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Shanna Early Date

GATHERING PLACES: PLACE AS ARCHIVE IN IRISH, INDIAN, AND CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Gathering Places: Place as Archive in Irish, Indian, and Caribbean Literature

by

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Abstract

Gathering Places: Place as Archive in Irish, Indian, and Caribbean Literature
By Shanna Early

"Places gather," observes philosopher Edward S Casey. He continues, "Minimally, places gather things in their midst—where 'things' connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts." The gathering tendency, Derrida explains, is an essential characteristic of the archive: "The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together." Scientists, historians, and literary scholars such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen have begun to think of how places operate as organic archives of human and natural history. "Gathering Places: Place as Archive in Irish, Indian and Caribbean Literature" argues that some authors from Ireland, India, and the Caribbean represent place as a counter-archive to the institutional archive, making space for the often-elided histories of marginalized people and situating human history within the broader context of natural history. It explores how literature imagines places that gather personal stories and alternate histories, potentially challenging formal archives and the systems of power in which they are enmeshed. This dissertation works across genres and national borders, focusing on the work of Sebastian Barry, Seamus Heaney, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Jamaica Kincaid, and Derek Walcott. The texts I study represent natural spaces and entities that partner with humans to build knowledge and store memory. I argue that these authors imagine and give voice to possible histories, searching outside the limits of institutional archives for other sites of authorization, which come through places that gather the histories they posit in their texts. I contend that these literary engagements with place-archives gesture toward an understanding of the past that extends beyond anthropocentric perceptions of history, promoting a more ecologically ethical view of the world.

Gathering Places

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Acknowledgments

When I was a child, then First Lady Hillary Clinton introduced mainstream America to the now well-traveled proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." At this stage in my life, I have no wisdom regarding child-rearing, but I can say with confidence that it takes a village to produce a dissertation. My dissertation village has been endlessly patient, tenaciously interested in my progress, and deeply compassionate about my struggles. It seems impossible to me that I will be able to adequately convey the value of their many various contributions to my success here.

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Introduction

An Archive to Shelter In

"A tree is a time machine," declares The Doctor in a 2014 episode of BBC's long-running science fiction show *Doctor Who*. This episode, "In the Forest of the Night," sees The Doctor and his companions investigate a dense, mature forest that springs up mysteriously overnight all over the world. The Doctor continues, "You plant a little acorn in 1795, and in 2016 there's an oak tree there, in the same spot, with a little bit of 1795 still alive in it." By The Doctor's logic, archives, too, are time machines, keeping bits of the past alive in the present through the efforts to preserve and maintain significant documents and artifacts. Indeed, I might amend The Doctor's terminology to consider instead the archival nature of trees, to focus not on its movement through time so much as its astonishing preservation of the past. As it grows, the tree makes records of its own history within its body, archive and archivist in one.

A tree is an archive, and part of a larger natural archive comprised of human and non-human artifacts, constructed by human and non-human actions. Like institutional archives that store the materials from which we write our histories, *place-archives* gather and preserve traces of the past, at times allowing for an alternative narrative to emerge than what is produced in the institutions. This dissertation draws attention to authors who represent place as a counter-archive to the institutional archive, making space for the often-elided histories of marginalized people and also situating human history within the broader context of natural history. It explores how literature imagines places that gather personal stories and alternate histories with the potential to challenge the formal archives and the systems of power in which they are enmeshed. These

literary engagements with place-archives, I argue, gesture toward an understanding of the past that extends beyond anthropocentric understandings of history, promoting a more ecologically ethical view of the world.

Many postcolonial texts lend themselves particularly well to this line of inquiry because they often focus on the stories, struggles, and lives of exactly the kind of people who are typically omitted from the institutional archive. The archive's use as a technology of governance, as I discuss further below, makes such texts particularly valuable in examining how place-archives operate differently than formal archives. Many of these texts are deeply invested, too, in developing a sense of place, perhaps because ownership and control of representations of place have been so deeply contested in these regions. For this project, I concentrate on twentieth- and twenty-first-century Irish, Indian, and Caribbean literature. These texts show an increasing concern for the way that humans interact with and view themselves in relation to both marginalized people and the nonhuman environment. While I draw on a range of texts to make my argument, I focus particularly on the poetry of Seamus Heaney and Derek Walcott, and novels by Sebastian Barry, Amitav Ghosh, and Arundhati Roy. These texts all do the imaginative work of locating archives beyond the institutional context.

I. Defining the Archive

In his seminal lecture on the archive, Derrida quips, "nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'" (57), a comment that remains true twenty years after its utterance in *Archive Fever.* Both a noun and a verb, the term can refer to repositories of materials, historical records and artifacts, and the act of placing items in an archive. Generally, archival repositories are libraries, governments, and other record-keeping institutions such as hospitals or schools.

Archival records are the documents and artifacts stored in the repository. These definitions of archive suffice at the most basic level, but as AM Purssell suggests, the term archive comes with "considerable conceptual baggage" (202). Indeed, the practices associated with archiving are less simple than they may seem. As Penelope Papailias points out, "The archive is also characterized by a diverse range of practices, including reading, classifying, reclassifying, documenting, donating, destroying, hiding, hoarding, collecting, and exposing" (402). What an archive does, what it means, how it is constructed, to whom it is open, what it produces, who and what find representation in it, and who and what are excluded are all questions that should drive our understanding of what an archive is. Drawing on Derrida, Foucault, and other theorists of the archive, I develop a working concept of the archive centered around its role in historical production and interpretation, politics and governmentality, and cultural memory. For the purpose of clarity, I refer to "the archive" in the singular to invoke this concept.

Archival records are historians' disciplinary raw material, making it possible for historians to construct arguments and develop narratives about the past. Charles Merewether's definition of the archive hinges on its role in the production of history; he explains, "Created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a collection or library, constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written" (10). However, as Patrick Joyce points out, "There has been limited reflection on the truth that the archive which produces history is also the product of history" (36). Further drawing attention to this dual role of the archive as producer and product of history, Ann Laura Stoler argues, "To understand an archive one needs to understand the institutions that it served" ("Colonial" 275). Stoler's

comment highlights the archive's embeddedness in a particular historical context that must be understood in order to accurately represent the history it preserves.

The need to understand the context also indicates the archive's role as what Thomas Osborne labels a "center of interpretation" (52), following Bruno Latour's "center of calculation," which refers to "the venues in which knowledge production builds upon the accumulation of resources through circulatory movements to other places" (Jöns 158). The archive operates as a node in a network of knowledge production, in which the raw material of documents and artifacts are interpreted by scholars. Those interpretations are then sent out onto the broader circuit of knowledge. But as Stoler and Joyce point out, part of the interpretive work is understanding the historical situatedness of the archive and what networks of knowledge and power it serves. As a center of interpretation, the archive's role as an accumulator of resources and materials also renders it a center of authority and what Osborne calls a "principle of credibility" (53). The archive, in other words, is the site that gives authority to claims about history and makes them credible.

While Osborne's interest in archival authority is primarily academic—he explains that as a principle of credibility, the archive "functions as a sort of bottom-line resource in the carving-out of claims to disciplinarity" (53)—the idea of the archive as a site of authority and credibility also connects to its function in politics and governmentality. For Derrida, this connection is the basis of the archive. He contends, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation" (11). According to Derrida, the archive has been central to political power, both for the ruling class

and the populace, since the very beginning of the idea of the archive. Tracing the etymology of the word, he observes, ". . . the meaning of 'archive,' its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded" (9). From its very foundations, then, the archive is enmeshed in systems of power. It is from the outset a technology of governance, housed, guarded, and interpreted by those in power. The archons, writes Derrida, are "accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (10). The archive may be a center of interpretation, but as Derrida suggests, the right to interpretation has been closely guarded in the past and made exclusive to those in positions of power. Osborne notes, "With the totalitarian archive, the archivist and the historian are essentially the same person; there is no gap between their functions" (57). The right of interpretation of the archive remains with the archons.

Derrida and Osborne, then, point toward the role of the archive in politics. Joyce argues that the archive is "a political technology" (36) and asserts that "our engagement with it is political" (46). In part, the archive as a political technology is related to its role as a principle of credibility and how it can be interpreted and used by people in positions of authority. In other words, if the archive is the source that authorizes knowledge, control over how it is interpreted is essentially control over knowledge itself. In this way, the archive can be understood in terms of Foucault's concept of power-knowledge. In a 1975 interview, Foucault explains, "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (qtd in Gordon xvi). As a site of knowledge production that is itself produced by power, the archive functions as a center of power-knowledge, which is, perhaps, another way of

understanding it as a center of interpretation and recognizing that the right to interpret is a deployment (Foucault's *dispositif*) of power. The archive is, as David Ingram suggests, a technique along with "statistics, [. . .] metrics, classification schemes, exams, therapies, and disciplines" used for "detaining, surveying, conditioning, partitioning, and 'governing' discrete and irreducibly diverse populations" (248). The archive is a political technology, an apparatus of power.

As a political technology, a center for interpretation, and a producer of knowledge, the archive also functions as a grid of intelligibility (Stoler *Along* 37), operating at the limit of what we can credibly or authoritatively know. Using the term metaphorically to develop his theory of discourse, Foucault claims, "The archive is the first law of what can be said" (*Archeology* 129). While my interests here are not in the Foucauldian archive that governs discourse, I want to borrow from his definition to suggest that the archive is the law of what can be known. However, the archive, as Joyce suggests, "is not neutral" (46). For as much as it is an impressive accumulation of the material traces of history and memory, it is also limited in how much it can accumulate. The archive, Derrida asserts, is equally a place of memory and forgetting. He admonishes, "Let us never forget this Greek distinction between mneme or anamnesis on the one hand, and hypomnema on the other. The archive is hypomnesic" (14).[1] For Derrida, the archive functions as a collector of hypomnema, of prosthetic memories. In that sense, the archive is a technology of memory. However, it is also deficient in that capacity; the archive, he explains, "takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory" (14). The

[1] Anamnesis refers to memory or recall. Hypomnema refers to reminders, including notes, documents, etc. Hypomnesic refers to deficient memory.

archive is at once a collection of hypomnema and a space of hypomnesia, a site of memory and forgetting.

The forgetful nature of the archive is in part due to its physical limitations as a space that houses documents, artifacts, and other materials. Archival practices have been exclusionary by necessity. John Ridener's *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archive Theory* walks readers through the major theories that have governed archival praxis through the twentieth century. The majority of these theories emerged in relation to government archives, and questions of what was worthy of preservation are central. Ridener reports, for example, that TR Schellenberg's influential book *Modern Archives* (1956) defines archives as "records that 'are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference or research purposes'" (82). This definition indicates the role of value judgement in archival collecting practices, and thereby also implies that someone—a modern-day counterpart to Derrida's archons—occupies the adjudicating position in determining what records are preserved. Ridener continues, "Coincidental to this definition, the National Archives [of the United States] sought to serve the following fields of knowledge in order of importance: public administration, diplomatic history, national history, economic history and theory, demography, biography and genealogy, and physical science," all with the intention of improving the efficiency of government operations (82). Such theories show the close relationship between the archive and other institutions of power, and the discriminatory practices of archivists in service of those institutions indicate how the archive is constructed as political technology. Those same politically informed discriminatory practices that shape decisions about what is included in the archive and what is not simultaneously define the official limits of cultural memory by rejecting or eliminating records

deemed unworthy. As a center of interpretation, a principle of credibility, the law of what can be known, the archive shapes history through what it preserves as memory and what it allows us to forget. It makes some histories visible and intelligible while obscuring others.

II. Archive and Empire

In the study of empire and postcolonial history, the imperial archive is remarkable both for the sheer volume of records it contains and for what those records leave out. Thomas Richards notes that the quantity of documents created during the rise of the British Empire in the nineteenth century is staggering; "The civil servants of Empire pulled together so much information and wrote so many books about their experiences that today we have only begun to scratch the surface of their archive. In a very real sense theirs was a paper empire: an empire built on a series of flimsy pretexts that were always becoming texts" (4). At the time, Richards explains, this massive gathering of information was a new strategy for governing the far-flung territories under British rule. It operated as a political technology on the imperial scale. Ann Laura Stoler suggests, "If it is obvious that colonial archives are products of state machines, it is less obvious that they are, in their own right, technologies that reproduced those states themselves. [. . .] Colonial statecraft was built on the foundations of statistics and surveys that demanded an administrative apparatus to produce and process that information" ("Colonial" 271). The administrative apparatus included everything from courier services to buildings in which to process and store the records being produced. But as Richards contends, the archive also fed the national imaginary of the British Empire, which he sees as particularly evident in literature. He writes, "The narratives of the late nineteenth century are full of fantasies of an empire united not by force but by information" (1). While that information was, as Richards and

Stoler both point out, much less cohesive than we are sometimes led to believe, the imperial archive helped to create an idea of what the Empire was and how it operated. Both the archive itself and the technologies that produced the information fed into it formed an image of the Empire as modern, sophisticated, and advanced, especially in contradistinction to its colonial territories.

In *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Stoler examines the moments in which the archive indicates a breakdown in the common sense of governance. She focuses, in part, on what is "unwritten," aiming to "distinguish between what was 'unwritten' because it could go without saying and 'everyone knew it,' what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and what was unwritten because it could not be said" (3). Focusing on the unwritten, on what was common sense or unintelligible or simply unknown, Stoler argues, is important to understanding colonial rule; "But perhaps," she writes, "the unwritten looms largest in the making of colonial ontologies themselves" (3). It is not, in other words, only in the certainties expressed in the documents but also in moments in which they falter that we can discern what was coming into being as these documents were produced (4). Stoler's ethnographic approach to the colonial archive, she claims, "undoes the certainty that archives are stable 'things' with ready-made and neatly drawn boundaries" (51). Her purpose is to interrogate the moments of slippage in the documents, which expose the instability of colonial ontologies. Ultimately, for Stoler, the production of the archive is an act of governance, but it is less monolithic and systematic than it sometimes seems. However, Stoler points out that the archive is exclusive and carefully controlled, the voices that comprise it limited, and access to it

privileged, making alternate archives even more significant in understanding and complicating the colonial archive.

For postcolonial scholars, the significance of the imperial archive is often less about what is collected in it than what is omitted. Derrida's insistence that the archive is simultaneously a site of memory and forgetting is particularly important here. In the introduction to *Unarchived Histories: the "Mad" and the "Trifling" in the Colonial and Postcolonial World,* historian Gyandendra Pandey argues, "[T]he very process of archiving is accompanied by a process of 'un-archiving,' rendering many aspects of social, cultural, and political relations in the past and the present as incidental, chaotic, trivial, inconsequential, and therefore unhistorical. The archive, as a site of remembrance—doing the work of remembering—is also at the same time a project of forgetting" (4). Pandey focuses especially on things that go unarchived because they are common knowledge and trivial, noting, "It has required the emergence of insurgent political movements, and insurgent thinking, to challenge the structures that work to exclude these dynamics from history and memory" (9). As the use of the term "insurgent" suggests, Pandey views the excavation of unarchived histories as political, a confrontation with the systems of power that necessarily have "control of the archive and memory" (3).

Beyond the un-archiving of the trivial, the imperial archive also strategically concealed the information it did collect from indigenes. In "Colonial History and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive," Nicholas B Dirks indicates how Britain's history of India was constructed by interactions with native informants through a study of the efforts of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the first Surveyor General of India, to create an Indian archive. Dirks's study shows that while their contributions were documented and filed into the archive, the informants

themselves were obscured. Dirks observes, “When local documents were collected, authority and authorship were transferred from local to colonial contexts. The different voices, agencies, and modes of authorization that were implicated in the production of the archive got lost once they inhabited the archive. [. . .] And the role of Mackenzie’s native assistants become relegated to positions of technical mediation” (301). This is just one example of the ways in which the colonial archive obscured and decontextualized historical information in order to serve its purposes. Gayatri Spivak indicates another way that colonial archives obscured or recontextualized historical information for political ends. In “The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives,” Spivak notes, “The records I read show the soldiers and administrators of the East India Company constructing the object of representations that becomes the reality of India” (248-9), a construction that depends on strategically concealing and revealing information. The titular Rani of Sirmur was the widow of a raja in south-east India in the nineteenth century, whose intention to become a sati threatened to destabilize British rule in the region. In examining the colonial archive about the Rani, Spivak observes, “As the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when, and why? We remind ourselves of the meticulously tabulated cadets whose existence is considered ‘reasonable’ enough for the production of the account of history. The Rani emerges only when she is needed in the space of imperial production” (270). Both Dirks and Spivak show how the colonial archive was constructed through strategic absences and interpretations. We see here how the archive operates as a site of forgetting and a center of interpretation that produces a politically motivated history of the colonial territory.

As the archive became a source of authority and a principle of credibility and intelligibility, the knowledge and people that remained unarchived were more and more discounted. A telling excerpt from the East India Company's Board of Control in 1810 serves as an example of how other epistemological systems were disregarded: "Real history and chronology have hitherto been desiderata in the literature of India, and from the genius of the people and their past governments, as well as the little success of the inquiries hitherto made by Europeans, there has been a disposition to believe that the Hindus possess few authentic records" (qtd in Dirk 279). The opening reference to "*real* history" indicates an attitude toward the history that was available, suggesting that indigenous historiographic methods were in some way fake or fictional. The closing note on "*authentic* records" points toward what it would take to render that desired "real history." For the East India Company, and by extension the British Empire, no history could be validated without an archive of documents verifiable within the British epistemological system. As Dirks suggests, "Orientalism took history away by claiming the exclusive authority of history in making its claims" (279). That authority was based in the imperial archive, constructed to store and produce a particular kind of knowledge about history and colonial territories. Placing authority in the institutional archives of the Empire ignored and invalidated any historical knowledge not produced in that archive. In this way, the Empire colonized not only territories, but also the past.

III. Place-Archives

While the institutional archive has become a de facto authority for producing knowledge about the past, it is limited in its scope. As we have seen above, the imperial archive is built as much on gaps, strategic absences, and filtered facts as it is on the proliferation of documents and

information. But another way that the archive is limited is that it simply cannot contain everything, and not every material trace of the past is suited for archival storage. Like the time-machine tree I discussed in the beginning, our environments—both natural and human-made—operate with an archival capacity for storing information and facilitating the development of narratives about the past. These place-archives are recognized across disciplines. Scientists, for example, look to natural spaces and phenomena as archives that preserve a less anthropocentric history. In stone, fossils, carbon deposits, and other natural features, scientists find elemental and chemical traces that tell them of a natural past beyond the human record. As these scientists and others have shown, archives are not limited to the formal spaces in which we store selected historical documents and artifacts for posterity and academic research. The earth is its own archivist, its own archive. It records its past in material traces that stretch from fossils to tree rings to objects trapped in peat bogs.

But science doesn't provide the only way of accessing natural archives. In his book, *Stone: an Ecology of the Inhuman*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues that stone is a type of archive. Examining a range of texts, Cohen looks at how medieval authors often look to stone as records of the past. He writes, "[S]tone is [. . .] a communication device that carries into distant futures the archive of the past otherwise lost" (11). Following Cohen, I am drawn to a series of questions about the boundaries of the notion of what we call "the archive." What does an archive look like outside of the institutional or scientific context? If the term archive, at its foundation, is about records of what happens, how have people kept those records outside of institutional contexts? How does the material world—the living and inanimate objects, the natural processes and human interventions—create a space that gathers, remembers, and records what has happened in it?

What histories are stored there, and to whom or what do those histories belong? If the archive is, as Stoler suggests, a grid of intelligibility (*Along* 37), what do place archives make intelligible? What do place archives reveal that institutional archives do not or cannot?

"Places gather," observes philosopher Edward S Casey. He continues, "Minimally, places gather things in their midst—where 'things' connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts" (24-5). Put another way, places are naturally archives of both material and non-material, human and nonhuman elements. Geographer Doreen Massey similarly argues for a definition of place that recognizes its archival nature. She explains, "If space is [. . .] a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories" (*For Space* 130). Place is where we encounter and explore these stories-so-far, these multiple histories of varying scales that, for Massey, constitute what we call space. This gathering tendency is, as Derrida explains, an essential characteristic of the archive. He writes, "The archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together" (10).

