of conflict over resource use in the forest.

Furthermore, Oak Apple Day is celebrated on May 29 each year which happens to be Oak Apple Day across the country because "it is the anniversary of the Restoration to the throne of King Charles II in 1660, after hiding in an oak at Boscobel in Shropshire" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 90). The original charter for Wishford allows for oak boughs to be cut between May Day and Whit Tuesday, "so it seems likely that the feast was deliberately moved in honor of the Restoration" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 90).

The original meaning of Oak Apple Day seems to have receded into evolved ritual. Villagers no longer gather wood in Grovely forest, yet once a year they tromp en masse into the forest and lop branches off of oak trees. These branches, a pagan symbol of fertility, are then stylishly placed on the doors of homes and of the church, the latter ironically a place where clearly pagan fertility dances are danced. The later creation of the Oak Apple Day Club further confused the original intent of Oak Apple Day by pushing the exercise of rights into socialist politics by adopting the motto "Unity is Strength." Yet while the original meaning of Oak Apple Day has been lost over the years, it is still celebrated without interruption every May 29.

Oak Apple Day certainly fits Nora's definition of "real memory:" a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth" (Nora 8), and it also fits Heidegger's definition of dwelling as presencing. The annual celebration not only recognizes the collective rights of the villagers to wood in Grovely forest, but also the plight of Grace Reed and three others in 1825 who were imprisoned by the eleventh Earl of Pembroke when they attempted to gather wood in the forest. The day also marries pagan tradition with Christian tradition, political activism with pastoral custom. Above

all, the celebration honors the forest—"there [is] a sanctity in this living bough" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 88). The ritual as a space-oriented, not time-oriented, act requires only The Royal Forest of Grovely and the villagers of Whishford. The actions that constitute the celebration—gathering the oak boughs, decorating the homes and church, dancing, a large party—have changed over the years, and through the celebration, a collective live memory is established in Wishford. More than anything, however, the annual Oak-Apple Day celebrates the symbiotic relationship between humans and forest, the dwelling of humans with and alongside the non-human environment. The coppicing of trees promotes their growth and continued health, and, at some historical time, the coppiced boughs provided warmth and cooking fuel, two things essential for the survival of the villagers.

"Swimming with Eels" is another chapter that unwittingly explores every Heideggarian aspect of dwelling within the fourfold, from the skies to spirituality. The chapter opens with Deakin approaching the city of Ely, situated in the Fens in southeastern England. Once an island, Ely became landlocked in the 18th century when the Fens were drained to provide energy for the burgeoning Industrial Revolution. Surrounded by water, Ely "dominates the most mysterious landscape in Britain, full of water and odd corners that can still be hard to reach, let alone find" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 55). The chapter continues on to describe the life of an eel-trapper, the *last* eel-trapper in Ely, "a city where the monks once paid their tithes to the cathedral with 30,000 eels a year" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 55), as well as the life-cycle of the eels. Immediately, Deakin constructs an intimacy in the text between the reader, Deakin, and Sid Merry, the eel-trapper. The reader is privy to the conversation between Deakin and Sid Merry, as well

as Sid's history. Deakin tells us, "There was always a market for eels in the Fens. People would sell them in buckets and baskets in Ely market until just a few years ago" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 56). Instantly the reader feels as if he understands the history of Ely and the eel trade, as well as the consequence of the loss of the eel market for Sid Merry. Instead of creating a space where the reader feels voyeuristic, Deakin's writing invites the reader into the events, thus establishing intimacy between event, text, and memory.

The life-cycle of the eel is, first and foremost, the base of the narrative in the chapter. Eel elvers, immature eels, migrate to the Fens from the Sargasso Sea after three years at sea. Once they are in the Fens, they are "clearly in touch with the moon, moving with it like the tides and shunning sun" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 58). They swim up the river at night in dark brown shoals like tadpoles, although nowhere near so many now as there used to be" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 58). Once the eels mature, they are called silvers, and after a few years in the Fens, most migrate back to the Sargasso to spawn. "Sid says they're usually about twenty when they go back to the sea, weighing between one and four pounds…Once they have gone back to spawn in the Sargasso, the silvers never return. Like spawning salmon, they simply die" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 59).

Deakin does not merely provide reproductive information on the eels, however. He also describes their color—"mottled and green and varnished in mucus it could be an uprooted plant, a mandrake come to life"—and anatomy—"an eel's head, with its eyes set close together and high in the skull, and the sharp snout, bears a remarkable similarity to Concorde" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 58). He also describes the eel's reaction to being pulled from the water:

> John untied each trap at the bottom and tipped the creatures deftly into the plastic tub, where they subsided into a glutinous tangle, making little kissing sounds. Their electric energy was astonishing. They reared straight up in the tub on the tips of their tails like snakes, waving their little heads about looking for a way out, swaying like puppets, naked as bedsprings. Every now and again an eel spilled to the bottom of the boat and slithered in reverse, then forward, curling itself into a question mark as if to say: 'What the hell is going on here' (*Waterlog*, Deakin 58-9).

But this description is not just natural history. It is a human interpretation of the eels, that the creatures that rear up like snakes and look like a Concorde jet, and it is clear that Deakin respects the eels for their role as a "totemic ancestor" (*Waterlog,* Deakin 56). The eels, although inseparable in this text from the humans who rely on them and the culture built up around them, are the original inhabitants of the Fens, they are neighbors to humans, with more right to the water than the humans who drained and reengineered the waterways.

This relationship of humans to eels and vice versa is analyzed in both the text and the subtext of the chapter. Although Deakin does not consciously draw the parallel between water quality (the health of the Fens) and occupation, it can be argued that he advocates a rural, land/water-oriented lifestyle over a town-based lifestyle, in that the environment of the Fens is preserved only by those who rely upon the Fens for survival. Deakin opens the chapter by introducing Sid Merry, the last eel trapper in Ely. From the very beginning of the chapter, Deakin inscribes memory. Sid remembers trapping the eels in baskets, also called eel-hives, putting out night lines for the eels, and selling the eels in buckets in the market. All three of these activities are no longer practiced in Ely or in the neighboring towns. Sid is the last eel-trapper. After he retires, Ely will lose its history of eel-trapping, and this is what Deakin pays tribute to in his chapter—the soon-

to-be lost art of eel-trapping. It is not that the eels are fewer than they used to be, which they are, but that no one in the region wants to trap eels for a living. Instead people flock to cities to work in factories, and industry that pollutes the water of the Fens, making the life of the eel-trappers and small, local farmers harder. Industry is erasing the small cottage industries of rural England.

It is in this way that Deakin's text serves as an ecological archive of the Fens, of both the natural environment and the humans who dwell in that environment. He preserves the stories of Ernie Hall, a resident of the village of Wicken, who used to "dive off the bridge there into the muddy Hundred Food Drain, swim down on the ebbing tide to the Crown, three miles away, sink three pints while the tide turned, then swim back up on the rising tide to Bank Farm" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 66). But he also preserves the spiritual dimension of life in the Fens, and how Christianity itself depended upon the natural environment until the 1970s when pollution levels were deemed too high in the rivers—"The River Lark was known as Jordan, because people came from all over the Fens to be baptized by total immersion in its waters as Isleham" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 68). Many of the residents of Isleham remember the baptisms, but "the Isleham Baptists stopped immersing people in the Lark in 1972 because they thought it had become too polluted" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 69). Deakin, however, swims the lark and feels "baptized by the naiads of the Lark" in a "delightful deep pool beside an old hump-backed bridge above the mill at Icklingham" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 69).

Questioning the level of pollution in the river, Deakin writes to the Environment Agency "to enquire whether the river was still polluted, or whether it might once again be safe to be baptized in the river" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 70). The reply that the river contained

sewage effluent and therefore was not safe to swim or to dunk in stems from an industrial pollution incident in the 1980s.

> The sugar factory at Bury St Edmunds leaked some of the highly toxic effluent from the treatment of sugar beet into the Lark. Nothing is more polluting than sugar, which deoxygenates water by promoting the massive growth of bacteria. As the poisoned water went downstream it killed everything. The river has since recovered, and I saw plenty of fish, but the question remains…could it happen again? (*Waterlog*, Deakin 71).