If Casey and Massey suggest the archival nature of place, others make the connection more explicit. Historian William J Turkel argues, "Every place is an archive, one that bears material traces of the past in the very substance of the place" (66). In *The Archive of Place*, he presents an environmental history case study of the Chilcotin Plateau in British Columbia, arguing that everything from the material traces, including both natural and human-produced artifacts, to the stories told about the place constitute its archive. He suggests that studying the place as an archive produces a more complete and more concrete narrative than a study of documents alone. Understanding place as an archive makes it possible to fill in some of the gaps

left by the institutional archive. In that way, place-archives operate as counter-archives, at times challenging the narratives and knowledge produced in institutional archives and at times simply providing additional information. In an essay on Arthur Schomburg's Afrodiasporic archive, Adalaine Holton clarifies the meaning of the term "counter-archive."[2] She writes, "By terming Schomburg's collection a 'counter-archive,' I do not mean to suggest that its relationship to mainstream archives and historiography in the United States and Europe was one of negation or opposition. Rather, Schomburg's collection has a supplementary relationship to dominant historiography knowledge, and this is where its power lies" (220). Following Holton, I posit place-archives as counter-archives that are supplementary to institutional archives. Place-archives operate similarly to the documents collected in the Schomburg archive and others like it to complicate our understanding of history and the archive itself. However, place-archives not only challenge the received narratives of human history, but also draw together the shared history of humans and non-humans.

"Places gather," argues Casey, and gathering, he explains, "is an event, and an exploration of place-as-event allows us to see how places, far from being inert and static sites, are themselves continually changing in accordance with their own proper dynamism" (44). Casey's phenomenology of place-as-event consistently characterizes it as active and dynamic.[3] His use of the verb "gathers" renders place the very opposite of lifeless *mise en scène.* In this way, his 1996 essay gently anticipates the recent New Materialist assertion that matter is not inert. Jane Bennet, for instance, argues for understanding matter as what Bruno Latour calls

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[2] Schomburg's collection is the foundational archive for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library.

[3] Massey argues for an understanding of place in similar terms: she pushes for a conception of "Places not as points or areas on maps, but as integrations of space and time; as *spatio-temporal events*" (*For Space* 130).

"actants" (9). She writes, "I want to highlight what is typically cast in the shadow: the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite human things" (iv). Place archives often demonstrate "agency or effectivity" in precisely the way that Bennet describes; while they may not demonstrate the kind of willful agency we associate with humanity, the non-human elements of place-archives preserve, conceal, and reveal material traces of history, while also growing, shrinking, shifting, and otherwise adapting in response to ecological change. Places, then, gather material traces and stories related to human history, but they archive natural history as well. In a way that institutional archives cannot, place archives recontextualize human history within the broader sweep of natural history.

New Materialism, and particularly ecomaterialism, promises an important intervention in the way that we perceive and interact with that amorphous thing we call nature.[4] Recognizing the agency of things and acknowledging our own materiality offers "[p]otent ethical and political possibilities," writes Stacy Alaimo (2). "Indeed," she adds, "thinking across bodies may catalyze the recognition that the environment, which is too often imagined as inert, empty space or as a resource for human use, is, in fact, a world of fleshy beings with their own needs, claims, and actions" (2). In other words, this way of thinking encourages us to understand our place in the world and our relationship to the material things around us in a less anthropocentric way.

IV. Literature and the Archive

The role of archives in knowledge production and politics has fascinated authors. Early twentieth-century British novels such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and HG Wells's *Tono-Bungay* processed and responded to the idea of an empire powered by information (Richards 8). A range

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[4] Ecomaterialism is a branch of new materialism that focuses particularly on the natural environment, which Cohen and Duckart define as "a study of inhuman agency" (4).

of later twentieth-century British novels feature archival research as a central element of the plot. These *romances of the archive*, as Suzanne Keen calls them, respond to the uncertainties of postmodernism and "the last decades of the Empire's slow demise" (211). She writes, "Romances of the archive repeatedly insist that there is a truth and that it can be found in a library or a hidden cache of documents. Romances of the archive create temporarily risky worlds in which the character--and by extension the reader--can seek and find the truth" (27). According to Keen, the British literary response to the archive largely reasserts its authority and capacity to render the past intelligible in the present.

Postcolonial writers, however, have displayed less certainty in their response to British archival romances. Where the archive shows up in postcolonial fiction, Keen suggests that it is less authoritative and less likely to produce historical truths. Extending beyond Keen's argument, I contend that postcolonial literature not only questions the authority of the institutional archive, but also imagines alternative archives and different ways of recording history. While the novels Keen discusses suggest that the documents of the archive produce verifiable truths, the literature I examine treats truth, history, and archives all as flexible concepts. If there is a truth to be found, the formal archive can only ever contain it in part. The place-archive, for these authors, offers another piece of the puzzle. Critically, that other piece not only includes the experiences of marginalized people, but also allies the human and nonhuman in the construction of ontologies. It reconstitutes a vision of human history as a part of natural history.

While scientists and historians have implicitly and explicitly explored place-archives, literary authors have also taken place-archives as their subjects. Cohen explains, "Romance and lapidary rumination both know that the world is full of forces and objects that proliferate

disruptive connections and possess uncanny vitality. Although inherently anthropocentric, such narratives unleash ecologies-in-motion that subtly challenge that perspective" (10). Literature, he suggests, has the capacity to challenge anthropocentric perceptions by narrating a world that is active and vibrant. One way that literature does this is through poetic language, such as pathetic fallacy, that creates a sense of liveliness in the world. While pathetic fallacy runs the risk of anthropomorphizing nature and therefore reinforcing anthropocentrism, it can also have beneficial effects. The metaphoric language of pathetic fallacy can even represent an attempt to connect with the nonhuman, as Neil Evernden argues: "once we engage in the extension of the boundary of the self into the 'environment,' then of course we imbue it with life and can quite properly regard it as animate" (101). Literature can help us to express and recognize our relationship to the world around us. Hubert Zapf similarly argues that literature and literary studies "specifically focus on those interrelated dimensions of ecology and ethics that other forms of knowledge tend to neglect," positioning them as an essential element in the "evolution of that new global consciousness that we need to meet the challenges of the future" (865). Literature, in other words, creates a space in which ecology and ethics can operate to shape knowledge about our planet's environmental challenges.

Literature, then, offers valuable contributions to the development of more ethical ways of understanding the world and the human place in it. Authors not only draw on the archive for inspiration and information; they also participate in the construction of the archive. Literature is not history, though it is often historiographic in the broadest sense of that term, and literary texts are typically not primary sources for historical research. However, literature does represent perceptions of and reactions to the events and official versions of history. Increasingly over the

course of the twentieth century, literature operates as a space to imagine the lives and voices of those who have typically been overlooked in historical narratives. Literature forms an archive of possible histories; without claiming factual authority, it helps to foster an understanding of history as layered and multiple, comprised of more lives and stories than could ever be contained in the documents and artifacts of the institutional archive. It critiques the archive not by dismissing it altogether, but rather by probing its limits and attempting to provide a counterbalance. It encourages an ethical engagement with the traces of the past, reminding us of the value and necessity of entering deeply, intimately into the experience of the Other—both human and nonhuman—as we attempt to come to terms with our multiple histories.

The readings I pursue in this project are staked in the ethics of re-evaluating the human-nature connection. To think of place as an archive, as something that gathers, isn't simply to posit another human-colonized space. Rather, it is to think of how human history fits into and is recorded within the broader category of natural history—a category from which ecocritics and New Materialists would say we have falsely separated ourselves.[5] In his conceptualization of stone as an archiving force, Cohen writes, "Stones are the partners with which we build the epistemological structures that may topple upon us. They are ancient allies in knowledge making" (4). But stones aren't the only allies we have in our epistemological architecture. My aim here is to consider how literature represents other natural spaces and entities that also partner with humans to build knowledge and store memory.

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[5] Lawrence Buell's criteria for an "environmental text" include the presence of a non-human environment that acts "not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7).

Related to that, my argument is also staked in recognizing the natural spaces in which non-dominant human histories—the histories of marginalized groups and individuals—are recorded. Postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and other "insurgent movements" (9), as Pandey calls them, have worked diligently to untangle the humans for whom they advocate from reductive associations with nature.[6] I explore how literary place-archives recognize the agency of the nonhuman without eliding the subjectivity of the disenfranchised, so as to validate the alliance between them. Indeed, the relationship between the disenfranchised and the natural environment is a crucial factor in re-evaluating the ethics of our relationship to nature. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon argues that the "slow violence" of environmental destruction has a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable human populations, who depend on their immediate environment for food, water, and economic opportunity. Describing this intersection as "conjoined ecological and human disposability" (4), he identifies environmental activist movements, such as Kenya's Green Belt Movement, that are spearheaded by the local people who are most affected by polluted waterways, deforestation, and other ecologically devastating phenomena.[7] Nixon's work provides a valuable corrective to more common approaches that focus on either economic conditions or the environment without recognizing how inextricably intertwined the two are. He points out the need to, in the words of Pope Francis, "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (qtd in Ghosh, *The Great* 157).

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[6] Alaimo, for example, observes, "[B]ecause *woman* has long been defined in Western thought as a creature mired in 'nature' and thus outside the domain of human transcendence, rationality, subjectivity, and agency, most feminist theory has worked to disentangle *woman* from *nature*" (5).

[7] Kenya's Green Belt Movement is an organization that was founded by Wangari Maathai with the aim of combatting deforestation and soil erosion, empowering women, and developing communities.

For Nixon, literature can play an important role in making that connection visible: "In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats and accessible to the immediate senses" (15). In a similar way, Amitav Ghosh argues in his non-fiction book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* that literature, and fiction in particular, has the potential to help shape our understanding of climate change. He writes, "[W]hat fiction—and by this I mean not only the novel but also epic and myth—makes possible is to approach the world in a subjunctive mode, to conceive of it *as if* it were other than it is: in short, the great, irreplaceable potentiality of fiction is that it makes possible the imaginings of possibilities" (128). Following Nixon and Ghosh, this dissertation argues that literature has the potential to render visible the interconnected histories of humans and non-humans, and to offer up possibilities for living more ethically toward vulnerable populations and ecologies.

This dissertation begins with a focus on the role of amnesic institutional archives and supplementary place archives. Chapter One takes Irish author Sebastian Barry's 2008 novel *The Secret Scripture* as the primary text, demonstrating how Barry explores the limitation of institutional archives through the figure of his protagonist, Roseanne, an old woman who has spent most of her life unjustly confined to a mental institution for social indiscretions. Identifying this novel as a "romance of the archive," this chapter examines how Barry uses the conventions of that genre to expose gaps and inaccuracies in the institutional archives about Roseanne, which point toward the archive as a political technology that is instrumental in constructing a national identity in the young Irish Free State after independence. Where

institutional archives are insufficient in constructing Roseanne's history, the novel represents place-archives as valid alternatives.

Having established the role of place-archives as counter-archives in Chapter One, Chapter Two focuses more specifically on the archival qualities of natural phenomena. Looking at literary representations of bogs, particularly from Bram Stoker, Bernard Share, and Seamus Heaney, this chapter considers the remarkable preservatives qualities of bogs. For all three writers, the bog operates as a figure of Ireland's history in that it gathers both historical artifacts and oral tradition. Where Stoker and Share represent the bog as an obstruction to modernization, Heaney represents it from a more balanced ecological perspective. Heaney's bogs are indiscriminate archives of human and natural history, flattening the human/nature duality that has contributed to unethical environmental practices.

Chapter Three continues to consider the close connections between humans and the non-human world. Focusing on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), this chapter considers how place archives environmental destruction in the anthropocene. In both novels, I explore how rivers archive the human-nature relationship through the lens of what geographers call the hydrosocial cycle, a model that accounts for the impact of human society on the hydrological cycle and vice-versa.

Whereas the previous chapters consider how the place-archives interact with received versions of history, the final chapter considers how place-archive contradict perceptions of a-historicity in Caribbean literature that confronts the problem of paradise tourism. Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) and Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) both represent the problems associated with labeling and marketing a place as paradise, a concept predicated on the absence

of history. For both writers, place operates as an important archive for the islands' multiple histories, which include everything from the original indigenes to contemporary environmental destruction.

In her poem "The Oral Tradition," Irish poet Eavan Boland embroiders an experience of listening to two women sharing a story about a great-grandmother giving birth in a meadow. Her first-person speaker finds herself caught up in the story, imagining the scene. "I was caught by it," Boland writes, elaborating the flora of the setting

> where she lay down
>
> in vetch and linen
>
> and lifted up her son
>
> to the archive they would shelter in[.] (133)

The poet suggests in the following line that the archive she has in mind is the "the oral song," or oral tradition of the poem's title. Significantly, though, she connects that other counter-archive to place. She both spatializes her metaphor and grounds the story in physical space, making the past into an organic as well as oral space. Indeed, the story only comes alive for Boland through lilac and laburnum, lime trees and bracts (132). It's not only the oral tradition, that "wreck of language," but also the natural spaces of "the remnants of a nation" (133) that serve as the poem's archive. But where the sheltering archive in this poem is largely imagined, the idea of a physical place-archive that shelters the lives and histories and voices of both humans and nonhumans pervades the texts this dissertation studies.

Chapter One

"An Archive of Silences": Archives, Asylums, and Remembering Landscapes in *The Secret Scripture*

In an essay titled "The Woman, the Place, the Poet" in *Object Lessons*, Eavan Boland reflects on the experience of putting down roots in the suburbs, a space with powerful resonance in her poetry. She considers not only the suburb in which she lives, but also Clonmel, the town her great-grandfather helped build as "the master of that most dreaded Irish institution the workhouse" (162). While visiting Clonmel, Boland envisions a woman to act as a sort of spirit guide, helping her to connect her present with the past. This woman, Boland imagines, is around her own age, has children, and is an inmate at the workhouse her great-grandfather ran. As Boland considers the conditions under which this imagined woman might have ended up in the workhouse and what she would have suffered within the institution, Boland realizes that her sometimes-idyllic life in in the suburbs is not separate from the historical circumstances that put real people in workhouses. The woman she conjures as a figure for the faceless many whose histories are barely recorded serves as a reminder of that history and its role in producing the present. She writes, "Familiar, compound ghosts such as she—paragons of dispossession—haunt the Irish present. She is a part of all our histories. The cadences I learned to see in that suburb, those melodies of renewal, had their roots in her silence" (171-2). Boland argues in this essay that a sense of place is built on such silences and elisions of the past, and indeed that the path to the future is purchased at the expense of the memory of those histories. Boland implicitly asks, what silences are foundational to the social spaces and imagined communities in which we live? With which absences do we construct our present? "History was the official version," she

suggests elsewhere; “the past is an archive of silences” (*Journey* 100). History is built as much from what is absent as what is present.

Boland doesn’t visit an archive to find whatever documentary trace might exist to give the woman she fabricates a factual basis, though surely such a visit would provide something, some few sentences that would make her fantasy into history. For, as Foucault suggests in his essay “Lives of Infamous Men,” the archive is full of fragments from unremarkable lives: “Lives of a few lines or a few pages, nameless misfortunes and adventures gathered into a handful of words” (157). This essay is the introduction to an anthology of short documents found in the archives of the Hôpital Général and the Bastille about people who were utterly insignificant in history. For Foucault, what is remarkable about these documents is that they exist at all. Referring to these archival fragments as “poem-lives” (159), he marvels that there is any documentary trace of these people and argues that it is only their brush with power that renders anything of their lives visible in the present. He writes, “But in order for them to reach us, a beam of light had to illuminate them, for a moment at least. A light coming from elsewhere. What snatched them from the darkness in which they could, perhaps should, have remained was the encounter with power; without that collision, it’s very unlikely that any word would be there to recall their fleeting trajectory” (161). Foucault reminds us here that the archive is a site of both memory and forgetting; for every one of the fragments, these poem-lives, he discusses in this essay, there are millions more that have no archival trace. And each of the lives he anthologizes are, as he says, “reduced to ashes in the few sentences that struck them down” (158). In other words, all that remains of them, all that is remembered, are the words by which they are

denounced, detained, and incarcerated—collisions with power that preserve a small piece of their lives in the archive. The rest of their lives, and their own voices, are lost to oblivion.

Foucault's poem-lives encapsulate the nature of the archive as I discuss it in the introduction. Foucault values the archive because it allows a continued existence to these lives and makes visible the strategies of power with which these people came into conflict. While Foucault indicates that there are, indeed, multiple strategies at work, one is knowledge, what he here refers to as "the grid of intelligibility that the West undertook to extend over our actions, our ways of being and of behaving" (169). The archive, both in its construction and in its interpretation, is a part of that grid, the law of what can be known. It is a political technology that comes to bear on the level of the individual and the national, prescribing the actions and behaviors of the former in order to shape the latter. By selectively recording undesirable behaviors for the purpose of punishment and obscuring the lives associated with such behaviors, the archive produces a sense of a national identity on the basis of negation. By preserving particular kinds of knowledge and eschewing others, by foregrounding particular lives and obscuring others, the archive plays a role in the formation of the imagined community of a nation.

As discussed in the introduction, the archive is a center of interpretation, and not only for those who do research in it. It is always already a center of interpretation because its very construction is an interpretive act. Derrida recognizes this in his discussion of the archons, those figures from ancient times who control the archive and are "accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (10). The archons determine what goes into an archive and how it is to be understood. As collectors, guardians, and interpreters, the

archons craft the historical narratives that govern our understanding of both the past and the present, and mediate our relationship to the future. As Derrida suggests, "The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (17). Foucault's poem-lives and Derrida's archons tell us about the construction of the archive as a center of interpretation, a producer of knowledge, a strategy of power, and also indicate the simultaneous creation of an archive of silences, those spectral voices and lives that are not recorded.[8]

Sebastian Barry's novel *The Secret Scripture* is concerned with precisely that intersection of what is and isn't recorded in the archive. By imagining a character whose archival trace renders her a poem-life, as Foucault uses that term, and allowing her to speak on her own behalf, Barry's novel implicitly asks questions about the construction of the archive and its role as a political technology in developing the national imaginary. It dramatizes the limitations and inaccuracies of information available through institutional archives, especially regarding those who have been seen as socially or politically undesirable and come into conflict with power. I draw on Suzanne Keen's work on archival romances to develop my argument about how this text uses the archive and offer a brief reading of A S Byatt's *Possession*, which represents for Keen the quintessential archival romance, as a point of comparison. I consider how Barry connects the archive and the asylum as related technologies in establishing Ireland's imagined community. Ultimately, I argue, the physical spaces of Roseanne's testimony function with at least as much authority to legitimize her story as the scant trace of archival documents about her.[9]

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[8] In *History of Madness*, Foucault writes, "History is only possible against a backdrop of the absence of history, in the midst of a great space of murmurings, that silence watches like its vocation and its truth" (xxxi).

[9] My use of the term trace here and throughout refers to a trail of material evidence of history. I follow William J Turkel, in particular, in using the term in this way. However, it is also worth noting that the Derridean "trace," referring to the binary nature of language which ensures that every sign also bears a trace of what it does not mean, resonates with *The Secret Scripture's* presentation of archival materials that are remarkable as much for what is absent as what is available.

I. *THE SECRET SCRIPTURE* AND ARCHIVAL ROMANCES

Shortlisted in 2008 for the Man Booker Prize, *The Secret Scripture* is part of a group of interrelated novels focused on the McNulty family, based loosely on Barry's family history.[10] It narrates the story of Roseanne, a centenarian whose ill-fated marriage to Tom McNulty in her youth ultimately results in her unjust commitment to a mental hospital in Sligo in the 1940s for social indiscretions rather than mental illness. The novel is set approximately sixty years after her confinement as the hospital's psychiatrist, Dr Grene, attempts to uncover the reasons for her initial commitment in his effort to assess whether or not she should remain in care. The novel is composed of two, related first-person narratives: Roseanne's personal testimony, which she writes in secret during the time of Dr Grene's evaluation, and the doctor's commonplace book, a journal he keeps as an informal account of his work. These two narratives intersect and intertwine, each contributing to the unfolding narrative of Roseanne's past, as well as moving the present-day plot forward. Dr Grene's commonplace book records the facts and gaps he discovers as he attempts to find out about his patient, while Roseanne's testimony offers her own account of her life history leading up to her confinement.

Like the majority of Barry's work, *The Secret Scripture* is an effort, as Roy Foster suggests, "to rescue figures adrift in history's flood, and salvage a sense of belonging" (196). Barry's inspiration for the novel is a great aunt who, like Roseanne, was institutionalized. In an interview in *The Guardian*, Barry recalls, "I heard my grandfather say that she was no good. […]

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[10] In addition to *The Secret Scripture*, the McNulty family novels include *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1997)*, The Temporary Gentleman* (2014)*,* and Barry's most recent novel, *Days Without End* (2016). His plays *The Only True History of Lizzie Finn* and *Our Lady of Sligo* (1998) fit loosely into this saga as well, though in the latter the family is fictionalized as the O'Haras. Early drafts of plays that later became *The Secret Scripture*, archived in The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, also used the name O'Hara for the characters who were later renamed McNulty.

That's what survives and the rumors of her beauty. She was nameless, fateless, unknown. I felt I was almost duty-bound as a novelist to reclaim her and, indeed, remake her" (O'Hagan). Barry has been alternately praised and criticized for his fictional reimaginings of Irish history.[11] However, little attention has been given to how Barry comments specifically on the archive in *The Secret Scripture*. Nicholas Grene notes, "[Barry] has sought out the black sheep and dark horses of his family's legends rather than anyone whose life can be charted through definite dates, facts and documentary knowledge" (168). The lack of public records for these figures, the lack of a documentary trace in the archive, is directly addressed in *The Secret Scripture*, making it unique among Barry's work.[12] Because the archive is central to the novel, *The Secret Scripture* operates as a subgenre of historical fiction that Suzanne Keen identifies as "romances of the archive." This subgenre features a type of quest narrative that centers around typically contemporary characters on a path of research and discovery through archives.

Keen's work on archival romances provides a valuable tool for analyzing *The Secret Scripture* because it shifts the emphasis from how Barry uses history to how he comments on the production of history in the archive. Where the majority of Barry's work poses questions about gaps in the accepted historical narrative, *The Secret Scripture* takes that question further; it asks not only who is omitted from history, but who is responsible for those omissions. Who, in other words, are the archons? Moreover, the novel poses these questions against the backdrop of the formation and early years of the Irish Free State, a critical historical juncture in which the

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[11] Both John Wilson Foster and Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, for example, locate Barry's work in relation to revisionist history, but Foster applauds that effort while Cullingford dismisses it.

[12] The addition of the archival element appears to have come late in the process of developing this story. Early drafts of a play and a screenplay based on Roseanne's story in the Harry Ransom Center develop a relatively simple narrative. The contemporary element and Dr. Grene's search for evidence of Roseanne's past came later.

national imaginary of Ireland was being reinvented. As I have suggested, the archive plays a significant role in the production and preservation of imagined communities, meaning that Barry's critique of the archive here is also an examination of how Ireland's national identity was constructed. Looking at the novel through the lens that Keen develops makes Barry's commentary on the archive stand out in ways that focusing only on the historical aspect does not.

Keen distills genre conventions for romances of the archive primarily from A S Byatt's 1990 Booker Prize-winning novel *Possession*, in which we follow researchers on a quest to find the hidden truth about a previously unknown affair between two fictional Victorian poets, R H Ash and Christabel LaMotte. The quest begins when Roland, an Ash scholar, discovers several drafts of a letter to an unidentified woman in Ash's handwriting and cross-references collections to determine that the mysterious addressee is LaMotte. Roland teams up with LaMotte scholar Maud, and together they discover the complete correspondence between the two poets, which points strongly toward but never quite confirms an amorous affair. Now connected by their shared knowledge of the relationship between Ash and LaMotte, Maud and Roland embark on a quest to discover the truth, learning that LaMotte stayed with family in France to conceal her pregnancy. The fate of the baby remains a mystery as Roland and Maud attempt to stay one step ahead of other scholars and the rapacious American collector, Cropper. In the end, they work together with their fellow scholars to foil Cropper's grave-robbing scheme, but not before Cropper removes from Ash's grave a box containing the final artifact—a letter sent to Ash on his death-bed by LaMotte explaining that their daughter had been adopted in infancy by LaMotte's sister and her husband. To the great surprise of the gathered scholars, Ash and LaMotte's daughter turns out to be Maud's grandmother.

For Keen, *Possession* is the quintessential archival romance. From it, she draws out the following list of genre conventions. Keen writes:

- romance adventure stories, in which "research" features as a kernel plot action, resulting in strong closure, with climactic discoveries and rewards
- discomforts and inconveniences suffered in the service of knowledge (actually part of the romance plot, but so played up as to deserve separate emphasis)
- sex and physical pleasure gained as a result of questing (these stories about "brains" are always also stories about bodies)
- setting and locations (such as libraries and country houses) that contain archives of actual papers
- material traces of the past revealing truth
- and evocation of history, looking back from a post-imperial context. (35)

Keen offers this as a list of basic criteria, though she clarifies that not all archival romances emphasize these characteristics equally. She argues that *Possession* and other novels like it make a statement about the knowability of the past through document-driven research and discovery. The fictional research presented in these novels, she explains, "restore[s] to history its glamorous, consoling, and admonitory powers" (61). Keen builds her argument in part through contrast, periodically commenting on how the novels she labels "romances of the archive" differ from postmodernist research narratives, of which Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* is her prime example. Where archival romances produce certainty and documentary proof, "postmodern historiographic metafictions" instead enact a form of teasing, in which "the proof and facts, once grasped, then shimmer and disappear like mirages, or go up in flames" (55). Archival romances

do include gaps in knowledge and availability of information—for example, the readers of *Possession* know more of Ash and LaMotte's story than is available in the documents the character-researchers find— but historiographic metafiction calls into question the entire practice of research. Keen explains, "[H]istoriographic metafiction does not merely correct historical narratives, but undercuts the practice of creating discursive wholeness from scraps of evidence" (56).

Neither of the two poles Keen outlines accurately describe *The Secret Scripture*, though it is closer on the spectrum to archival romances. It employs many of the conventions of the genre, offering some degree of closure to the mysteries it presents and gesturing toward the potential for documents to render a narrative of the past. At the same time, however, Barry continually calls into question the nature of historical truth, the reliability of archival documents, and institutional practices that fail to collect or preserve materials related to undesirable histories beyond the fragments that record the operations of power that create poem-lives. *Possession*, on the other hand, consistently reestablishes a firm belief in the archive as a site of discovery and truth. It affirms the role of the archive in preserving national heritage and the power of the archons (in this case, the scholars) to determine what should be kept and where, and to whom it will be accessible. Both novels implicitly ask who owns history and heritage. In *Posession*, the suggested answer is the institution and the scholar-archons who maintain it. In *The Secret Scripture*, the question isn't settled, and Barry uses several of the genre conventions of the archival romance to work through the question.

One of the major genre conventions Barry uses is the character-researcher. Dr Grene is cast in this role as he combs through institutional records to uncover the truth about the reasons

for Roseanne's confinement. He even comes to think of his pursuit as a quest (276), and himself as "a scholar of her life" (277). However, his interest in her story does not begin as a scholarly passion or even a personal desire to find the truth. It is, instead, a result of carrying out his professional duty. As the senior psychiatrist in the Roscommon Mental Hospital, Dr Grene is tasked with determining who among his institution's residents need to remain in care and who can be released. This task is precipitated by two factors: first, as Dr Grene tells Roseanne, "[T]here has been very much an outcry in the newspapers against—such people as were incarcerated shall we say for social reasons, rather than medical" (27); and second, the decrepit building that currently serves as the hospital is deemed unfit for continued use and a new facility is under construction. In other words, social pressure initiates the need to reassess patients, and the relocation to the new facility expedites the action. Finding Roseanne reluctant to divulge the details of her admission to the hospital, Dr Grene must attempt to reconstruct her story through research. Initially, he looks to the archives of his own institution for answers, but is unable to glean much information there due to destruction and decay. The one fragment of a document he does recover is a barely legible copy of a deposition from the Sligo Asylum, where Roseanne was initially committed before her transfer to Roscommon.

The doctor has little expectation of finding much about her, noting, "I expected there would be little trace of her in the records" (118). Nevertheless, he continues his quest "to find the heart and thread of her story, as one might put it. Her true history or as much of it as can be salvaged" (121). He writes to the Sligo Asylum and receives a clear copy of the deposition, which was written by Father Gaunt, a local priest who turns out to be the antagonist in Roseanne's story. The priest's deposition answers some of the doctor's questions, but leads to

others, and Dr Grene eventually continues his search in Sligo. There he finds Royal Irish Constabulary records proving that Roseanne's father was a policeman, which she earlier adamantly denies when asked, noting in her testimony, "Such lies in the old days could get you shot" (270). His visit to Sligo also directs him toward the final clue. Earlier, Roseanne asks Dr Grene to give a book to her son, and when he asks where the boy is, she answers, "I do not know. Nazareth" (247). Dr Grene's colleague in Sligo points him toward Nazareth House, an institution run by nuns which was originally an orphanage, leading him in turn to a related institution in England, where he discovers a birth certificate and adoption papers proving not only that Roseanne's baby lived, but that Dr Grene was that baby.

Like the plot of *Possession* and other archival romances, Dr Grene's research quest has positive results. He does locate a documentary trace, however scant, that provides some facts about Roseanne's life. Eventually, Roseanne's own testimony becomes a part of that documentary trace, along with a letter from her brother-in-law, Jack McNulty, that corroborates some of the testimony and fills in details about what happened to the family after Roseanne's confinement. Dr Grene's success, though much more limited than that of his character-researcher counterparts in *Possession*, suggests that diligence can indeed lead to revelations of truth. However, the doctor is not the same kind of researcher as Maud and Roland in *Possession*. The stakes of his quest and the large-scale outcomes are very different from theirs. Maud and Roland's quest leads, as Keen suggests, to "enhanced prestige, multiple job offers, cash, career changes, even better sex" (41). Their exciting discoveries about Ash and LaMotte will radically change scholarly approaches to both authors. Blackadder's television appearance indicates the cultural interest in the discovery, and the success of his appeal for funds to keep the documents in

England prove the extent of that interest. The status of these character-researchers as scholars and their connections to institutional archives also casts them in the role of archons. They have the power to assign the cultural value of the discovered documents and also to interpret their significance both for the literature and for national heritage.[13] Blackadder's appeal to his viewers' sense of national pride is not merely a rhetorical choice to persuade his audience but also a perpetuation of an English national imaginary that includes esteem for literary figures.[14]

By contrast, Dr Grene's discoveries have profound personal significance for himself and Roseanne, but nowhere does the novel offer any indication of public interest in her story, which challenges the Irish national imaginary. Dr Grene does comment on recent public outcry about the mental health system, which he labels "the all-knowing public at large, or let us say public opinion as it is mirrored in the newspapers" (16). However, the "public at large" and the newspapers stay well away from the hospital. It is significant that the character-researcher of this novel is not a journalist intent on bringing justice and increasing public awareness by telling Roseanne's story. Public opinion, it seems, stops short of actual involvement or genuine interest in the people they believe to be "deserving of 'freedom' and 'release'" (16). Instead of a journalist, then, or even a historian—both figures whose research would be intended for a broad

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[13] Irish playwright Brian Friel's play *Give Me Your Answer Do* also addresses the relationship between archives and national culture. It dramatizes the experience of a minor Irish writer whose papers are being evaluated by an archivist from a prestigious university in Texas. Though never directly addressed in the play, the question of whether and Irish writer's papers should be housed in the United States permeates the text's background.

[14] This is one of the notable ways that *Possession* represents the role of the archive in the national imaginary. In the televised interview, Blackadder asserts, "The letters have to to stay in our country—they're a part of our national story" (436). The suggestion here is that the archive helps to shape and safeguard a narrative about national identity. Interestingly, a similar line of argument was made in 2017 in response to an auction held by WB Yeats's grandchildren at Sotheby's in London to sell a large collection of Yeats family artifacts and documents. Irish newspaper headlines prior to the sale indicate a general public outcry at the idea of these Irish treasure being sold to the highest bidder rather than going to Irish institutions. One letter signed by 80 artists, writers, and scholars (including Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon) published in *The Irish Times* urges the Minister for the Arts to save the items in the collection "for the nation" ("Time to Save").

audience—Dr Grene is a psychiatrist dispensing his duty toward a patient. His research is never intended for an audience. He is a character-researcher, but has limited function as an archon. There is little he can do to alter the national imaginary that becomes amnesic in regard to individuals like Roseanne. He cannot fix the gap in the archive that Roseanne represents. By casting Dr Grene in this way, Barry leaves open questions about the reliability of the archive and who controls historical narratives.

Barry addresses those questions in more depth through his use of another genre convention for archival romances—the revelation of truth through material traces. Byatt develops this convention in *Possession,* in which the discovered documents yield up the truth, or at least most of it. Even when all of the available artifacts have been discovered, the text discloses that there is more to know than the documents can disclose. Byatt reveals to her readers —but not her character-researchers—details of Ash and LaMotte's affair, Ash's wife's response to it, and finally Ash's encounter with his daughter, whom he was presumed to have no knowledge of at the time of his death. For the character-researchers, the discovery of the final secret in Ash's grave serves as a conclusion to the quest. They are satisfied that they know the whole story. The novel's readers, however, get to see the full picture. On the one hand, then, Byatt points toward the incompleteness of the archive, and therefore its inaccuracies. On the other hand, Byatt fills in those gaps for her readers. Her characters may not be able to access the full truth of the Ash-LaMotte affair, but the novel doesn't foreclose that possibility, and its own completion of the story presents the past as fully knowable. As Keen observes, the final scene in which Ash meets his secret daughter, "surely reinforces the reader's certainty about 'what really happened'" (33). The novel gives us enough information to know that the character-researchers'

knowledge is incomplete, but it simultaneously reinforces a sense of the past as knowable and truth as discoverable.

The Secret Scripture also represents the archive as incomplete, but unlike *Possession*, it doesn't fill in the gaps. In the end, the reader knows only as much as Dr Grene knows, and like the doctor, we are left to draw our own conclusions about the details of Roseanne's life that remain a mystery. Indeed, the novel's structure, two interrelated documents about Roseanne's life, simulates the experience of archival research as we peruse and cross-reference the documents, forming a cohesive narrative and extrapolating what we believe to be the truth. Readers of *Possession* feel confident that they know everything, but readers of *The Secret Scripture* are left to wonder about what aspects of Roseanne's story are not entirely accurate and which details from Fr Gaunt's report might be trustworthy. Unlike *Possession*, *The Secret Scripture* does not "reassure readers [. . .] of answers that can be located" (Keen 43). If anything, Barry goes to great lengths to show that not all questions can be answered, that the archive is not up to the challenge of accurately producing knowledge of the past, and his characters continually question the nature of historical truth and the possibility of discovering that truth. Roseanne, for example, muses, "Friend or enemy, no one has a monopoly on the truth. Not even myself, and that is also a vexing and worrying thought" (128). As she attempts to write out the truth of her life, Roseanne doesn't believe that even her own account is a complete and accurate record of her past. To put it another way, Roseanne questions the authority of archons. Dr Grene questions history and truth more directly, writing,

> But I am beginning to wonder strongly about the nature of history. Is it only memory in decent sentences, and if so, how reliable is it? I would suggest, not

> very. And that therefore most truth and fact offered by these syntactical means is treacherous and unreliable. And yet I recognize that we live our lives, and even keep our sanity, by the lights of this treachery and unreliability, just as we build our love of country on these paper worlds of misapprehension and untruth (293).[15]

This meditation from Dr Grene comes at the end, after he knows all he will know. He knows that Fr Gaunt's deposition is at least partially false; certainly the doctor's very life is proof that Roseanne did not kill her baby as the priest claims. But he also knows that Roseanne's account is not altogether factual; at the very least, her father's documented employment as a policeman proves one inaccuracy in her testimony. *Possession* presents a research quest that ultimately re-establishes a sense of archival documents as carriers of truth, but *The Secret Scripture* questions the reliability of documents to produce accurate knowledge about the past. In this way, Barry subverts the genre conventions slightly to make a significant comment not just about the nature of history but also about the nature of the archives in which historic artifacts are stored and historical knowledge is produced. But unlike the historiographic metafiction Keen discusses, the documents Barry's character-researcher discover are not lost or illusory in the end. The point is not that truth is impossible to recover, but rather that institutional archives are unreliable.

Barry continues to pursue questions about the reliability of the archive through the absence of archival spaces in the text. As the novel comments on the sequestering of undesirable or insignificant people from the nation's history, the archives that produce that history are absent from his narrative. The archive that gives little space to people like Roseanne is given no space

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[15] The final sentence in this quote suggests that the very project of nationalism—of building an imagined community—is founded in the archive through documents that form "paper worlds." That these worlds are comprised of "misapprehension and untruth" points toward not only the gaps in the archive but also the significance of those gaps in the construction of the national imaginary.

in her story. Here, Barry diverges significantly from other archival romances. Indeed, one of the major genre conventions is the inclusion of such spaces. Byatt goes to great lengths in *Possession* to describe the archival spaces—notably, the suffocating and sepulchral Ash Factory in the basement of the British Museum where the Ash archive is stored and the ancient, dilapidated big house where the LaMotte-Ash letters are discovered. Barry, however, leaves his archival spaces out of the narrative entirely. He devotes space in the novel to developing an intense sense of place in Roseanne's testimony and in the hospital itself, but archives are merely mentioned in passing in Dr Grene's account. The only description the novel offers of archival space is Dr Grene's report on the conditions of the documents from Roseanne's file. The doctor explains, "[U]nfortunately a great swathe of our archive in the basement has been used, not surprisingly, by generations of mice for bedding, and it is all quite ruined and unreadable. Your own file such as it is has been attacked in a most interesting fashion. It would not shame an Egyptian tomb. It seems to fall apart at the touch of a hand" (26). Dr. Grene's commentary on the ruined state of the hospital's archive is the closest we get to seeing an archive in the novel, and all we know of it is that it has been abandoned to destruction. This very abandonment remains, nonetheless, an evocative metaphor of how people like Roseanne become forgotten entirely, the material traces of their lives largely destroyed by neglect.[16] The archive is unreliable because of inaccurate documents, Barry suggests, and it is also unreliable because of what it fails to adequately preserve.

Because the archive is a political technology, contributing to the creation of the imagined community of the nation, a central concern in *Possession* is the location of the archive. Where

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[16] As Tara Harney-Mahajan notes, "Roseanne can serve to remind us that no matter what records may be released, innumerable stories of incarcerated women will remain lost" (62).

should Ash's archive be kept, the text asks implicitly and explicitly. Indeed, the very presence of the antagonist Cropper—stereotypically villainous down to his "American hips, ready for a neat belt and the faraway ghost of a gunbelt" (105)—is malevolent not because he poses a threat to the safety of either the other characters or the artifacts, but rather because he will use his superior financial resources to take the items back to his collection in America. Even his criminal act of grave-robbing is coded as a lesser offense than his plan to take the ill-gotten spoils to America; having surmised Cropper's plan, the protagonists stop him from absconding with the artifacts, but they deliberately take no action to prevent the crime. The central danger is not the annihilation of the documents, but their loss to the Americans.[17] Ownership is the key concern, which is partially related to the archive's role as a center of interpretation. The British character-researchers want to maintain control over the scholarly interpretation of the new documents. In *The Secret Scripture*, on the other hand, the ownership and location of archives is irrelevant. The question is not "Where is the archive, and where should the archive be?" but "Is there an archive at all?" No counterpart for Cropper exists in this novel; no human character threatens the archive in any way, though certainly natural actants (rodents, insects, and mold) have proved to be agents of destruction. If the question in *Possession* is "Who has the right to own and research these documents?", the question in *The Secret Scripture* is "Who has the right to representation in an archive, and who determines that right?"

While these two novels pose very different questions about the nature of the archive, in both texts, it is a center of interpretation and a political technology. In *Possession*, the archive as

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[17] Keen points out the irony of this insistence on keeping British literary artifacts in England, noting, "The fact that British libraries and museums still contain treasure troves gathered from around the world lies concealed, for Byatt does not invite closer scrutiny of the imperial history of collecting and acquisition" (60).

a center of interpretation relates primarily to the literary oeuvres of Ash and LaMotte. Indeed, interpretation is central to Roland and Maud's quest. Faced with the possibility of discovering the cache of letters, Maud speculates, "It would change all sorts of things. LaMotte scholarship. Even ideas about *Melusina* [LaMotte's most famous poem]," and Roland answers, "It would change Ash scholarship too" (56). Unsurprisingly, the two literary scholars are immediately interested in how new documentary evidence about the poets' personal lives could change the analytical grid of for understanding their poetry. In this way, the archive is also represented as a grid of intelligibility for the poetry, dictating what can be known and what can be credibly claimed about Ash's and LaMotte's work.[18] Beyond the literary significance, however, the archive represents a broader center of interpretation as the debate about whether or not the documents should remain in England becomes almost a test case for British cultural identity. The archive in *Possession* becomes a center through which both poetry and nationalism are interpreted. At the same time, the archive also operates as a lens for interpreting American identity from a British perspective, as Cropper's predatory collecting paints America as a place that takes what it wants regardless of others' claims. As a center of interpretation, then, the archive is also a political technology; it offers a sense of security regarding the knowability of the past and, in doing so, helps to build a stable national identity and imagined community. *The Secret Scripture*, on the other hand, destabilizes received versions of history and national identity in order to explore the cracks of that narrative.

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[18] It's worth noting that while *Possessions* consistently focuses on institutional archives and documents, it does also bear a hint of a place-archive. This is particularly evident when Maud and Roland travel to the seaside town of Yorkshire, believing that Ash and LaMotte had gone there together. They become convinced that Yorkshire influenced the creation of LaMotte's *Melusina*. Roland proclaims, "It's full of local words from here, gills and rigs and ling. The air is from here" (287). In spite of amassing evidence of LaMotte's previously unknown visit to Yorkshire, though, the scholars discount it as a credible source. "I've got no proof that will stand up," Maud says (288), which is another way of saying that she has no documentary proof.