Could it happen again? The sugar beet processing plant is still in Bury St Edmunds and is still the town's main industry. Ironically, Deakin remarks that "You can always tell something untoward is going on in a place when you see large numbers of trees being planted" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 71). The factory looks "satanic at night, when clouds of evil-smelling white smoke and steam billow like candyfloss out of a forest of steel chimneys and hi-tech ducting, floodlit in lurid pink and orange" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 71). It appears that yes, an environmental disaster could easily occur again in the Fens. In a chapter that begins with the story of last eel-trapper of in Fens, pervaded by a sense of the end of an old and well-loved way of life, Deakin ends with no hope. "In a prosperous and sainted English town, I witnessed the public humiliation of the Jordan of the Fens. By the Bury St Edmunds Tesco I sat down and wept" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 72).

The call to dwell is the subtext of this chapter. While Deakin does not call for sustainable industry or development, his lament of the "public humiliation of the Jordan of the Fens" is in itself a call to action, a call to dwell. Deakin mourns the loss of the eel-trappers and pleasures in swimming in the "wide stillness of Burwell Lode" where there was a "powerful sense of eels in the reeds and in the invisible mire below" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 62), and in a different part of the Fens he calls the water "brilliantly clear—'gin-

clear' as they say here" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 63). The landscape is powerful with the history of the rural, water-centered life as well as the history of language and it holds within itself an archive of human dwelling. With the loss of the former ways of life, eel-trapping and farming, comes the loss of the landscape to industrial accidents and construction projects. The culvert of the Tesco is not far from Ely and Sid Merry the eel-catcher. Roger Deakin is calling his readers to a state of dwelling. While he can preserve the Fens in words in his text, he cannot save the Fens from becoming polluted or built-over. But the actions of those preserved in the text do. In the way that Sid presences the eels by respecting their lifecycle—he does not trap the eels when they are en route to the Sargasso Sea—and the allotment farmers presence the Fens by "minister[ing] peacefully to their cabbages, decanting the holy butt-water from their cans with appreciation, if not reverence" (*Waterlog*, Deakin 72), Deakin also presences the rich natural and human history of the Fens, concluding that humans are a part of natural history, negatively or positively existing within nature, within the Fens, and archives the rich contextual landscape of the Fens.

Although Deakin champions the idea of a new nature—one that includes humans as an integral part of the ecosystem—this new nature can become problematic. One example of an uneasy relationship between humans, material objects, and the non-human natural world is Deakin's chapter, "Among Jaguars," which is devoted entirely to the Jaguar automobile and it's relationship to walnut trees. As a well-established environmentalist—Deakin is a founding member of the international environmental organization Friends of the Earth, as well as the co-founder of Common Ground, a not-for-profit that champions localism and the cultivation of small-scale apple orchards,

among other projects—it is interesting that Deakin would choose to dedicate an entire chapter in a book about woods to the harvesting of trees for an automobile. Although this kind of relationship—car to wood, Jaguar to walnut— is exactly what Deakin is interested in, it is difficult to be convinced of any way in which this relationship is sustainable and does not harm one or both parties involved. While Deakin argues that in one small way, humans experience nature in an extraordinarily personal manner through driving or experiencing a Jaguar, and that the car connects humanity to nature in the same way that standing in a grove of walnuts does, he does not manage to frame the chapter by a hope of sustainability. Instead, he questions the viability of using the walnut tree as a resource for car production, in addition to the negative environmental impact of the automobile. Thus the question is posed, is it possible for humans to dwell within both the environment and the automobile and is Jaguar's relationship to the walnut an example of Heideggarian dwelling?

"It might have been a library, and the studious-looking people in white coats librarians or archivists moving bundles of old manuscripts about very carefully, leafing through them, or settling to pore over them at well-lit desks" (Deakin 138), Deakin writes of the Jaguar factory in Coventry. The scene portrays cabinet-makers "selecting and cutting out the shapes of delicate walnut veneer for the dashboards and door panels" of the cars (*Wildwood*, Deakin 138), and the awe inspired by this setting causes him to compare the cars to "higher animals" that have evolved from "the feral SS Jaguar 100 sports model of 1936" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 138). An aura of mystery and glamour hangs about the chapter—the cars advance "gracefully" along the production line (*Wildwood*, Deakin 138), they emulate the "wave-motion of the leaping *Panthera onca* in the forests

of the Amazon" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 139). Like the jaguar animal, he argues, a certain type of mythology surrounds the cars.

Deakin then affirms this mythology by exploring Roland Barthe's essay on the Citroen DS.

> Modern Jaguars still belong to what Roland Barthe's calls 'the bestiary of power'…He believes that modern cars are the exact equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals: 'the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object.' Barthes sees that mythology is the key to understanding the world of cars: that, considered as objects, they are 'messengers of a world above nature' (*Wildwood*, Deakin 138-9).