II. "Outside the Frame": The Archive and the National Imaginary

In developing his archival quest plot, Barry works to make room within the established historical narrative for real-life counterparts of Roseanne, the many poem-lives in Irish archives for whom the only documentary trace is their collision with power. In the years leading up to and following the formation of the Irish Free State, the project of nation-building was accompanied by the formation of a national identity. The architects of this identity were deeply invested in a homogenous, sanitized, idealized vision of what it meant to be Irish, a vision that was inextricably bound up with Catholic morality. As James Smith notes, "The historically powerful Catholic Church and the fledgling Irish Free State cooperated increasingly throughout the 1920s as the self-appointed guardians of the nation's moral climate" (2). The Church and State worked together to mandate and legalize a mode of morality that was an essential part of the developing national ethos. Within this ethos, gender roles were clearly defined, sexuality was tightly controlled, and family values were central. The ultimate goal of the Church and the State was to establish an Ireland that was unified and homogenous. "Working in unison," Smith explains, "these two institutions closed off internal challenges and contradictions even as they represented society as pure and untainted by external corruption" (3). This meant that individuals who contested that idealized vision often found themselves socially sequestered or institutionalized.[19]

In fact, during the time chronicled in Roseanne's narrative, Ireland "led the world in locking up more of its people per capita in psychiatric institutions than anywhere else" (Raftery).

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[19] While Smith focuses primarily on Magdalene Laundries, he contextualizes such institutions as part of a larger network of containment. Additionally, in an early draft of the play that eventually developed into the novel, Roseanne's mother-in-law attempts to send her to a Magdalene Laundry (*The Metal Man's Wife*, box 16.6, p. 43).

Mary Raftery's 2011 documentary *Behind the Walls* seeks to bring to light the dark and complicated history of Ireland's mental health system. *Behind the Walls* explains that while some see the high level of institutionalization as evidence of a possible epidemic of madness, others believe it implicates the social climate. Psychiatrist Brendan Kelley suggests that the high number of incarcerations came from "a societal desire to address the problems presented by certain people who don't quite fit in for whatever reason" (Raftery). Along those same lines, historian Diarmaid Ferriter argues that institutionalization was an essential part of building the national ethos: "The way to perpetuate that myth is to hide and incarcerate any individuals who are seen to challenge it" (Raftery). The role of asylums, then, was primarily about containing and hiding difference in order to construct and maintain a homogenous national identity.

In *The Secret Scripture*, Roseanne explains her understanding of the social climate that led to the marginalization of those deemed undesirable. She writes, "In the war of independence it wasn't just soldiers and policemen had to be killed, [. . .] but also tinkers and tramps and the like. People that were dirtying up the edges of things, those people that stood at the edges of photographs of nice places and in certain people's eyes were starting to stink them up" (194). Roseanne's trouble is that she is just such a person. Like her real-life counterparts, she fails to assimilate. She writes, "I knew that in the eyes of Tom's friends outside, gathered in the Plaza, if they knew everything about me, they would want to—I don't know, extinguish me, judge me, put me outside the frame of the photographs of life" (195). Roseanne's reference to photographs subtly invokes the archive because her comment explores who gets to be represented in the documents and artifacts that produce the historical narratives that feed the national imaginary. In this way, Barry suggests that asylums and archives were both political technologies involved in

twin projects. The archive created about Roseanne, those few pages that reduce her life to ashes as Foucault might say ("Lives" 158), condemn her body to the oblivion of the asylum and her voice to the oblivion of the forgetting archive.

There are three primary reasons that Roseanne doesn't fit into the burgeoning national ethos, bringing her into conflict with power: her father's job as a policeman, her religion, and her sexuality. Regarding her father's position, Dr Grene explains the trouble of this situation: "De Valera, as a young leader during the war of independence, had declared that any member of the police could be shot if they in any way obstructed the aims of the revolutionary movement" (136). History corroborates these comments about the dangers to policemen in Ireland during the turbulent period before and after independence. WJ Lowe explains that boycotting and killing policemen was a sanctioned activity for nationalist forces during the war for independence, and these measures extended to families of policemen as well. Lowe explains, "The cumulative effect of the campaign against the RIC [Royal Irish Constabulary] was a tense, violent environment in which policemen had well-founded fears for their own safety and that of their families and friends" (89). This was part of a strategy to weaken the police, whom the colonial government used as the primary force for suppressing the rebellion. The RIC were the primary enforcers of actions against rebels, which caused some citizens to perceive them as the active oppressors of the Irish (81). Lowe observes, "The RIC was the manifestation of British authority that Irish people encountered most regularly" (79). Because the war was, as Lowe suggests, "a struggle to remove any meaningful British presence from the daily lives of the Irish citizens" (79), social distrust and hatred would remain widespread for the men who, in spite of their own status as Irish, were the most tangible force of British rule even after the RIC

disbanded following the war.[20] Roseanne's status as the daughter of a policeman automatically places her outside of the national imaginary that was as invested in repudiating all things related to British rule as it was in lauding all things Irish. Her initial brush with power was beyond her control.

The second way that Roseanne comes into conflict with power is her religion. She is Presbyterian in contrast to a powerful Catholic majority, and she refuses to convert in spite of Fr Gaunt's attempts to persuade her to do so. His initial attempt comes after her father's death, when he suggests that Roseanne convert to Catholicism and marry a man of the priest's choosing. This scene is important for two reasons; first, we see Fr Gaunt's initial attempt to contain Roseanne's sexuality, and second, we see Roseanne colliding with power by refusing to do as she is told. Fr Gaunt's desire to, as he says, receive her into the fold is primarily a desire for her to assimilate into the national ethos. He explains that converting "is a politic and indeed marvellous and magical prospect" (94), noting that the political climate does not favor Protestants. Roseanne's refusal to convert and marry on Fr Gaunt's recommendation is, Dr Grene explains, the basis of the priest's scorn for her. He writes that Fr Gaunt "regards her Protestantism as a simple, primal evil in itself. His anger that she would not let herself be made a Catholic at his request is absolute, long before she married her Catholic husband, and likewise remained what she was. This in itself for Fr Gaunt is a real perversion" (230). Indeed, Fr Gaunt throws Roseanne's refusal to convert in her face when he informs her of the annulment of her marriage, saying, "If you had followed my advice, Roseanne, some years ago, and put your faith

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[20] Barry's earlier, related novel, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty,* dramatizes the severe ostracization of Eneas, a former RIC policeman. This novel also hints at the forgetting archive, albeit much more subtly, through Eneas's recurring feeling that he had been blotted out of the book of life. He even mentions it during his brief appearance in *The Secret Scripture* (238). The phrase, which comes from the book of Revelation in the Bible, carries with it a whiff of a spiritual meaning but primarily refers to Eneas's exclusion from life in Ireland and from Irish history.

in the true religion, if you had behaved with the beautiful decorum of a Catholic wife, you would not be facing these difficulties" (223). By refusing to assimilate, Roseanne challenges the power of the Church and state to determine the behavior and actions of the people. While her father's occupation as a policeman is entirely outside of her control, her decision against conversion is wholly her own choice.

The third way that Roseanne does not conform is her sexuality, with which Fr Gaunt is obsessed. Dr Grene explains that in the priest's testimony about her, he "is almost clinical in his anatomizing of Roseanne's sexuality. [. . .] He betrays at every stroke an intense hatred if not of women, then of the sexuality of women, or sexuality in general" (230). During his initial attempt to convert Roseanne, he tells her that she is "a mournful temptation, not only to the boys of Sligo but also, the men" (94). After her marriage, when he sees her with a male acquaintance on Knocknarea, he assumes it is a sexual rendezvous. Subsequently, he annuls her marriage on the basis of her "madness"—nymphomania. His assumptions seem justified when Roseanne turns up pregnant years later. Her failure to comply with sexual mores is her worst infraction against the national imaginary because sanitized sexuality was a central component of it. It was so central, in fact, that the alliance of Church and State created legislation to, as Smith contends, "constrain women so that they might visibly conform to the prescribed national paradigm" (3). As part of that, the state established punishments to "negate and render invisible those women unlucky enough to countermand social conventions" (3). Moreover, The Carrigan Report (1931) and following legislation allowed the "church-state partnership effectively to criminalize sexual relations outside of marriage and thereby inscribe moral purity into the project of national

identity formation" (4).[21] Roseanne's failure to comply with that ideal of sexual purity finally leads to her incarceration. She is caught up, irrevocably, in a network of power that removes her from public life and, almost, from public record.

Though Roseanne is a fictional character, her story represents the many cases of wrongful institutionalization in Ireland which indicate that such a homogenous national identity is not accurate. A number of scholars have examined how women in particular who didn't conform were associated with madness.[22] Pauline Prior notes that in the nineteenth century,

> [T]he strong woman who knows her own desires and wishes to follow them even when doing so will bring her into conflict with social norms [features in the historical literature on women and madness]. This was most apparent in the area of sexual desire. In the eyes of a Victorian psychiatrist, excessive sexual desire in a woman (defined sometimes as 'erotomania' and 'nymphomania') was a clear sign of insanity. (221)

Though Prior's observation is specific to the Nineteenth Century, the link between sexuality and madness she describes carries over into the Twentieth Century and accurately explains Roseanne's case. Involuntary incarceration was typical of this time as well. Sociologist Eilis Ward notes, "It wasn't unusual for people who were perhaps considered to be a little bit challenging or unusual or difficult to be considered mentally unstable" (Raftery). The challenge that Roseanne poses for Fr Gaunt and the national imaginary fits exactly into this criteria.

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[21] The Carrigan Report was created in response to a call for policy recommendations regarding amendments to laws related to juvenile sex crimes. Smith argues, "The origins of Ireland's containment culture, in short, are rooted in the Carrigan Report and the [related] Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1935" (5). While organizations like the Magdalene Laundries and mother-and-baby homes were more significantly affected by the Carrigan Report and subsequent legislation than mental hospitals, it indicates the moral climate in which Roseanne's story takes place.

[22] See, for example, Patricia Kennedy and Elizabeth Hickey and Anna Cleary.

Historian Damien Brice reports, “Almost any form of human behavior that was in any way an affront to society could be diagnosed” (Raftery). This information paints a picture of a socio-political climate in which asylums were deemed an appropriate way to contain women who didn’t conform to hegemonic ideal.

Moreover, old laws made it easy to institutionalize a person. Roseanne’s case reflects legislation passed in 1838, the Dangerous Lunatics Act, which, as Mark Finnane reports, allowed for “a person to be committed on information which was not taken on oath or recorded. There were neither safeguards for the liberty of the law nor against the law’s own misuse” (92). That the law did not mandate a record to commit a person suggests the likelihood of significant gaps in institutional archives about such people. In Roseanne’s case, Fr Gaunt’s uncorroborated deposition is the only record of her commitment. His report, as Dr Grene records it, says that Roseanne bears a child, “and in a savage line of his own, containing only three words, he writes: ‘And kills it’” (231). The priest’s report is not factually accurate; however, such an assertion would have made it easy for him to dispose of a troublesome woman. The Dangerous Lunatics Act, though instituted by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, remained in effect in the Free State at the time of Roseanne’s incarceration, meaning that Fr Gaunt’s testimony of her instability would have been taken at face value with little or no investigation. Dr Grene acknowledges this, admitting, “If I had read those words years ago, with the authority of a priest behind them, I would myself have been obliged to commit her” (231).

I have been working here to demonstrate the correspondence between Barry’s fictional account and the historical reality of a mental health system that was used as a means of controlling not only individuals but also the national ethos. By taking as its subjects both the

asylum and the archive, Barry highlights the ways in which those institutions worked in tandem as political technologies to help produce and safeguard a highly sanitized national imaginary. Both, in other words, worked to define and control what it meant to be Irish. The asylum removed people from society, in a sense creating a decontaminated version of Irishness. Simultaneously, the archive did not adequately preserve the documents, artifacts, and other records of the people who were sequestered in the asylums and other institutions of containment, thereby producing a historical record that reaffirms the version of Irish society the asylums helped to create.[23] Where these people show up in the record, it is rarely on their own terms but instead as Foucault's poem-lives, fragments of testimony against them. As Smith notes, "[C]reating and maintaining Ireland's national identity necessitated the formation of a narrative selective in what it chose to remember and who it chose to forget" (90). The archive is a site of memory and forgetting, of intentional presence and selective absence.

Even in its construction, then, the archive operates as a center of interpretation by determining what records and whose voices would be kept. Indeed, the archive of Roseanne's life is created to justify committing her and consists primarily of Fr Gaunt's deposition. If church records of Roseanne and Tom's annulment were included in the novel, that archive, too, would exclude Roseanne's voice. Despite the priest's assurances that "every possibility of justice has been afforded to [her]" (224), Roseanne is never allowed to speak on her own behalf. That archive would consist of the priest's "own deposition, Tom's own words, the elder Mrs McNulty

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[23] While mental health facilities are typically known for their proliferation of records, they are not always so meticulous. In a case study of archives from Grangegorman Psychiatric Hospital in Ireland, Kirsten Mulrennan demonstrates that the practice of record keeping in the Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Centuries was highly subjective and often contained mistakes and missing information. She explains, "Despite the various guidelines in place since the early nineteenth century, staff considered recordkeeping to be an individual preference rather than a legislative necessity" (125).

[. . .]. No stone unturned" (223), but Roseanne's testimony is never entered into record until she does so herself some sixty years later. Her own voice absent, this archive serves as the principle for interpreting the events of Roseanne's life, and because her life has only been interpreted within a grid of intelligibility in which she is rendered criminally insane, she justifiably fears further interpretation. In discussing her reluctance to show Dr Grene her testimony, Roseanne notes, "He interprets things, which is dangerous, extremely" (143). How, specifically, his interpretation might pose a danger for her at this point is unclear, but Roseanne's brushes with power in the past have certainly taught her that interpretation is dangerous. As a center of interpretation and a grid of intelligibility, the political uses of the archive to develop a national imaginary becomes clear.

It's worth pausing for a moment at this point to note that the scholars I've cited in this section are to some extent engaged in a similar project to Barry's. These historians, sociologists, documentary filmmakers, and other scholars are also doing the work of recovering lost and silenced histories, of bringing back into focus those lives who were relegated to the margins of both society and history. That we have any information at all about, for example, the history of mental health facilities in Ireland shows the great value and significance of institutional archives, without which the documentary trace for these poem-lives would surely be non-existent. Additionally, *Behind the Walls* is careful to show the work that the National Archives of Ireland are putting into preserving documents and artifacts from those institutions. My point here is not to suggest that archives are bad or useless. Nor is that Barry's point; indeed, my purpose in situating *The Secret Scripture* in the archival romance genre is to show how Barry both values and critiques the archive. However, the limitations of the archive that Barry delineates are

precisely the limitations within which historians and other archives-based disciplines must work. Historians may derive narratives from the materials they study, but academic rigor limits their capacity for conjecture. This is where literature offers something of value. Unrestrained by the necessity of evidence, Barry is able to imagine a person whose life largely constitutes a gap in the archive, drawing attention to the similar, real-life gaps that exist. In the best-case scenario, this imagined tale can inspire scholars to do the work of telling the stories of those whose archival traces are faint. Beyond that, however, it is perhaps its own form of justice to remind readers that those people existed, that their lives mattered and their stories are worth telling, and through its critique to encourage archival practices going forward that preserve not only the trace of power, but also the artifacts of injustice.

III. Place archives: Roseanne's Remembering Landscapes

Because the burgeoning national imaginary pushes Roseanne and those like her outside of the frame and largely outside of the institutional archive, place-archives become important in preserving her story. Together with her testimony, Roseanne's places form a counter-archive that challenges the narrative constructed about her derived from the institutional archive. As I discussed in the introduction chapter, place-archives are spaces that gather material traces of the past along with oral tradition, cultural associations, and ideas. Both human and non-human elements of place demonstrate what Derrida calls the "archontic principle of the archive, [. . .] that is, of gathering together" (66). In this chapter, I have been defining the archive in terms of its function as a center of interpretation, a grid of intelligibility, and a political technology. The place-archive functions as a counter to that, offering a different lens for interpretation, an

expanded grid of intelligibility, and a way of resisting the political structures and affiliations of institutions.

One significant way that place functions as archive in the novel is through the very existence of buildings and institutions that constitute what Smith calls "Ireland's architecture of containment" (2). As Dr Grene contemplates the impending destruction of the decrepit building of his facility, he writes, "But when this world here is demolished so many tiny histories will go with it. It is actually frightening, maybe even terrorizing" (48). For Dr Grene, the building functions as a gathering place for "tiny histories" that likely exist nowhere else, as his anxiety about the loss suggests. Indeed, Roseanne's own practice of archiving her testimony under the loose floorboard in her room points toward the building as a sort of archive of untold histories. As she begins her testimony, Roseanne writes, "For dearly I would love now to leave an account, some kind of brittle and honest-minded history of myself [. . .] I will tell this story, and imprison it under the floor-board" (5). Throughout the novel, Roseanne is never confident that her story will be found and read. As far as she is concerned, the hospital is the only archive for the story of her life. By hiding her testimony under the floor, it becomes almost a part of the building, not simply housed in it but a very component of its structure. It also draws attention to the various unspoken histories of her fellow hospital residents. What stories might these other poem-lives tell of themselves? What histories remain unknown of the men who Dr Grene proclaims "are certainly not mentally ill the most of them, they are just the 'detritus' of the system" (245)? What of the old women with bedsores who are scarcely even mentioned in the novel? The text never suggests that any of the other patients attempt a project similar to Roseanne's documentation of

her story, but their own vague histories are notable in absentia. The hospital is likely the only archive of their lives beyond whatever brief fragments are available in their official records.

Moreover, the very existence of buildings such as the Sligo Asylum and the Rosscommon Mental Hospital offer evidence, if not of the individuals who were placed in them, then certainly of the oppressive system that mandated the existence of such places.[24] The condition of the asylum reflects both its history and the history of the people housed there. It is old, dilapidated, and condemned as unsuitable for use. The decrepitude of the asylum reflects the state of its residents, as Dr Grene writes, "This building is in a terrible condition, how terrible we were not completely aware until the surveyor's report. The three brave men who climbed into the ancient roof report many timbers on the verge of collapse, as if the very head and crown of the institution were mirroring the condition of many of the poor inmates beneath" (14). While the condition of the building does represent the patients who live there, it also reflects a change in the social system, in which new legislation and public awareness of the wrongs of asylums historically has led to public outcry about the conditions under which institutionalized people live. The structural issues of the building reflect the ideological issues of the old system under which patients were interned for various reasons and never reassessed or allowed to leave. In that way, the building operates as an archive of the history of the mental health system. The structure stands as a reminder, evidence of histories for which the documentary trace in institutional archives is often minimal.

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[24]The real Sligo Asylum, where Roseanne was initially committed in the novel, still stands today but has been turned into a luxury hotel, almost an irony given Roseanne's insistence that asylum used to be known as "the Leitrim Hotel" (100). During a trip to Sligo in 2016, I visited the hotel and found that not so much as a plaque memorializes the building's original function.

Beyond the asylum, the only space available to Roseanne are the spaces that she remembers. In her testimony, she intricately maps her narrative through details and descriptions of the significant places where her story plays out. From the very beginning, she locates her tale in a specific geography, characterizing her native Sligo as "a cold town" from which "[e]ven the mountains stood away" and noting the "the black river" that "had no grace for mortal beings" (3). These descriptions set the tone for Roseanne's difficulties and simultaneously ground her testimony in space. She goes on to offer detailed descriptions of the graveyard where her father worked (18), street names, businesses, and geographic markers to orient her story and her imagined readers in the real space of her life. She describes, for example, her experience walking to nearby Rosses Point in this way: "And I did walk there, coming along first by the cottages of the Rosses, with Coney island across the flow of the Garravoge, and the wonderful, calming figure of the Metal Man, in his old blue iron clothes, and his black hat" (129). The level of detail she includes helps her testimony seem trustworthy and believable. It reads like an attempt to spatially anchor her story, as if the existence of the places will prove her story to be true. In a sense, she invokes these places as witnesses of her testimony.