This concept of a "world above nature" has, of course, led to intricate environmental and ethical issues, as well as the very apparent disregard by human beings to the world as an ecosystem. Descartes' "Cogito, ergo sum" is called to mind—only the human mind can think, so therefore the human mind is above all of creation. The historical clash of environmental issues and philosophy aside, however, Barthe's and Deakin's mythic typology do attempt to clarify how walnut trees and Jaguar automobiles might figure in a theory of dwelling.

First, Deakin's mythology depends on a certain level of artisanship. If the Jaguars are to be considered tantamount to Gothic cathedrals, then the shaping of each piece of walnut veneer must be both well-planned and well-executed. As he explains, the walnut, in English culture, is one of the original marks of wealth: "Its roots lie in the Old English *Walhhnutu* and the Old German *Walhoz*. The first syllable, *wal*, is related to the Old English *wale*, which evolved into *weal*, as in *commonweal*, and then became *wealth*, in the sense of well-being as much as possession" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 139). On one hand,

the linguistic analysis of the common base *weal*, as signifiying both well-being and material possession, is extremely similar to Heidegger's linguistic analysis of the Saxon *wuon*, to remain (dwell) in one place, and, on the other hand, the walnut as wealth signifies a sense of care, for one does not intentionally mismanage wealth. There seems to be a connection between wealth and care, possession and dwelling, but the extent of this relationship is unclear. Historically, after the catastrophic freeze of 1709 which killed all the walnuts across Europe, however, cabinet-makers turned to mahogany, which grew in fashion over the next few centuries. The relative scarcity of walnut as a result of the freeze now ensures the walnut tree's place as a rare and beautiful wood in Europe, thus presupposing the idea that the walnut will be cared for equal to its scarcity.

Walnut burr veneer, now rare in Europe, is imported from the Sacramento Valley in California. These burrs "are found only on large, old trees, perhaps one in a thousand" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 140) and are a sign of the many stresses trees endure over their lifetime. When a burr develops on a walnut, it tends to grow "around the graft at the crown of the root and in the base of the trunk, swelling it like a sprained ankle" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 140). The burr begins as a reaction to some disturbance in the tree like a "kind of benign wood tumor," but as the cells divide quickly and increase the size of the bur, "what begins as a disfigurement ends life as an opulent adornment" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 141). Burrs also grow further up the trunk, leaving a pot-bellied bulge that is sometimes poached. Each Burr is sold by its weight, and one large tree's value increased from £5,000 to £50,000 after it had been converted to veneer. The material value of the walnut is incredible. "The veneer is a celebration of the tree's pent-up energy in a whirling wood-dance" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 141).

Deakin's interest in the walnut, however, lies in the transfer from tree to craftsman. He describes the process as taxidermy, that "whatever secret anguish had created the burr was now on display, coopted as a sign of the genius that created the car" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 142). The "secret" of the tree is transferred to the veneer-cutters in the Jaguar plant. As each piece of veneer is calculated and cut, fitted to the vehicle, one more piece of nature integrates itself into an industrial- and technical-era machine. "I watched as the car-shapes of walnut were bedded gently on foundations of three strata of poplar veneer, each laid with its grain at right angles to its neighbor…[they] were sanded, polished, varnished, sanded smooth again and fine-polished twice" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 142). In view of this process, Deakin invokes Barthes again:

> 'It is well known,' says Roland Barthes, 'that smoothness is always an attribute of perfection because its opposite reveals a technical and typically human operation of assembling: Christ's robe was seamless, just as the airships of science fiction are made of unbroken metal' (Deakin 142).

The idea of perfection, in its most humanly shape, is found in Barthe's comment on smoothness. A seamless object is generally granted more value than a seamed object. In the craft of fitting walnut veneer to a Jaguar, the seamless quality of the veneer after it has been fit, pressed, sanded, and shined emphasizes human mastery of the wood.

Mastering the wood (nature) is exactly the thing Heidegger worries about in regard to dwelling: "Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it" (Heidegger 150). So how does Jaguar's use of walnut veneer free the walnut to its presencing? Walnut trees are becoming more and more rare every year, but Jaguar still harvests the boles for its cars. Jaguar has responded publicly by planting a two-hundred acre plot of walnut trees in Staffordshire. "This is, of course, meant as a gesture and not

to assure future supplies of veneered dashboards, gear handles or steering wheels" (*Wildwood*, Deakin 146). Even the research Jaguar is funding on greenhouse gas emissions and responsible walnut bole harvesting cannot erase the impact each individual car has had on both walnut populations and the biosphere.

"Among Jaguars" ends on a note of hope, but perhaps this hope is built on shaky foundations.

> Watching one of the big Jaguars inching along the assembly lines, it occurred to me that one way for this machine to 'conceal itself entirely[6]' would be if, like the true wild animal when it takes to water, it were to leave no sign of its passing, no carbon vapour trail, no damage at all to the Earth. Take all these away, and it would attain perfection. And there would be no more need to plant walnuts (*Wildwood*, Deakin 151).

Deakin longs for a day when technology advances to the point of concealment, the point of perfection in the Jaguar's evolution. While the company is taking steps to reach this goal, it may never happen. His exploration of the Jaguar's relationship with the walnut tree is more parasitic than symbiotic. Jaguar merely uses the trees with no return to the trees. "Among Jaguars" becomes a failed study of dwelling, for instead of "setting [the walnut] free into its own presencing," (Heidegger 150), Jaguar subjugates the trees and harvests to its own ends without replenishing the grove.

What then is the overarching theme or impetuous in Deakin's writing? What do his two nonfiction texts bring us that poetry or fiction or some other form of literature do not bring us, the readers? Certainly he brings the rural life of England to a large

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[6] Refers to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des Hommes*: "The more perfect machines become, the more they are invisible behind their function…It seems that perfection is attained not when there is nothing more to add, but when there isnothing more to take away. At the climax of its evolution, the machine conceals itself entirely" (Deakin 150).

readership. He records history and rituals, names and dates, the natural history and evolution of the England in both *Waterlog* and *Wildwood*. To some extent, then, his texts serve as an archive—an archive that would certainly be lost in the well-established historical and literary centers. Sid Merry and the individual villagers of Great Wishford would certainly be forgotten if Deakin had not recorded their lives and stories. The gin-clear waters of the Fens and the aquatic life in his Suffolk moat, while possibly recorded in natural history books or species guides would not be available to a large readership if it were not for Deakin's environmentally-focused writing.

On the other hand, Deakin's writings also ask the ethical question: what is the responsibility of humans to the non-human environment. His texts, it can be argued, beg for a new form of nature, a nature in which humans and the environment coexist and are viewed as the same. In this new environment, dwelling becomes the key to success. Humans cannot fully coexist with the non-human environment unless they dwell among it, unless they spare and preserve the earth by presencing all parts of the earth to its fullest. Some relationships, like that of the walnut tree to the Jaguar car, cannot sustain themselves and do not exemplify dwelling. Others, like that of the small-scale eel-trapper to the eel do. When Deakin's texts are read together, a comprehensive nature ethic emerges through the archive of *les lieux de mémoire*. *Waterlog* and *Wildwood* as texts record the various living sites of memory throughout England, but they call for active dwelling within the environment. Together, Roger Deakin's two texts allow for literature to compel ethical action and thus become an active site of memory.

The *lieux de mémoire* created in Roger Deakin and Seamus Heaney's works help create a new nature writing, a writing that does not separate humans from the

environment, but implicates them within it. The politics of the human animal is just as important in the spatial and temporal dimensions of ecology as the growth of the walnut burr. The landscape of Ireland certainly serves as a fixed point for Heaney's poetry, just as much as Walnut Tree Farm serves as fixed point for Roger Deakin. But Heaney moves beyond Ireland and finds himself at home in "the old man-killing parishes" in Jutland (Heaney 63) and in the freeze of Höfn. The literature of place in Heaney and Deakin's writing is expanded beyond their fixed points. Deakin explores all of Britain, both its land and water, and Heaney addresses global landscapes and events. Both writers find themselves steeped in ecological imagery and event, whether in their own personal memories or in larger political or social memories.

The relationship between memory and landscape, event and archive is certainly complex in both writers' works, but one thing is certain, Seamus Heaney and Roger Deakin cannot "imagine what might come after nature, when we are gone" (Cowley 12). Human nature is part and parcel the natural world, and as such, Heaney's poems and Deakin's writings express a new kind of nature writing, a writing compelled by the human implication in ecology.

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