Roseanne's attempt to anchor her story extends beyond her evocative verbal mapping as she frequently identifies herself very closely with the landscape. She does this in an attempt to substantiate her own story, to territorialize her narrative, and to make a space for herself in Ireland. Initially, the association is loose, as when she begins her testimony by writing, "[The mountains] were not sure, no more than me, of that dark spot" (3). She sees something of her own distrust of Sligo in the mountains, but she doesn't represent herself as connected to them in a particular way. Toward the end of her story, however, as she becomes increasingly isolated

from other humans, she begins to write herself into the landscape. When she learns that Rosscommon Mental Hospital is closing, she writes, “I was in turmoil now, like that blow hole in the cliff the back of Sligo Bay, when the tide comes in and forces water into the rock” (244). Even after so many decades locked away, she still feels connected with place. Her comment here indicates her particular familiarity with the geography of Sligo, a way of claiming belonging in that space while simultaneously connecting her own feelings to the natural phenomena of the blowhole, signaling a link between her body and the landscape. Roseanne makes that physical link even more explicit as she describes giving birth on Coney Island. She writes, “I felt the tide recede again from the island, felt it in my veins” (263). Here, the boundaries between Roseanne’s body and the landscape are collapsed. By connecting herself to the landscape in this way, she develops a sense of legitimacy and belonging for herself. Her verbal mapping and her close association with those places indicates her desire to show that she belongs in and to that place. Having been left outside the frame of Ireland’s imagined community, Roseanne attempts to verbally reinsert herself into the material space. The places she invokes connect her body to the space, locate her story in Irish soil, and also serve, in a sense, as evidence proving the truth of her story.

Dr Grene’s trip to Strandhill, in which he follows the map of her narrative, legitimizes her story by grounding her narrative in a real space. As he drives along, he observes, “I sort of knew the road from Roseanne’s account, and went there as if I had been before” (298-99). Though, as he observes, Strandhill has changed significantly over the years, the doctor is still easily able to locate the places of Roseanne’s testimony—Knocknarea with Queen Maeve’s Cairn atop it, Sligo Bay, Rosses Point, Coney Island, the Strandhill beach, the Plaza dancehall. As he records his

experience of being there, he writes, “It was extraordinary for me to think of all the vanished histories of this place” (300), histories for which this landscape serves as an archive. When he finds the place where Roseanne’s hut no longer stands, he notes, “There was nothing to see but in my mind’s eye I could see everything, because she had supplied the ancient cinema of this place. Nothing except a neglected rose bush among the brambles, with a few last vivid blooms” (300). The rosebush, Barry implies, is the remnant of the Souvenir de St Anne’s rosebushes Roseanne tended during her long years of isolation and confinement in the hut. It stands as a material trace of Roseanne’s life there. In fact, Barry hints at the role of the rosebush as a memory-bearer in Roseanne’s testimony. Of tending her roses, she remembers, “Maybe this year there would be a new look to them, not quite ‘St Anne’s’ or ‘Malmaison’ but becoming slowly Sligo, ‘Souvenir de Sligo,’ a memory of Sligo” (236). She refers here to types of roses, and as landing on the Souvenir suggests, the rose becomes a part of the memory of the landscape. Roseanne may be largely forgotten, but the text suggests that the roses bear the trace of her life. In this way, the natural environment becomes an ally to Roseanne, bearing witness in a small way to the life she lived, operating as a principle of credibility and offering proof of her presence to Dr Grene. His final act of taking a cutting from the bush to propagate at home suggests that Roseanne’s story—her archive—will live on. Whereas the doctor’s visits to institutional archives are left outside of the narrative, this final visit to Roseanne’s place archive is carefully included. The tone of the text indicates that it is as valid a source of verification as the documents Dr Grene receives from the institutions.

If the institutional archive is a grid of intelligibility by which Roseanne’s life is interpreted in a way that renders her at best undesirable and at worst criminally insane, the place

archive she develops through her narrative offers another lens for interpreting her life in its fullness rather than in the brevity of the archival fragments that have pushed her beyond the margins of society and history. Her testimony coupled with her places effectively supplement the institutional records, expanding the archive of her life beyond what was made visible only in relation to the strategies of power that enforced her long confinement. Within this expanded context, Roseanne can be understood not as mentally ill, not as criminal, but rather as someone whose life became tragically entangled in the politics of a nation's becoming. Where her testimony does the majority of the work of speaking back to the archive of evidence against her, her place-archive serves ultimately as a principle of credibility for her story, reducing whatever uncertainties might remain regarding the truthfulness of her narrative.

IV. Conclusion

The Secret Scripture is a unique take on historical fiction, delicately parsing the difference between the past and the production of history in the archive. Barry pushes his readers to think about how the archive functions as gatekeeper not only of history, but also of national identity. His novel asks questions about who controls the archive and who has the right to representation in it. He suggests that archivization and institutionalization were both projects that aimed to preserve a national identity predicated on the public absence of undesirable people. Like the quest in *Possession* and other romances of the archive, *The Secret Scripture* reminds us of the possibilities for discovery that await the diligent researcher. At the same time, however, it exposes the limited potential of such a quest because of the limitations of the archive itself. Barry draws attentions to the constructedness of the archive and its gaps, offering places as an alternative. The landscape of Roseanne's story maintains her trace, providing evidence for her

testimony. In this way, Barry suggests that we look outside of the institutions and official records to learn the truth of people like Roseanne whose documentary trace is limited. Including the places as part of the archive reminds us that while the imagined community may be amnesic, the material space of the nation bears testimony to the lives of the forgotten. If, as Eavan Boland suggests, "the past is an archive of silences" (*A Journey* 100), it is an archive housed not only in the gaps of institutional archives but also in the non-discursive landscapes and structures of our lives.

Chapter Two

Bottomless: Ireland's Archiving Bogs

Of all the landscapes this dissertation considers, the bog is the most distinctly archival, in the sense that it acts as both repository and preservationist in one. Having formed slowly over time in the aftermath of the post-ice-age glacial thaw, bogs are a unique ecological space in which an anaerobic environment combines with a high level of tannin acids to operate as a powerful natural preservative.[25] Because of this preserving quality, all manner of objects—from human and animal bodies to entire megalithic field systems—have been found intact within the mire. In this chapter, I examine how the bog functions as an archive for two Irish authors, Bram Stoker and Seamus Heaney, along with a brief consideration of the presentation of the bog in a Bord na Móna pamphlet written by Bernard Share in the early 1970s. I consider how these authors' texts represent the bog as a site of temporal blending, wherein the past and present are not entirely distinct; the past makes a strange return to the present through artifacts and oral culture, and that return has potential to affect the present. I argue that while Stoker's and Share's use of the bog fits neatly into a capitalist colonial and ecologically unethical worldview, Heaney's bog poems present a complex political and ecological ethic that situates human history within the broader sweep of natural history.

I. Bogs in Ireland: History and Politics

[25] The bog's highly acidic soil is a product of precipitation as the bog's only water source and the antibiotics and hydrogen ions excreted by *Sphagnum* mosses (Foss and O'Connor 184). The anaerobic conditions begin with waterlogging, which "reduces oxygen levels and slows the decay of dead vegetation, which settles and gradually becomes peat" (184). The anaerobic conditions also "limit the ability of bacteria and fungi to break down dead plants" (185), both aiding in the preservation of those plants and limiting the creation of nutrients necessary for new plant growth.

Often taken as emblematic of the nation and its people, bogs in Ireland have a complex history of associations. At times bogs signify a benign agricultural and quaintly bucolic image of Ireland (turf digging, peat fires in the hearth), evoking humble, hardworking people and a traditional lifestyle. But bogs have political associations as well, both for the Irish and for the imperial British. The burgeoning capitalist British saw the bog as evidence of a lack of Irish industriousness; they believed that the Irish were lazy and bogs were a result of poor land management rather than natural processes unfolding over centuries. Gerard Boate, for example, wrote in 1652 of the "retchlesness [sic] of the Irish who let daily more and more of their good land grow boggy through their carelessness" (qtd in Foss and O'Connor 187). Boate is one of a number British writers who used the image of Irish bogs as evidence of the idleness of the Irish and of the necessity of British governance to come in and solve the problem. In this way, the bog was leveraged as evidence against Irish fitness for self-government.

While early texts, such as Boate's, advocate for land management to prevent the spread of bogs, the British began looking for ways to drain wetlands in the eighteenth century in order to make the reclaimed land useful for agricultural production. Richard Griffith undertook significant surveys of bogs with an eye toward draining and developing them, publishing his findings in 1810 and 1814 (Foss and O'Connor 188). Draining the bogs was framed as mutually beneficial to the British and Irish; as Katie Trumpener explains, reclamation demonstrated "the fruitfulness of English stewardship" (42). She continues, "Here colonialism and expansionism appear as progress and as the incontrovertible economic salvation of the whole country, Irish peasantry and all" (43). The colonial agenda for bogs, then, was elimination in the name of progress and economic development.

At the same time, draining the bogs also had benefits for the military and colonial administration, as bogs were associated with rebellion. Luke Gibbons fills in some of the historical connections between bogs and rebellion, noting a 1685 essay by William King that represents bogs as “a shelter and refuge to tories and thieves” (14), and Nicholas Daly similarly points out, “The bog in Spenser is a dangerous bolting hole for the wild Irish” (76). Perhaps even more tellingly, Trumpener writes, "For seventeenth-century commentators [. . .] the bog represents a lasting physical barrier both to the agricultural development and the political subjugation of Ireland" (47). Trumpener explains that Fynes Moryson's 1620 *Itinerary* (a book that reports on broad cultural surveys of European countries at the end of the sixteenth century) discusses how Irish rebels rely on the difficult terrain of bogs and forests as military tactics, engaging the English on those grounds. Ultimately, these tactics lead the English to a policy of leveling and clearing the terrain, effectively “crippling rebel forces and improving government surveillance” (47). But the English weren’t the only ones to connect bogs to rebellion. Derek Gladwin notes, “Due to the accretive layers of stratified culture and history in the bog, Catholic nationalists argued vehemently for its preservation. The visibility of the bog, it was argued, needed to remain a presence as a reminder of national identity and Gaelic tradition prior to colonial occupation” (“The Bog” 47).

The bog in Ireland, then, has a historical connection to the processes of colonization and development, which sought to eradicate bogs. Where the bog operated for the British as a hindrance, it operated as an ally to the Irish by providing space for the rebels to leverage their knowledge of their home turf against British forces. Additionally, it has operated as an ally by serving as a repository of Irish culture, history, and oral tradition that typically went unrecorded

in the colonial archives. Trumpener writes, “Where both oral and written traditions have been forcibly suppressed, the national landscape becomes crucial as an alternative, less easily destroyed historical record.” (53). Indeed, a central element of the bog is its ability to recall the past. Stuart McLean observes,

> As a result both of [bogs’] distinctive materiality and of their seeming recalcitrance to human projects and designs, environments like bogs, poised ambivalently between solid and liquid, form and formlessness, take on a singular mnemonic charge. They recall [. . .] the variegated process of their own formation and transformation over time, [. . . and] the human histories enacted on or around them. (65)

Preserving everything from medieval psalters to Iron Age bodies, from pollen spores to extinct animal carcasses, bogs have archived Irish history for thousands of years. They gather human and non-human artifacts indiscriminately, facilitating a strange return of the past that is charged with the potential to affect the present. McLean questions, “Could it be then that in [. . .] bogs both the historical past and modernity’s disavowed other-times are able to impinge, to a potentially transformative effect, upon the present?” (65). The answer, at least for artists and writers, seems to be yes.

The ability of the bog to link the past and present, to make the past, as McLean says, impinge transformatively upon the present, marks it as an archive. Indeed, all archives function in this way, not only as preservers of cultural memory but as centers of interpretation for both past and present. As Doreen Massey suggests, “The past [. . .] helps to make the present” (“Places” 187) through our understanding and deployment of the past in construction of

the present. But where institutional archives are interpreted on a number of levels, beginning with the archivists (Derrida's archons) who perform an interpretive act in determining what to collect and continuing through to the historian who produces research, the bog-archive is somewhat less mediated. While it, too, serves as a center of interpretation, it is not a human construction from the outset, its collections being deposited by both human and non-human actants in coincidental collaboration rather than through a process of careful evaluation. Moreover, the majority of the artifacts recovered from bog-archives are discovered by peat diggers, so the act of interpretation is not the sole prerogative of governing bodies or the intellectual elite. The bog, then, operates as a different kind of center of interpretation than the institutional archive. It allows for a strange return of the past, an unexpected return through almost spectral presences emerging organically from the earth and viscerally into the present.

The bog has weighed heavily on the Irish imagination as evidenced in literature, folklore, songs, and other art. Manchán Magan recently published an article in *The Irish Times* titled "How Irish Culture got Sucked in by the Bog" (2016) in which he considers how bogs have had a profound impact on Irish art and writing. "Our bogs," Magan writes, "have been catalysts for poets, painters, playwrights, dancers, novelists and film-makers since at least the 19th century, when a fashion for bog oak sculpture took hold in Dublin and Killarney." He goes on to list various authors, artists, dancers, and others whose work has particularly sought to evoke the "otherworldliness of this realm of primordial compressed botany." His article celebrates the role that the bog has played and he suggests that role is growing. Indeed, the bog has been a significant topography of the literary tradition, featuring in texts by Sydney Owenson, Maria Edgeworth, and many others prior to the 20th century, when it would be taken up more directly

by authors such as Seamus Heaney, Marina Carr, Patrick McCabe, Siobhan Dowd, and Kevin Barry.[26]

I. The Past and the Future in Stoker's Bog

One of the first literary texts in which the bog becomes a central figure is Bram Stoker's little-known second novel, *The Snake's Pass* (1890). His only novel set in Ireland, this story is set ambiguously in the mid- to late nineteenth century and features a benevolent, wealthy British protagonist named Arthur Severn who travels to rural western Ireland to visit some friends and finds himself along the way enchanted by the Irish countryside and a beautiful peasant girl named Norah Joyce. Norah and her father have fallen victim to the ruthless tactics of the local Gombeen man (a predatory money lender), Black Murdock, who cheats Mr Joyce out of his land so that Murdock can carry out a secret search for a fabled treasure lost in the bog on the property. Along with his old schoolmate, Dick, a geologist and engineer, Arthur endeavors to help the Joyces. As the novel's events unfold, the bog operates as an archive that authorizes local oral tradition and turns story into history. At the same time, however, Stoker juxtaposes the knowledge produced by the bog with the colonial archive of scientific knowledge about the bog, suggesting that the latter rather than the former has the capacity to beneficially affect the future through physical and economic development. Ultimately, the story nullifies the transformative, perhaps subversive potential of the bog archive and a human-nature alliance.

Though *The Snake's Pass* has received relatively little critical attention, a number of scholars have commented on the bog's relationship to history and the environmental aspects of the novel. For example, Daly suggests that the bog can be read as "the figure in the text for the

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[26] Derek Gladwin offers a thorough history of the bog in Irish literature in *Contentious Terrains: Boglands in the Irish Postcolonial Gothic*.

colonial past" (45), noting in particular the bog's operation as a recorder of the past: "The range and precision of historical reference that Stoker invokes in describing the bog suggest that it is a recording device, a matrix for the storage of history" (77). Similarly, in his ecocritical reading of the novel, Gladwin notes that the bog "gathers and preserves stories and histories and artifacts that authorize those histories" ("The Bog" 45). Along those same lines, Valeria Cavalli reads the bog as "a natural museum, the preserver of a glorious past of a pre-colonial culture" (154). For these writers, then, the bog is a storage matrix, a preserver and authorizer of history, a museum—in other words, it is an archive. While the archival aspect of the novel is a secondary observation for these writers—Daly's reading is staked in comparing the novel to other imperial adventure novels, Gladwin is using it as a test case for establishing the bog as a gothic landscape, and Cavalli emphasizes the bog as a symbol of the liminality of the Anglo-Irish—I focus specifically on the bog's role as archive.

Stoker's bog has three primary archival functions: an anchor for memory for oral traditions, principle of credibility that authorizes history, and preserver of artifacts. In regard to the first function, there are two local stories connected to the bog in the novel. The older of the two tales relates St Patrick's expulsion of the snakes from Ireland. The local legend holds that the king of the snakes lived in a lake on the hill where the bog is now, and when St Patrick came, the snake hid its golden crown and promised to return for it in some guise or another. Many of the locals believe the bog itself to be the snake king's new form. The other legend of the bog involves French aid during the 1798 Rebellion.[27] The story holds that the French sent a treasure

[27] Curiously, the rebellion itself is never directly mentioned in the text. It is referred to instead as "the French invasion that didn't come off undher Gineral [sic] Humbert" (16), and it is only through such obscure references that it becomes evident that the French treasure is connected to the rebellion.

chest to help fund the rebellion, but when it was clear that the rebellion would not be successful, the French soldiers attempted to take the gold back to keep it from the British. The soldiers charged with the task were last seen near the bog and never heard from again. The locals believe that the treasure was lost somewhere in the bog. These stories exist and remain a part of local culture because the bog operates as hyponmnema (prothetic memory); though the stories may not be recorded in documents, the bog's presence serves as a reminder of the tales and in that way preserves them as they are passed on from generation to generation.

In addition to the bog as an anchor for oral tradition, it also preserves evidence to authorize those tales. After the bog's final shift sends it through the Snake's Pass and out to sea, the bog reveals its secrets; both the historically-plausible French treasure and the less believable snake king's gold crown are uncovered, authorizing both of the legendary tales. Upon finding the skeletal French soldiers with the treasure they had died transporting, the narrator proclaims, "We recognized the whole story at a glance" (206). Dick proceeds to surmise the previously mysterious end of the tale by looking at the artifacts. Initially, he assumes that the soldiers must have stepped into the bog unawares, but then he notices the leather straps around the soldiers' shoulders connecting them to the chest and concludes that they were "willy-nilly, dragged to their doom" (207), unable to detach themselves from their burden as it and they sank in the mire. The preserved artifacts in the bog provide not only authoritative historical evidence for the tale of the French treasure, but also fill in the missing information to bring closure to the knowledge of that particular past event.

The bog also yields up other historical treasures, including evidence of ancient human activity. After the bog has washed away, the protagonists discover a cavern that is "partly natural

and partly hollowed out by rough tools," in which they find "inscriptions of a strange character" that Dick identifies as ogham writing (208). Along with the known history of the French treasure, then, the bog has also preserved evidence of a previous, primitive society who left their mark in the rocks, both in carving out the cavern and in leaving writing behind. They find the gold crown in this cavern and surmise that the origins of the tale were, in fact, not supernatural but rather a conflict between St Patrick (or his followers) and the local king who resisted the new religion. The bog operates as an archive and archivist. It offers up more than just lost treasure; it gives insight into a pre-historical community that lived there, shaped their environment, and left behind a written record in the form of ogham.

The stories and artifacts attached to the bog in this novel represent a unique history. The specific ties of the oral tradition to the local landscape make these stories a rare part of cultural history, for which the only archival record is a mention "in a manuscript of the twelfth century" about the snake king (21). Even so, such tales in the institutional archive are only fantasy, with no authority to gesture toward their basis in fact. The bog, on the other hand, preserves evidence that suggests the origins of the tale. Similarly, the history of the French gold is locally specific. While it connects certainly to the non-fictional history of the 1798 rebellion, and in that way would have some degree of representation in the institutional archive, the tale of the lost treasure chest relates only to the local setting, and its factuality is doubted by some of the locals and the priest in particular, who asserts, "There is not a word of fact in the story from beginning to the end" (21). The priest, whose archival knowledge is sufficient for him to note the twelfth-century manuscript with the snake-king tale, does not have any such institutional authority for the story of the French gold. However, in the end, the bog-archive produces sufficient evidence to turn the

local legend into verified history, becoming a principle of credibility to rival the institutional archive. The other instances of artifacts in the bog also are specific, local histories that are not recorded anywhere else. No institution charts the geological changes in the hill or shifts in the bog. No institution has documents about the people who carved out the cavern and left behind a written record in ogham. The bog preserves what the institutional archive does not and cannot. It is the only archive of this local history.

Ultimately, then, the novel represents the bog as an archive by emphasizing its three significant archival functions—anchoring memory, preserving artifacts and authorizing history as a principal of credibility. However, the bog's role in knowledge production is complicated because the novel positions it as both source and subject of knowledge. Knowledge about the bog within the novel is divided into two camps: local knowledge represented only by the oral tradition, and scientific knowledge that Dick learns from a colonial archive.[28] Both archives are validated in the course of the novel's plot. As previously discussed, the artifacts found in the bog validate the historical knowledge of the oral tradition. At the same time, Dick's successful experiment draining another bog and his accurate predictions about the instability of the Knockcalltecrore bog suggest the validity of knowledge produced about the bog in the colonial archive.[29] However, even as both archives are justified, they are valued differently. The final outcome is that the local archive is backward-looking, providing historical knowledge that only

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[28] When Dick educates Arthur about bogs, he begins "with such records as those of Giraldus Cambrensis, of Dr Boate, of Edmund Spenser, from the time of the first invasion, when the state of the land was such that, as is recorded, when a spade was driven into the ground a pool of water gathered forthwith" (44). The knowledge of bogs in Ireland, Dick assumes, stretches no further than the archived history of English colonial involvement. Any Irish knowledge of the bog, whatever Irish archives might exist concerning the bog, are entirely absent for Dick.

[29] See page 101 of the novel for Dick's bog reclamation experiment. He also attempts at several points to warn Murdock that his activity in the Knockcalltecrore bog was destabilizing it and the likely trajectory the bog would take if it were to shift again, which proves to be correct in the end (102, 138, 185).

has symbolic value, whereas the scientific colonial archive is future-oriented and provides immediate economic and agricultural benefits. The novel may primarily narrate the oral archive, which forms the central engine driving the plot, but in the end the discovery of the artifacts is little more than an interesting thing that happens in the area. Even the recovery of the French gold, which Mr Joyce plans to give away because "[t]he money was sent for Ireland's good" (208), has no recorded impact; Stoker never indicates where the treasure goes or how it is used. Whatever potential the gold has to affect the future is lost to its primary function as a symbol of the past.

The scientific archive, on the other hand, is responsible for the general improvement of the area, which Stoker represents as beneficial for all residents. By the novel's conclusion, Dick and Arthur have managed to transform the hill into a beautiful, bountiful, and prosperous paradise where the protagonists and their neighbors will presumably live happily ever after.[30] The scientific archive may be less prominent in the text, but the practical value of the knowledge it produces—its ability to affect and shape the future—ultimately overwhelms the natural archive of the region. Unsurprisingly, then, the colonial archive proves to be the most valued source of knowledge, and its value lies in giving humans mastery over nature.[31] The novel champions the human domination of nature through science. It celebrates Dick's victories over the bogs, which he sees as a disease on the landscape that needs curing.[32] On the one hand, then, the novel

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[30] The transformation of the hill mirrors Norah's transformation through finishing school. Both Norah and the landscape have been conformed to suit the expectations of British aristocracy. Gladwin agues, "The purchase of Knockcalltecrore is also a purchase of Norah, who symbolises both the bog and Ireland, and in so doing this Arthur also reclaims Norah by sending her to become educated on the European continent, thereby draining her Irish cultural identity" (49).

[31] Because of the complicated colonial politics of bog management, this championing of the scientific archive exposes that archive not only as a repository of information, but also as a political technology.

[32] Dick explains, "In fine, we cure a bog by both a surgical and a medical process" (44).

suggests the subversive potential of a human-nature alliance as the bog validates and authorizes the oral tradition and folk knowledge of the local peasants. On the other hand, however, Stoker hamstrings that alliance by celebrating human mastery over nature, which ultimately destroys the very natural archive that was central to the alliance.

The novel also leaves out almost any trace of natural history. The bog's lack of preserved flora and fauna is striking; aside from scant mention of geological formations, the bog has not preserved any plant or animal matter. Daly points out that in the novel, "[O]ther political voices, Bakhtin's heteroglossia, are silenced" (67). In addition to the missing human voices, the non-human "voice" is also largely erased from this natural archive. It is only an archive of local human history, rather than an indiscriminate preserver of human and natural history. The absence of plant and animal remains may be due to a lack of knowledge on the author's part; Stoker does, after all, go to great lengths through the voice of Dick to show how little was known about bogs at that time. But Stoker was not unaware of the preservative capacities of the bog. As previously mentioned, upon finding the French soldiers and their treasure, Dick observes, "See how the bog preserves" (207) as he holds up the intact, century-old leather straps. However little was officially or scientifically known about bogs in Stoker's time, turf cutters would have been well familiar with the occurrences of bog oak and animal carcasses in the mire. Stoker's strangely empty bog, then, is not only a product of ignorance; it also points toward a highly anthropocentric, human- and subject-centered view of history.

Moreover, it's worth noting that even the novel's central legend serves to establish and maintain the separation of humans and non-humans, as it pits humans against nature. St Patrick, in this tale, has unquestionable authority and control over nature on the island as he drives all of

the snakes out to sea. The king of the snakes may stubbornly refuse to acquiesce to the saint at first, and he may promise to return in some other form, but he nevertheless eventually surrenders and flees out to sea along with his kin, thus establishing the mastery of humans over nature. Similarly, Dick's fascination with bogs not as unique and vibrant ecosystems but rather as problems to be solved parallels St Patrick's banishing of the snakes, all the more so as the shifting bog is figured again and again in serpentine imagery.[33] Dick's interest in bogs is focused on how to drain and reclaim them in order to make the land agriculturally productive or aesthetically pleasing. It is essentially a colonial act, however benevolent Dick and Arthur may think themselves, given that it corresponds with the colonial environmental policies regarding the destruction of woodlands and bogs. As Gladwin points out, "The elimination of both forests and bogs in Ireland were colonial policies that have environmental and political impacts to this day" ("Bog Gothic" 51). Though not acting on behalf of the colonial power, the two English gentlemen carry out colonial policies nonetheless. Because the novel casts the bog in this way—as an object of human domination—whatever subversive potential it might have had washes out to sea along with the bog itself.

The ogham and other evidence of a distant, prehistoric civilization in Ireland may, as Daly suggests, operate along with other contemporary Anglo-Irish texts from writers such as John Todhunter, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Standish O'Grady and his cousin Standish Hayes O'Grady, and others who sought to make space for themselves in Ireland by deploying a precolonial past, thereby sidestepping a thorny history of colonial violence in which they were

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[33] For example, Arthur has a dream about the bog in which "the whole mighty mass [of the bog] turned into loathsome, writhing snakes, sweeping into the sea!" (177).

implicated through their Anglo heritage.[34] Daly reads *The Snake's Pass* in this context, noting that the significance of the crown and ogham discoveries is that they represent "a more acceptable history for [Arthur] and the others" (77). Cavalli also suggests that "its story [depends] heavily on a noble Irish past preceding religious division" (148). In these readings, the significance of the bog-archive is its potential to affect the present and shape the future through the strange return of the past. However, any such potential is drained, washed away with the bog itself, as the novel ultimately consigns history and folk knowledge to the past and promotes instead the more economically valuable and forward-looking scientific knowledge that Dick brings. The obliteration of the bog indicates an end to local tradition and culture, the bog itself now only a historical footnote.

The bog in this novel is decidedly animistic. It is a vibrant, living landscape, almost a character in its own right, and it is the only part of the natural environment that the text codes in this way.[35] Gladwin suggests, "Animism, then, strangely serves as an ecocritical argument here because it assumes, similarly to the environmental philosophy of Deep Ecology, that natural communities or bioregions have agency and individual identity completely separate from the managers that control and often exploit them" ("Bog Gothic" 45). In this way, the novel sets up a

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[34] Stoker's most famous novel, *Dracula*, expresses similar anxieties about landlords and the value of science. However, whereas the ancient, Eastern landlord Dracula is represented as a malevolent and corrupting influence in England, the young, English landlord (Arthur) in *The Snake's Pass* is represented as a benevolent force of economic and agricultural development. Indeed, even Dracula's connection to his land is shrouded in death imagery, as he carries his native soil with him in coffins. It is also worth noting that *Dracula* is also a novel with archival concerns, as it enacts the creation of an archive through various technologies about Dracula, which renders the vampire intelligible and, therefore, defeatable. As Thomas Richards suggests, "In *Dracula*, the monster is defeated by mastery of the means of information" (5).

[35] While the idea of the landscape as a character is potentially problematic because it does anthropomorphize nature, that is to some extent mitigated by the recognition of nature as vibrant and alive rather than inert scenery. In his landmark ecocritical theory essay, "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the Pathetic Fallacy," Neil Evernden argues that the use of pathetic fallacy indicates a close association between the human self and nature, a recognition of the self as part of nature and nature as part of the self (101).

potentially valuable ecological message. In "Nature and Silence," a foundational text of ecocritical theory, Christopher Manes examines how nature has effectively been silenced by non-animistic cultures that assume speech as a solely human capability. He suggests that animistic cultures view the non-human world as both alive and "filled with articulate subjects" (18), pointing out that such societies have typically avoided ecological destruction. He argues for "the need to dismantle a particular historical use of reason, a use that has produced a certain kind of human subject that only speaks soliloquies in a world of irrational silences" (25). Scientists corroborate the idea of non-silent nature; Suzanne Simard, a forestry expert, found that birch and fir trees communicate with one another through carbon, a behavior that she designates as "talking" (Simard). Similarly, it's long been understood that orcas and dolphins communicate with each other through complex sounds, and with training, primates are capable of communicating with humans through sign language. Of course, these examples don't correspond exactly with animism as a spiritual construct, but they share with animism a recognition of the myriad ways that non-humans communicate and act. For Manes, that recognition has the potential to create a more ethical relationship between humans and nature. The animism of the bog in *The Snake's Pass,* Gladwin suggests, tacitly participates in that ethic.

However, the outcome of the animist bog in the novel is ultimately problematic. Stoker's bog is a vibrant, actant landscape that moves, threatens, preserves, destroys. But the novel codes that very agency as dangerous and terrible, pushing readers to agree with Dick that it must be eradicated. Gladwin acknowledges this: "Animating the bog as a symbol of the horrific with its 'sea of ooze and slime' creates an inverse reaction that forces the reader to recoil from this landscape, thereby supporting more modernised positions of production capital proposed by

Arthur and Dick" ("Bog Gothic" 45). Gladwin reads the animism and the bog's opposition to the actions taken against it as an ecological message. While there is ecological value in texts that recognize the agency of non-human objects, that argument is undermined in this novel by the portrayal of the bog as an antagonist, as readers are encouraged to fear the vibrant landscape and view it as a threat that must be neutralized. Stoker reinforces this message by destroying the bog in the end, leaving in its place a domesticable landscape with agricultural potential and no acknowledged agency. This bog, then, represents not an alliance between humans and non-humans, but rather an anthropocentric archive of human history, an actant whose agency must be forfeited to ensure the mastery of humans over nature.

II. The Anachronistic Bog in "The Moving Bog"

Stoker's novel concludes with a decisive victory of humans over nature, through the intervention of science. It suggests that knowledge of the past is good, but scientific knowledge will make the future brighter and more prosperous. The bog, as a representative of nature and the past, is dissolved, its potential foreclosed. Stoker's bog is a liminal space between the superstitions and folk traditions (i.e., the past), on the one hand, and modernization and development (i.e., the future), on the other. In a similar way, Bord na Móna pamphlets from the 1960s and 70s take up the bog as a sort of threshold to modernity.[36] Focused on the composition and history of bogs, as well as contemporary bog reclamation efforts, these pamphlets celebrate advances in the peat industry, marveling with particular pride at the massive machines uniquely engineered to roll over the soft surface of the bog in order to harvest vast amounts of usable peat

[36] Formed in 1946, the semi-state company Bord na Móna (which translates to "Peat Board") was created to "develop Ireland's peat resources for the economic benefit of Ireland" ("Bord na Móna Story"). The pamphlets I refer to here are from Seamus Heaney's papers at Emory University's Stuart A Rose Manuscript, Archive, and Rare Book Library.

while simultaneously achieving the goal of reclaiming farmable land from the bog. These publications celebrate the ingenuity of humanity, acclaiming the engineering feats of the machines alongside the social rhetoric of employment and housing opportunities for rural men who would work for the Bord. They emphasize advances in the use of peat as fuel for generating electricity, the export of Irish peat for use around the globe, and the cosmopolitan nature of an industry that partners intellectually with other peat producers in Europe to share knowledge and collaborate in producing new knowledge and practices. They romanticize the labor of Bord na Móna workers by characterizing them as warriors in a battle against nature.

But it is a thoroughly modern romanticization: none of Yeats's Irish peasants remain. Rather than symbolic bastions of an imagined ancient Celtic culture, these Bord na Móna workers are the sculptors of modernization, a central concern in Ireland at the time. Joe Clearly observes, "Based on a crude dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies, modernization theories [created the perspective that] the problems that bedeviled Irish society [. . .] were understood to mean that Ireland remained a dysfunctional and traditional society that still had to make the necessary transition to a properly modern social order" (17). Cleary explains that "de Valera's Ireland," or Ireland as it was under the leadership of Éamon de Valera, became a "magnet-term around which to constellate every negative inference of the word 'tradition'" (8), and served as a counterpoint to the emerging "contemporary Ireland" beginning with Seán Lemass's leadership in the mid-fifties.[37] During this push toward modernization, Bord na Móna represented bogs as a sort of testing ground, a site on which to work out anxieties about the traditional past and the modern present. One pamphlet in particular, "The Moving Bog,"

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[37] The socio-political landscape described in the previous chapter as contributing factors to Roseanne's institutionalization in *The Secret Scripture* would be considered part of de Valera's Ireland.

thoroughly participates in and propagates this rhetorical construction of the bog. Written by Irish novelist and critic, Bernard Share, it was produced by Bord na Móna in 1972 as what Donal Clarke calls a "prestige brochure"—part of a public relations campaign that also included a booklet distributed to primary schools, a twenty-minute documentary film called *Life for the Soil* (1966), and the publication of the journal *Scéal na Móna* beginning in 1969 (Clarke 175). "The Moving Bog" blends lyricism, science writing, and propagandistic praise for the Bord's work to pitch an idealized narrative of modernization that is, for all of that, set against a backdrop of tradition. Share asserts, "The story of Bord na Móna is [. . .] a story that, for all its modern methodology is deeply rooted in the consciousness of a people for whom the bog has been both friend and enemy, a source of refuge and a source and symbol of the past of economic squalor and depression" (1). Not unlike Stoker's fiction of some sixty years earlier, the narrative Share and Bord na Móna begin to develop here is about the transformation of the bog from a symbol of poverty and hardship into a symbol of hope and modernity.

Indeed, the very title "The Moving Bog" is intended as a sort of double entendre, at once referring to the phenomenon of bogs that occasionally shift and slide from one location to another—the very phenomenon that forms the climax of *The Snake's Pass*—and to the new opportunities for prosperity that the Bord is literally pulling out of bogs. "In Ireland today," Share writes, "bogs are moving in another, less literal but more dramatic sense" (1), attempting to capture—or perhaps catalyze—a shift in the cultural imaginary regarding the place of bogs in Ireland. Finding his way to a more concrete description of the Bord's plan, Share explains, "There will always be bogs in Ireland: but by turn of the century most of the wide, almost horizonless boglands worked by Bord na Móna will have been reduced once more to their

immediate post-glacial condition, ready to begin again on a man-made cycle of fruitfulness and agricultural bounty" (3).[38] These sentences indicate a sense of manifest destiny; the Bord's plan is to tame the "almost limitless horizon" of bogland. The goal to reduce it to its "post-glacial condition" creates a sense of restoration, almost of rebirth. The idea Share advances here is that to reclaim land from the bogs in Ireland is to start again, to reinvent Ireland's topological past in the contemporary moment. Here again, we see a kind of double-edged nostalgia, which features on one side a longing for a distant, prehistoric past (represented in *The Snake's Pass* by the ogham cave) and on the other side a desire for an altered future, reflecting what Charles Piot terms "nostalgia for the future," or a "longing for a future that replaces untoward pasts, both political and cultural" (20). In that way, the pamphlet proposes a return of the past that will then mediate the future. As in the novel, the pamphlet suggests the only way to access that past/future is through the bog's removal.

However, even with all of the emphasis on modernization, "The Moving Bog" has moments when the old cultural imaginary of the mysterious, vibrant bog surfaces. Share writes, "Talk to any of the men who look out, day after day, on the elements casually undoing the work of weeks and you are talking to dedicated people for whom turf is a way of life, for whom it holds a fascination and a challenge similar to that of Moby Dick for Captain Ahab" (3). Share conveys a lively agency in the bog and the nature around it, as the elements "undo" the laborer's efforts. The language here reminds us, as McLean suggests, "[T]he material world is not a passive recipient of the order and meaning imposed upon it by culture [. . .]. Rather, the material realm [. . .] is endowed with its own form-generating and self-ordering capacities" (65). The bog

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[38] More recently, ecologists have demonstrated the value of bogs as unique ecologies that promote biodiversity, and Bord na Móna "has committed to ending all peat extraction by 2030" (Magan).

behaves in a way that seemingly resists the efforts made against it. Share further points toward the bog as an actant, writing "If the machines demand attention, so does the bog itself. It lives and moves, disgorges blackened lumps of timber old enough to have offered shade to Fionn MacCumhail--evocative, but more than a slight nuisance if it fouls an implement" (17). The bog lives, moves, and produces preserved items that evoke the ancient mythologies, but the value of such objects is dismissed as damaging to the implementation of a modern Ireland. This bog is not represented as an archive; the artifacts found in it, rather than a strange return of the past with a potential to shape the future, are harmful anachronisms in the present moment, speed bumps to modernization.

In an even more pronounced way than *The Snake's Pass*, "The Moving Bog" suggests that whatever cultural, historical or even ecological significance the bog may have, its true value lies in its exploitation and removal as a benefit Ireland in the present and future. Once again, it is the epistemology of humanity's dominance of nature that is celebrated. Even the term "reclaim" suggests that the very space bogs occupy rightfully belongs to humans, to be used for human purposes. While this pamphlet does at moments offer a vibrant, actant bog, it so determinedly divides humans and non-humans—pits them against each other, in fact—that it forecloses any potential for an alliance. Both human and non-human history become irrelevant in this bog, which is only a doorway to the future.

III. Heaney's Bog-Archives

As much as Share's Bord na Móna pamphlet attempts to think of the bog as a gateway to the future, Seamus Heaney's bog poems do the opposite. While there are a number of Heaney's poems that might be considered bog poems, I focus here on the bog body poems—"Tollund

Man," "Grauballe Man," "Come to the Bower," "Bog Queen," "Punishment," "Strange Fruit," and "Tollund Man in Springtime"—along with "Bogland" and "Kinship." In part, I am following Heaney in grouping these poems, some of which appear in the limited edition book *Bog Poems* published by Rainbow Press in 1975.[39] Additionally, in a letter to a translator of his work, Heaney suggests a Spanish collection that includes "a group of poems from *North* (1975)—which might be bolstered by 'Bogland' (p. 55) and 'Tollund Man' (p. 78)" ("Letter to Ramon" Rose Library b 45 ff 3). The specific poems on which I focus in this chapter are those that most clearly represent the archival features of the bog.

Like Stoker's, Heaney's bogs are vibrant, active landscapes that operate as archives and facilitate a strange return of the past. However, whereas Stoker suggests but ultimately undermines the effective potential of the past's return, Heaney's poems embrace that potential. In Stoker, the strange return of the past reads as a necessary step to proceeding to the future—deal with the past and then move on. Similarly, the Bord na Móna pamphlet focuses on dealing with the past only as a step on the teleological road. Though the pamphlet was published some seventy-five years after Stoker's novel, the rhetoric is remarkably similar: use science and technology to reclaim the bog, providing a better future and an economic boon to local populations. Many of Heaney's bog poems are roughly contemporary to the pamphlet, but they approach bogs from a different perspective, with a different purpose and audience in mind. Heaney's bogs are not caught up in a teleological rhetoric. To some extent, they ignore—perhaps even reject—teleologies. Like *The Snake's Pass* and the Bord na Móna pamphlet, Heaney's bogs are about the past. But whereas for Stoker and Share, the bog is a site that must be cleared in the

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[39] *Bog Poems* collects "Bone Dreams," "Come to the Bower," "Bog Queen," "Punishment," "The Grauballe Man," "Tete Coupée" (retitled "Strange Fruit" for its publication in *North*), "Kinship," and "Belderg."

name of the future and progress, for Heaney the bog has intrinsic value as a natural archive. It is a site where the past and present convene, and where the future is of little or no concern. It's not anachronistic for Heaney. Moreover, whereas Stoker ultimately drains his bog of any political potential, Heaney's bogs are highly politicized. Stoker consistently reinforces a division between human and nature in his bog, but Heaney's bogs are sites where that distinction is almost entirely flattened. His bogs indiscriminately preserve human and natural history, and they draw human bodies into the natural milieu.

Heaney's bogs demonstrate particular archival functions, especially as sites of memory and preservation. In "Feeling Into Words," he writes, "We used to hear about bog-butter, butter kept fresh for a great number of years under the peat. Then when I was at school the skeleton of an elk had been taken out of a bog nearby [. . .]. So I began to get an idea of the bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in it and to it" (54). This statement connects the bog to the interrelated role of preservation in memory. In this way, the bog operates very much like any archive; it stores and preserves a material trace of the past, providing an operational memory of that past. Heaney's bog-archives extend that beyond human culture, though, because his bog is the "memory of the landscape," and not merely of the humans that interact with it.

Whereas the essential function of Stoker's bog is a principle of credibility to authorize local histories, Heaney's bog poems are not concerned with historical authority. A number of critics read Heaney's poetry, and the bog poems especially, as relying on a trope of the poet/speaker as archeologist. John Wilson Foster suggests, for example, "Heaney's poet is a kind of archaeologist (bringing cultural remnants up from below the surface) whose job it is to take the

long view of civilization" (*Colonial* 174). However, the remnants that Heaney brings up are not merely about civilization—he observes the human and non-human, nature and culture alongside each other. As Harry Clifton suggests, he is "a poet of physical sensation on an interface between the human and the non-human" (53). Heaney's focus on materiality, in other words, creates a site of contact between humans and nature. More than that, though, Heaney's bog-archive operates as that very interface. His engagement with the past in the bog poems doesn't aim to provide authority for a version of history; his bog-archives doesn't operate as a principle of credibility for historical knowledge. Rather, it recontextualizes human history within the broader scope of natural history, expanding possible interpretations of that history.

There are two registers in which I address Heaney's bog poems. First, I consider how focusing on the materiality of the bog allows for a different reading of the familiar political message. In particular, I will address the critique of Heaney's mythologization of violence via the bog by arguing that the bog's materiality in these poems reorients the force and meaning of that mythology. The bog is neither euhemerized goddess nor abstract deity; it is a bog, and as such, the sacrifices made to it (notably in the form of the bog bodies) are meaningless to the bog itself, which indiscriminately swallows victims of ritual sacrifice, animals that wander into it, trees, and other objects. While the majority of scholarship about Heaney's bog-centric poems focus on their symbolic interaction with Troubles politics, my objective is to show that the intense materiality of these poems indicates that they do not operate only on the level of symbol, but also as a representation of material spaces and environments. This leads into the second register in which I address these poems. Since they are not merely symbolic, I argue that they also represent a human-nature relationship that is porous, thus proposing a reading for these poems beyond their

immediate political context. The strange return of the past in the form of the bodies and objects found in bogs has undeniable political significance for the Troubles, but it also has ecological significance, and are therefore also involved in a different kind of politics. In both cases, I examine how the bog's role as archive facilitates my reading.

A. The Goddess in the Bog

Unsurprisingly, much of the criticism of Heaney's bog poems from *North* (the volume in which the majority of the bog poems are published) has focused on the invocation of the mother goddess mythos that dominates Irish politics and poetics in the early twentieth century. The texts demand this attention, to some extent, and Heaney himself recognizes the ways that he is interacting with the myth; in "Feeling into Words," he explains that "a number of [the bodies in PV Glob's *The Bog People*] [. . .] were ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess, the goddess of the ground who needed new bridegrooms each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the bog, to ensure the renewal and fertility of the territory in the spring" (57). Indeed, Glob asserts, "[B]y far the greater number of the bog people, where proper observations are recorded, bear the stamp of sacrificial offerings" (147). Glob goes on to connect these sacrifices to a fertility goddess responsible for agricultural prosperity (156).[40] In his poetry, Heaney situates this ritual sacrifice to the goddess in relationship to "the tradition of Irish political martyrdom" (57) for Mother Ireland.

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[40] Glob's book is another text in which the bog operates as an archive, preserving bodies and other artifacts that are virtually the only record available of Iron Age Danish history. Indeed, Glob's interpretations of the bodies and the circumstances of their death are essentially speculations informed by other archeological finds and texts from Roman writers such as Tacitus, whose knowledge seems primarily based on speculation and observation. There is no documentary evidence, no written discourse from the people of Jutland's Iron Age from which to develop a history. The bog is the primary archive of that time.

For many critics, the connection between ritual sacrifice and Northern Irish politics is a significant part of what makes the bog poems problematic. In his 1975 review, Ciaran Carson accuses *North* of a dangerous mythologization, arguing that the volume shuffles uncomfortably between the "incompatibility" of precise realism and abstract mythologizing (183). He explains, "One gains its poetry by embodiment of a specific, personal situation; the other has degenerated into a messy historical and religious surmise—a kind of *Golden Bough* activity, in which the real difference between our society and that of Jutland in some vague past are glossed over for the sake of the parallels of ritual" (184). He takes issue, in other words, with Heaney's figural connection between the past and the present. He accuses Heaney of being "the laureate of violence—a mythmaker, an anthropologist of ritual killing, an apologist for 'the situation,' in the last resort, a mystifier" (183).

In a similar vein, Edna Longley (1982) compares the bog poems of *North* unfavorably to "The Tollund Man," questioning, "Do these later images imply that suffering on behalf of Kathleen may not be in vain, that beauty can be reborn out of terror?" (76). For Longley, the presence of the goddess myth (here referenced as Kathleen ní Houlihan) aligns Heaney with a poetic and political tradition that promotes martyrdom on behalf of Ireland. She connects the ritualized violence of the poems with Heaney's own Catholic upbringing, noting, "The decorative tinge that Heaney imparts to violence and to history derives from a ritualizing habit, which itself derives from his religious sensibility" (84). Longley, then, sees in these poems a blurring not only between Denmark and Ireland, past and present, but also between pagan and Catholic rituals. For Carson and Longley, the myth and ritual invoked in the bog poems of *North*

participate dangerously in a tradition of mythologization that legitimizes violence as a quasi-religious, nationalist martyrdom.

Critics such as David Lloyd (1985), who reads *North* as isomorphic with early structures of Irish nationalism (320), have continued a similar argument, aiming to expose the potential dangers of Heaney's reduction of "history to myth" (331) in these poems. Other critics, however, have read Heaney's engagement with history and mythology in a more positive light. John Haffenden (1987) reads these poems through the lens of Jungian archetype, arguing that Heaney's mythologization of the bog represents a deep love of place (102). William Pratt (1996) and Brian McHale (1999) both locate Heaney's turn to mythology as part of a Modernist tradition, connected in particular to Eliot, Pound, and of course Yeats. Sydney Burris (1990) and Oona Frawley (2004) each read the poems within the context of the pastoral tradition, arguing that the look to the past and mythology are a form of nostalgia. The bulk of the criticism on these poems is concerned with identity politics, Heaney's role as poet-archeologist, or in some cases, both.

Though some more recent work examines the role of the natural environment—notably, that of Susanna Lidström (2015) and Alison Carruth (2016)—most of the criticism references Heaney's engagement with nature obliquely, often reading it as purely symbolic or psychological. In fact, very few scholars have given any attention to the dedicated material content of Heaney's bog poems, concentrating instead on the invocation of the mother goddess. Longley, for example, complains that *North* "appears more fascinated by bones, fossils, relics, archaisms—'antler combs, bone pens, / coins, weights, scale-pans'—than by those things which they are emblems of" (83). She sees Heaney's interest in these objects as problematic because it

comes at the expense of his attention to what she believes these objects represent. However, the material emphasis is not a poetic or political misstep, but rather points toward a way of reading; if the poems themselves are oriented toward the objects, perhaps we should also read them as objects rather than only as emblems of something else. Focusing on the materiality of these poems changes how we understand Heaney's engagement with mythology.

There are two points I want to make about the materiality of the bog in response to the criticism focused on the mother goddess myth: that the bog is never euhemerized, and that the generative capacities of the bog are ironic; it creates and gives birth to death. In Revival-era invocations of the goddess, she is named and embodied: Kathleen ni Houlihan, Rosaleen, the Sean Bhean Bhocht, the spéirbhean, Mother Ireland. She is idea and landscape made flesh, gendered, and named. She moves, speaks, interacts, incites, draws out. Significantly, she acts as a human. In her, the spatio-political construct known as Ireland is euhemerized into an anthropomorphic deity, deemed worthy of the masculine energies and attentions of loyal Irishmen. She is a dangerous figure. Having invoked her in his and Lady Gregory's 1902 play *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, Yeats later wondered, "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" ("Man and Echo" 345). Hubris aside, Yeats's concern at having tapped into a national myth so powerfully and frequently used to spur Irishmen to action was not ill-founded. This female figure had been fomenting rebellion in her various guises for over a century.

The two main forms this goddess takes are the beautiful young woman and the chiding old hag. *Cathleen ní Houlihan* suggests the clear connection between these figures, as the titular character begins as the hag and ends transformed into the young woman after young Michael pledges to sacrifice himself in her honor. The gendering of this figure is important; in both forms,

she represents sexuality and generative capacities. As the old mother, she has gestated and given birth to Ireland, Irishness, and the people who populate the island. As the young woman, she seeks male mates whose blood will ensure the continuation of the Irish cause. As any number of critics have shown, Heaney's bog poems in *Wintering Out* and *North* participate in this spatio-political mythology. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, for example, argues that in his engagement with the goddess, Heaney is "possessed by and even reproduces the atavistic myth which he deplores" ("Thinking" 3). In some of the poems, the goddess is not only implied but clearly invoked. "The Tollund Man" specifically references it, referring to the body as "Bridegroom to the goddess" (12), echoing Glob's belief that the Tollund Man and others like him served as "husband to the goddess" (190). In "Kinship," the speaker finds himself "facing a goddess" (72) and mentions "Our mother ground" (126). Finally, "Come to the Bower" and "Bog Queen" more tacitly cast the body rather than (or perhaps alongside) the bog in this role.

However, Heaney's engagement with the mother goddess myth is distinct from the Revival tradition and its predecessors. First, his mother goddess is not specifically tied to Ireland; in other words, it is not Mother Ireland. Indeed, the most famous of the bog body poems, "The Tollund Man," "The Grauballe Man," "Punishment," and "Strange Fruit," are inspired by photographs bodies found in Danish bogs, as presented in *The Bog People*. Not only is she not specifically Irish, Heaney's goddess also differs from earlier invocations of Mother Ireland because she never leaves the bog. He doesn't euhemerize the landscape into either a beautiful young woman or a hag. His goddess doesn't get a body at all; she—*it*—remains undeniably a

bog, changing the dynamic of the myth.[41] However sexualized the language used to describe it, the bog does not evoke the same sexual energy as the embodied woman. In this way Heaney critiques the goddess myth and exposes the romantic, idealized form that it generally takes in the Irish poetic tradition. In fact, most of the poems don't even connect explicitly to the myth; Heaney mentions the goddess specifically only in "The Tollund Man" and "Kinship," as noted above. The poems express not so much an admiration of national martyrdom as a fascinated terror at what it is that people are dying and killing for: not a goddess, but a shifting landscape.

Perhaps no other poem makes this quite as clear as "Kinship." Almost the entire poem is about the bog as an environment, with the direct political connection only coming together in the final section. The drafts suggest that earlier versions of the poem were focussed entirely on the bog. A related fragment that partially made its way into "Kinship" was simply titled "Bog." This fragment assigns the bog "the character of kindness" ("Bog" NLI ff 36), which suggests that for Heaney, the bog is not always the terrible goddess. Other drafts were titled "Bog Litany" ("Bog Litany" NLI ff 40), and while the use of the word "litany" here certainly invokes a religious connotation, the parts of the poem that reproduce the patterns of Catholic litanies are heavily focused on the materiality of the bog. Take, for example, section II, beginning in the second stanza of the poem as it appears in *North*:

> But *bog*
>
> meaning soft,
>
> the fall of windless rain,

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[41] Though the female bodies in "Come to the Bower" and "Bog Queen" can be read to stand in as the embodied goddess, there's not a clear separation between the body and the bog in these poems. Moreover, Richard Rankin Russell points out, Heaney's introductory note to the limited edition *Bog Poems* "conveys the importance to his work not so much of the bog bodies as of their black landscape" (152).

pupil of amber.

Ruminant ground,

digestion of mollusc

and seed-pod,

deep pollen-bin.

Earth-pantry, bone-vault,

sun-bank, embalmer

of votive goods

and sabred fugitives.

Insatiable bride.

Sword-swallower,

casket, midden,

floe of history.

Ground that will strip

its dark side,

nesting ground,

outback of my mind. (34-5)

This list describing the bog focuses almost entirely on the bog as an environment—and particularly as an environment that archives and preserves everything from seeds and pollen to bones and swords. The only line entirely disconnected from the bog as a natural space is "insatiable bride"; while the reference to "votive goods" carries a religious suggestion that connects to the mother goddess mythology, as the line indicates objects presumably cast into the bog as offering, the bog's role in relation to these items is "embalmer," a nod to the bog's natural preserving qualities. Section IV similarly focuses on the natural processes of the bog: "sump and seedbed, / bag of water," "ferments of husk and leaf," "mosses come to a head, / heather unseeds," "a windfall composing / the floor it rots into" (36). Although section III ends with the ominous declaration that the speaker is "facing a goddess" (36), the following section makes it clear that this goddess is primarily an ecosystem, a series of natural processes. The materiality of the bog overwhelms its deification as a goddess.

Moreover, by focusing on the materiality of the bog—its waters, plants, concealed objects—Heaney illustrates in the bog poems the distinct limitations of the goddess's generative capacities. As an ecosystem, the bog offers revelatory commentary on the idea of a fertility goddess because only certain types of plant and animal life can flourish there. The unique, anaerobic environment and high levels of tannin acids that give bogs their unusual preservative qualities also make bogs hostile to most plant and animals species. Because of that, bogs have historically been considered wastelands, useful only for digging peat. British surveyors from as early as 1810 have looked for ways to drain and develop the land (Foss and O'Connor 188), an endeavor that is dramatized in *The Snake's Pass*. While reclamation projects certainly reflect the capitalist tendency to value places only in terms of productive potential, it also suggests,

importantly for my purposes, the very lack of the generative capacity of bogs. They can't grow crops, serve as foundations for houses, or provide usable water. As a representation of Mother Ireland, then, the bog-goddess in Heaney's poetry is similarly limited as a symbol of germination.

The lack of germinating potential from the bog-goddess is further evidenced by the bodies that are recovered from it. The bodies Heaney responds to are preserved in their death by the bog, making the strange birth imagery of some of the poems ironic. **"**The Grauballe Man," for example, describes the victim of ritual sacrifice like a baby, observing "his rusted hair, / a mat unlikely / as a foetus's" (28) and "a head and shoulder / out of the peat, / bruised like a forceps baby" (29). Rather than instilling hope, this birth imagery indicates the destructive nature of the myth; the bog gives birth to a dead man. Indeed, the use of the word "foetus," typically reserved for unborn and non-viable babies, emphasizes that this is not an image of rebirth but rather stillbirth. The Grauballe man's sacrifice retains none of the romantic heroism and glory of Cathleen ni Houlihan's protectors, suggesting that only death awaits those who die for Mother Ireland. By representing the goddess as a bog, Heaney severely limits its regenerative capacities.

"The Bog Queen" uses birth imagery to much the same effect. Here, the body's hair is metaphorized as an umbilical cord; Heaney writes, "The plait of my hair, / a slimy birth-cord /of bog, had been cut" (50-2). Unlike "The Tollund Man," the first-person speaker of this poem is the bog body itself rather than an observer. While that gives an impression of life from the body, the speaker primarily recites a chronicle of bodily decomposition, more on which to follow below. In anthropocentric terms, this body is not an image of regeneration, as is particularly evident in the final stanza. After her umbilical-braid is cut, Heaney explains, she "rose from the

dark / hacked bone, skull ware, / frayed stitches, tufts" (53-5). The use of the verb "rise" here does convey an idea of resurrection or rebirth, and is implicitly connected to 1916 Easter Rising and perhaps also the 1798 rebellion, as the body that inspires this poem was discovered in the 18th century. However, the image of rebirth is immediately ironized by the following inventory of decay describing what, exactly, rises. The first image, "hacked bone," suggests a violent death. The following "skull ware" again suggests death through reference to the skull and "ware" creates a sense of the body as sellable goods rather than a living person. The "frayed stitches" and "tufts" also suggest that the body and its accoutrements are coming to pieces.

If this Bog Queen is, as some critics have suggested, a representation of the mother goddess, she is not a goddess of regeneration and renewal; she cannot restore even herself. On the one hand, the myth of renewal and the evocation of 1916 and 1798 in this poem are conceptually connected to Heaney's earlier poem "Requiem for the Croppies," which, through a central metaphor of barley seeds sprouting out of a mass grave, suggests that the slaughter of rebels in 1798 by British forces planted the seeds of rebellion that matured in 1916. On the other hand, the difference in metaphors between the two poems is striking. In "Requiem," the barley in the rebels' coat pockets is buried along with their bodies in fertile ground, where it germinated. In "Bog Queen," by contrast, a corpse preserved in infertile ground provides the metaphor. While both poems suggest the potential of the past to affect the present, what rises from the ground in the earlier poem is new life, in turn obfuscating the violence of revolutionary nationalism in 1916 and following, but what rises in the second poem is an uncanny figure of death.

In "The Grauballe Man" and "Bog Queen," then, birth imagery works ironically to emphasize the violent deaths of these characters. In both poems, it also emphasizes the

materiality of the bog rather than the presence of the mother goddess. In "The Grabaulle Man," the body emerges not from a uterus but "out of the peat" (35). The bruised appearance that the speaker compares to "a forceps baby" (36) is a product of the acids in the bog. Similarly, in "Bog Queen" it is significant that the umbilical cord is "a slimy birth cord / of bog" (50-1). In both cases, the birth imagery emphasizes the bog as a bog. It isn't anthropomorphized in order to make the images smoother or to make the bog more goddess-like. Again, this suggests that Heaney's mother goddess is quite distinct from other invocations of the Mother Ireland trope. The bog's role in the bog poems isn't about regeneration or rebirth, then. Instead, the focus on the materiality of the bog and the objects found in it suggest that the bog's primary role is preservation. The bog acts in these poems to archive, preserve and store. What it does is connected less to its role as goddess than to its role as archivist.

In sum, the bog makes for a poor mother—one that gives death instead of birth. As a mother goddess, it fails to provide renewal or regeneration in spite of the sacrifices made to it. The Tollund Man, in his poem, goes into the bog as a "Bridegroom to the goddess" (12), meant as a sacrifice to a fertility goddess to bring the land back to life and productivity in the spring. However much Iron-Age devotees may have believed in the power of that ritual, contemporary readers understand its absurdity. Spring comes regardless; crops thrive or fail as a result of environmental and agricultural activity. Though Heaney draws poetic energy from the idea of regenerative sacrifices that Glob makes a case for in *Bog People*, the scientific realities of climate and ecology mitigate the potential of the metaphor. From the perspective of the twentieth century, the Tollund Man's death is meaningless. The anachronism of comparing this ritual to contemporary violence may suggest the glory of political martyrdom, but it simultaneously

indicates its absurdity. While on one level, these poems convey the idea that partisan deaths in Northern Ireland have a generative capacity, on another level, they imply that such deaths are impotent and meaningless. They make nothing germinate, appease no deity. As Henry Hart argues, "Heaney's revelations of the dead [. . .] expose the shadowy demarcations between story and history and tabulate the consequences of blind devotion to fossilized myths" (402). The impassive bog swallows and preserves these sacrifices without distinction from the skeletons of other animals, like the Great Irish Elk in "Bogland." Focusing on the politics and the mythology of these poems, on the rituals and language of tortured reverence, produces a reading that places them within a dangerous tradition of instigating and legitimizing political violence. However, attention to the poems' insistent focus on the materiality of the bog suggests at least some ambivalence and perhaps a poetics of critique.

B. The Bog Beyond the Goddess

On the one hand, then, Heaney's bog poems are distinctly related to Trouble's politics, though perhaps with more ambivalence than has sometimes been claimed. On the other hand, the poems have a life and meaning beyond those particular politics, and again it is the intense material focus of the poems that points toward another reading, leading to a discussion of how the bog functions in Heaney's poetry beyond the political. In a 2000 RTÉ interview about the bog poems, Heaney says, "You can, and the poems do, try to link the actual bodies and the background of violence of the Iron Age or the background of sacrifice or whatever in the Iron Age to the contemporary moment. I mean, it attaches them by various little verbal devices in the poems, and just by being written in Ireland at that time, they were linking to what was going on. But they aren't quite political poems" (Murphy). In light of that, I offer a way of reading the

poems that opens them up to be about something beyond the politics of Northern Ireland. Specifically, I argue that these poems develop what Hubert Zapf calls an "ecoethical attitude of coevolution and partnership between the human and the nonhuman world" (858) by contextualizing human history within the broader context of natural history.[42]

These poems show a strong sense of connection between humans and non-humans. William Pratt suggests, for example, that Heaney's "Irish bog poems [. . . reestablish] the link between man and the natural world that we seem to have lost by single-mindedly pursuing a purely technological mastery of nature" (266). Similarly, Susanna Lidstrom argues that the bog poems operate to "disconcert our definitions of nature and culture" (48). In other words, these poems muddy the distinction between human and non-human, opening up space where, in Zapf's words, "the nonhuman environment is a presence in its own right [and] is closely interconnected with human life" (858). The bog archive, for Heaney, represents that interconnection by recording artifacts of human history indiscriminately alongside natural history.

That indiscriminate preservation is evident in his bog poems from early on. In "Bogland," Heaney's catalogue of artifacts is not anthropocentric: "the skeleton / Of the Great Irish Elk," long since extinct; "Butter sunk under / More than a hundred years"; "the waterlogged trunks / of great firs, soft as pulp" (41). Interestingly, this list includes only one human-created item—the butter. Where Helen Vendler reads the skeleton as an example of Heaney's benign interest in "evolutionary astonishment" (39), I suggest that it points toward an ethics of relationship to the natural environment. In a poem that is pervaded by a sense of history and memory, in which the

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[42] Zapf is writing specifically about a trio of Emily Dickinson poems in this instance. He uses the poems as a case study for developing a theory of literature as a site through which studies of ecology and ethics are interconnected. I am arguing here that Heaney's bog poems operate similarly.

bog itself "remembers," records, and archives, it is important that its memory is not only of humans. The remembering landscape archives more than human traces.

In the bulk of Heaney's bog poems, the human-nature relationship becomes more complicated. As previously discussed, most of these poems use the bog as a way of addressing politics and the poetic tradition, and in many ways it is a more complex landscape in these poems than it is in "Bogland." And indeed, many of the bog body poems in particular focus primarily on the human object that the bog has preserved; unlike "Bogland," these poems do not include the carcasses of animals and mentions of bog trees are typically analogical, relating a part of the body to other natural items that are found in the bog. However, the close relationship that Heaney establishes between the bodies and the non-human elements of the bog suggests a flattening of distinctions.

In fact, in many of them, the body itself is almost indistinguishable from the non-human elements in the bog. In "Punishment," for example, the poem's "little adulteress" comes out of the bog "at first" as "a barked sapling / that is dug up" (30). The Grauballe Man, in his poem, is a "black river" with wrists "like bog oak," an instep like "a wet swamp root" and "his spine an eel" (28). In "Strange Fruit," the girl's nose is "dark as a turf clod" (28). In fact there are numerous examples in each of the poems that carefully connect—almost conflate—these bodies with the natural world. As the distinctions between what is human and what is natural diminish, the bodies seem to be part of the bog itself. Like the natural objects that surround them and which they have begun to resemble, the bodies themselves eliminate the need to distinguish between human and non-human. Their very bodies—like the bog itself—become spaces in which the human and the natural converge and coexist.

"Bog Queen" offers one particular example of this. This poem gives a series of descriptions that indicate how the body is integrating into the bog assemblage—she is being "digested" by "the seeps of winter," and roots infiltrate and die in "stomach and socket" (25). The picture here is both of a body in the process of decomposition and becoming a part of the bog, as the roots and other plant matter are elements of the bog's composition. The body is being assimilated into the bog. The speaker's capacity for reproduction is not ended, but simply shifts from human reproduction to non-human reproduction; as the "vital hoard reduc[es] / in the crock of the pelvis," her brain is "a jar of spawn / fermenting underground" (25). In an earlier draft, Heaney wrote "bog-spawn" instead of just "spawn" here, a further clarification that the generative capacities of this body are now entirely enmeshed in the bog ("Viking Queen" NLI ff 34).

The comparison of the body's hair in the penultimate stanza to "a slimy birth-cord / of bog" (27) further suggests the body's connection to the bog—not only the physical connection that the hair/birth-cord provides, but also a metaphorically genetic connection as well; the bog queen of this poem has been remade in the bog's image. While I've already suggested the limitations of the birth imagery in these poems, so that the cut cord and suggested birth of the bog queen is not properly a symbol of birth in the sense of vitality and hope, it does carry a suggestion that the body's gestation in the bog has created something new: a blend of human and non-human. The birth imagery of "The Grauballe Man" is similarly complicated. On the one hand, as previously noted, the significance of this imagery in the human context shows the futility of death in the name of the goddess. On the other hand, though, we can look at this imagery in the context of a human-nature connection; the body has been transformed and is

something new altogether, a human-nature hybrid and, in Heaney's hands, an aesthetic object. If the goddess in these poems is, as I have argued, de-euhemerized back into a bog, and if the context of Troubles politics is temporarily shelved, these poems become about the connection between humans and nature—or, more specifically, about the connection between human history and natural history. In an era of climate change, it is becoming increasingly apparent that our fate is linked to that of the non-human world, our history inextricably intertwined with non-human history. Reading the bog poems outside of their immediate political contexts creates space for Heaney's poetics to speak toward the value of recognizing ourselves as part of the natural processes that take place around us.

Heaney's final bog body poem comes some thirty years after *North*. In *District and Circle*, Heaney returns to the Tollund Man, and reinvents him in "The Tollund Man in Springtime." Here, through six sonnet stanzas, the Tollund Man transforms from the observed object to the first-person speaker of the poem. Unlike the other bog body poems, including "Bog Queen" which is the only other one in which the body speaks for itself, "The Tollund Man in Springtime" doesn't associate the body with the bog quite as closely through description. In fact, this poem is not ekphrastic in the same way that the earlier bog poems are. Another significant difference between this poem and the others is the optimism of its tone. Whereas the earlier poems display little or no optimism, this one presents a hopeful vision for the future. On one level, the optimism of this poem is a response to improvements in the political situation in Northern Ireland signaled by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 that effectively ended The Troubles. In that way, it is similar to the earlier poem "Tollund," a response to the 1994 ceasefire in which Heaney's speaker travels to the bog in which the Tolland man was found. There, rather

than the unhappy "man-killing parishes" (63) anticipated in "The Tollund Man," he finds himself "at home beyond the tribe" (410) in a bright and peaceful landscape that does not point to the violent past but instead inspires the speaker "to make a new beginning" (410). On another level, however, "The Tollund Man in Springtime" goes beyond the specific politics of Northern Ireland to a broader ecological politics.

In this poem, the strange return of the past in the form of the Tollund Man comes with the energy for renewal. In the earlier poems, the connection to nature and the recontextualization of human history creates a space for critique and a re-evaluation of the violence of the Troubles. Rebirth images are all at least partially hampered by the overwhelming presence of death. "The Tollund Man in Springtime," on the other hand, suggests that a reconnection with nature can provide a sense of renewal for humanity. In fact, marginalia on the draft of this poem indicates that renewal and reconnection to nature are what Heaney had in mind while writing. In one note, Heaney writes of "renewal" and "organic life" ("Tollund Man in Springtime" draft NLI ff 126). The bog here carries little trace of the earth goddess and bears none of the death imagery of the earlier poems. In fact, the body becomes a site of regeneration and restoration. The speaker explains, "[I] told my webbed wrists to be like silver birches, / My old uncallused hands to be young sward, / The spade-cut skin to heal, and got restored" (56). These lines suggest that the way to restoration is through nature; the Tollund Man wills his body to be like birches and sward, trees and grass. Significantly, this transformation is made possible by the body's connection to the bog: "I gathered / From the display-case peat my staying powers," the speaker explains, as the first step in healing his body. The speaker also indicates how the bog and the natural world have—literally and figuratively—shaped him. He notes that "the bog pith weighed / To mould

me to itself and it to me" (56), suggesting a mutually formative relationship between the human and non-human world.

In the first sonnet stanza, the speaker says, "I reawoke to revel in the spirit / They strengthened when they chose to put me down / For their own good" (55). These lines echo the idea of the Iron Age ritual sacrifices. It also suggests that the speaker's sacrifice has strengthened the spirit, which may refer to the spirit of renewal and agricultural rebirth that the sacrifices were meant to ensure. In this sense, then, the poem seems to avow that the sacrifice was justified. However, the other thing that the speaker reawakes to is "a sixth-sensed threat," and that threat is nature in distress—"Panicked snipe offshooting into twilight, / Then going awry" (55). Also part of that threat is "Clear alteration of the bog-pooled rain" (55), an image that carries a suggestion of climate change and pollution, especially when considering the third stanza's description of the modern world: "I smelled the air: exhaust fumes, silage reek, / Heard from my heather bed the thickened traffic" (56). The world to which the Tollund Man reawakens is characterized almost entirely through pollution.

Like the previous bog body poems, this poem features a juxtaposition of the ancient and modern, and like those poems, the connection between past and present is the bog which preserves the past in its natural archive. However, unlike the previous poems, the present of this Tollund Man does not feature the violence of humans against other humans, but instead the violence of humans against the natural world through pollution and a severing of the connection to nature. The Tollund Man serves as a sort of bridge between the human and non-human world in this poem. His very body becomes a liminal space connecting the two. Like the other bog

bodies Heaney describes, the Tollund Man's body is a site in which human and non-human elements merge, as in his birch and sward hands.

In the final sonnet, the speaker traverses what seems to be national boundaries—"through every check and scan" he goes, developing an image of airport security with its various checkpoints, x-ray machines, and full-body scans. But he also traverses the boundaries between human and nature. He carries with him into this modern world "A bunch of Tollund rushes—roots and all— / Bagged in their own bog-damp" (57). His intention is to transplant them, but they die and dry out. Having been disconnected from the bog, the rushes do not survive in the modern world. The demise of the rushes leads to the ultimate prophetic decision of the speaker; he wonders if he should shake off the dust of the dead rushes—an echo of Matthew 10:14 in which Jesus's apostles are to shake the dust off their sandals in condemnation when leaving a village where the people refused to listen to them—or instead "mix it with spit in pollen's name / and my own" (57). This reference to John 9:6, in which Jesus heals a blind man by mixing spit and dust and placing the resulting mud on the man's eyes, carries with it the suggestion of miraculous healing and restoration as well as revelation through the opening of the eyes. The Tollund Man chooses healing and revelation over condemnation in the end. But again, it's notable that this healing will come through the combination of the human and non-human—spit and dust, pollen and the man.

IV. Conclusion

Where most scholarly approaches to Heaney's bog poems focus on their interaction with Troubles politics, I have argued that they also work to create an ecoethic, operating as a site of connection between the human and non-human, diminishing the distinctions between nature and

culture. The poems simultaneously respond to the political violence of the Troubles and go beyond those specific politics to recontextualize human history within natural history. His bog archive facilitates a strange return of the past that has the potential both to question the value of political martyrdom and to offer a possibility of renewal and reconnection to the natural world. In comparison with Stoker's *The Snake's Pass* and Bernard Share's Bord na Móna pamphlet, both of which position the bog as an agentic landscape that must be eradicated to make way for progress, Heaney's work looks at the bog as valuable in its own right. Heaney's bog archives recontextualize human history as part of natural history, suggesting a more ethical stance toward the natural world than Stoker or Share present. In the next chapter, I explore how the ethics of a human-nature connection hold value for vulnerable populations and individuals who rely on their environment to live.

Chapter Three

Shaping Water: Archiving Rivers in *The God of Small Things* and *The Hungry Tide*

In March of 2017, an Indian court granted to the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers the same legal rights as humans.[43] Michael Safi of *The Guardian* reports that the rivers will "be accorded the status of living human entities," meaning that "polluting or damaging the rivers will be equivalent to harming a person." The basis for the decision rests largely on the rivers' veneration as sacred in the Hindu religion, though Safi suggests that environmental politics—specifically, decades of failed intentions to clean up the highly polluted waterways—also motivated the ruling. The decision is remarkable in that it reverses utilitarian imperial practices separating nature and culture, giving precedence to local religious belief.[44] In that way, the decision is profoundly anti-imperial; it rejects centuries of Western scientific epistemology in favor of local knowledge and religion. Additionally, it is remarkable from the perspective of ecocritical theory, in the sense that theorists have explored ways to rectify the relationship of humans to nonhuman nature and mitigate the damage caused during the anthropocene. The recognition of the vitality of a natural entity equal to humans may be a step toward improved human/nonhuman relations, at least in one part of the world. The recognition of the rivers as living entities could almost be scripted out of New Materialist theory, in which the river and all of its constituent objects—from molecules to dolphins—all possess vitality and agency worthy of recognition.

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[43] The Ganges and Yamuna ruling is the second such decision regarding rivers globally, following in rapid succession. Just a week prior to the decision in India, New Zealand granted legal rights to the Whanganui River. Adam Taylor of the *Washington Post* reports that the ruling ends a 150-year struggle by Maori communities to gain recognition for their religious ancestral relationship to the river.

[44] In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh suggests that the British Empire tended to push people away from indigenous geographical knowledge: "there was a collective setting aside of the knowledge that accrues over generation through dwelling in a landscape" (55). This ruling suggests a reversal of that tendency.

The river ruling is significant to this chapter because rivers are central figures in the two novels it examines. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* both feature rivers as more than geographical features and more than mere setting. Roy and Ghosh narrativize how places archive the slow violence of environmental destruction and conservation efforts, establishing the Meenachal and the Ganges as the central archives in their respective novels. These texts represent an alliance between human and nonhuman by materially connecting them as part of the same biome, in that way critiquing globalization as it manifests through the spread of capitalism and conservation, which often comes at the expense of impoverished local communities. Drawing on the geographical concept of the hydrosocial cycle, I look at how water in these novels brings together different people and different species and links them all. I examine how Roy and Ghosh depict nonhuman actants participating in the formation of an alternative archive that chronicles the intertwined fate of humans and non-humans in the face of environmental destruction and climate change. In this way, both novels offer a hopeful vision of a more ethical way of living in our natural environments.

I. The Hydrosocial Cycle and the Archive

The term "hydrosocial" is from an emerging area in the study of geography. It describes a historicized and contextualized way of understanding water beyond its molecular designation (H_2O) and the science that describes it. The hydrosocial cycle operates as a corrective to the scientific hydrologic cycle, which critics argue fails to take into account how factors outside of evaporation and precipitation, including human and non-human actants, participate in the water cycle. They argue that water is shaped by human (or social) activity, and that water simultaneously shapes society. Geographer Jamie Linton explains, "The hydrosocial cycle can be

considered a way of conceptualizing, envisioning, and accounting for the necessary correspondences between hydrological and social processes" (231). Anthropologist Jeremy J Schmidt further clarifies, "[T]he hydrosocial cycle posits and critiques a society/nature dualism for how it implicates modern categories of thought that sort things to 'society' on the one hand, and 'nature' on the other. [. . .] [A]ccounts that seek to identify water's hybrid, socio-nature often aim to show how water resists classification as wholly social or only natural" (221). The term hydrosocial, then, is a way of thinking about water as a socio-natural hybrid. For geographers who study the hydrosocial cycle, its significance lies in its potential to critique and shape policy and management of water.

As a concept, the hydrosocial has yet to have a significant influence on literary studies, but it corresponds nicely with eco-critical and New Materialist approaches. For both Linton and Schmidt, as well as authors they cite, the way to understand the hydrosocial is through Bruno Latour's breakdown of the nature-culture dualism in *We Have Never Been Modern*, in which Latour first defines modernity as the establishment of that dualism and then argues that objects never obediently conform to one side or the other but instead shift back and forth between the two poles. Water is precisely such a hybrid object. As such, water has a particular agency. Schmidt explains, "[W]ater acts. Following Latour, water is an actant. Furthermore, other non-human things act upon water: other species, urban infrastructure, biogeochemical cycles, and so on" (221). Within the hydrosocial frame, then, water is an actant operating within a larger network including the human and non-human as well as the natural and fabricated.

The hydrosocial cycle also draws attention to the ways human and ecological problems are intertwined. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon argues for

an understanding of environmental destruction as slow, attritional violence against both humans and non-humans. He notes, "Often, as a community contends with attritional assaults on its ecological networks, it isn't granted equitable access (or any access at all) to modernity's basic infrastructural networks—piped clean water, a sewage system, an electric grid, a public transport grid, or schools—utilities that might open up alternatives to destitution" (42). People are more immediately affected by changes in the hydrosocial cycle when they don't have access to plumbing and instead rely on rivers and lakes as water sources. Unlike what Nixon labels "spectacular" violence (2), such as war, slow violence tends to go unnoticed. He explains, "Casualties of slow violence—human and environmental—are the casualties most likely not to be seen, not to be counted" (13). This is in part due to the fact that slow violence unfolds gradually over time, making it difficult to track and relate causes to effects. However, it is also due to disagreement about "*who counts as a witness*" (16, emphasis original), and too often, people who are most vulnerable to slow violence are discounted, their voices left out of the archive. For such people, the polluted and diminished bodies of water they rely on become place-archives that authorize discounted testimonies about attritional violence that simultaneously devastates humans and non-humans.

As a socio-natural object, water gathers. In *What is Water?*, Linton demonstrates the various scientific, religious, and social ideas that gather in and around water of all kinds. Beyond that, however, water also gathers refuse and detritus, including manufactured chemical compounds, fossil fuels and other effluents, and other forms of human waste. This chapter explores how archiving is one of the hydrosocial functions of water, and of the rivers in *The God of Small Things* and *The Hungry Tide* in particular. I look at how Roy and Ghosh represent these

bodies of water as a chronicle of how they shape humans and societies and how those societies also shape the water. The rivers and the humans around them work together to archive their shared histories. Water also gathers human and non-human beings both along its banks and within its currents that depend on it for life. The term hydrosocial seeks to break down the nature-culture divide, looking at how human societies have been affected by and in turn affect water; however, I expand the term social to consider how water gathers together various species that all share in common the need for water as a basic requirement of survival. This chapter examines how water in *The God of Small Things* and *The Hungry Tide* not only archives a shared natural history between humans and non-humans, but also how it operates as a site that unravels nature-culture dualisms, allowing for the emergence of a more balanced environmental ethics.

III. *The God of Small Things*

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* tells the story of Estha and Rahel Ipe, fraternal twins who witness a terrible tragedy at the age of seven and are forever changed by it. Their story includes their broader family and neighbors—their grandfather, Pappachi, who was an "Imperial Entomologist" (48); their grandmother, Mammachi, who started the successful business, Paradise Pickles and Preserves; their bitter great-aunt, Baby Kochama; their uncle Chacko, an Oxford graduate who married a British woman and fathered a daughter named Sophie Mol before divorcing and returning to Kerala; their mother, Ammu, who married against her parents' wishes and returned with the twins to the family home after her divorce; and Velutha, a Paravan carpenter who works for the Ipe family, befriends the twins, and becomes Ammu's secret lover. Through a series of flashbacks, the novel narrates the events that lead to Ammu and Velutha's affair, Sophie Mol's drowning, and the brutal beating and subsequent death

of Velutha at the hands of the police. After witnessing Sophie Mol's death and Velutha's beating, the twins are further traumatized when Baby Kochama manipulates Estha into corroborating her false statement to the police that Velutha had attempted to rape Ammu and then kidnapped the children. For her indiscretions, Ammu is banished from the family home, where Rahel remains, and Estha is sent to live with his father. Twenty-four years later, Estha is sent back to the Ipe family home, now in the possession of Baby Kochama. Alarmed by Estha's oddities, including a refusal to speak, Baby Kochama sends for Rahel, who also returns to Ayemenem to reunite with her brother.

The novel centers geographically and narratively around the Meenachal River, which flows through the town of Ayemenem just next to the Ipe family home and pickle factory. Further downstream is the slum where Velutha lives with his family and other members of his caste, and on the other side of the river is the storied "History House," the plantation compound that belonged to an English colonial administrator who "went native." The river connects all of these spaces and people—the upper-caste Syrian Christians of the Ipe family, Velutha and his fellow Paravans, and the fabled ghost of Kari Saipu, the colonial administrator rumored to haunt the compound where he killed himself. The river connects not only places and people, but also the novel's past and present as it becomes the focal point of Estha and Rahel's memories of their childhood traumas. The adult twins both return to the river, which is awash in their history even as it also chronicles its own history and the histories of the human and non-human lives that live along and within its banks.

Scholars of the hydrosocial cycle argue that water and human society have a mutual effect on each other. Humans have always tended to build societies on the banks of rivers, lakes,

streams, and other sources of water, and we have rarely left those bodies of water unchanged—we build dams and canals, we dig wells and reservoirs, we expand lakes, we divert rivers. Among the many things that rivers gather, then, are the material traces of hydrosocial cycle, as *The God of Small Things* bears out. The geographic centrality of the river in the novel is one way that it records its own role in the hydrosocial cycle. The novel indicates that the town of Ayemenem was built up around the river. In this sense, the Ipe family home, the slum where Velutha lives, and the colonial estate-cum-hotel all serve as artifacts not only of the history of class, caste and empire, but also of the impact of water on establishing and maintaining a society. It's hardly controversial to say that human societies tend to attach to bodies of water. The facts of our biology as a species—indeed, biological facts of almost all life on this planet—mean that we need water to survive, and it's logical that human populations concentrate in places where water is abundant and available. More controversial, however, is the suggestion that humans impact the hydrological cycle, the scientific model for describing the process of evaporation and precipitation, in significant ways. Or, to be more specific, while humans incontrovertibly alter the bodies of water through various constructions and technologies, the relative harm done by such human interventions in the hydrological cycle via construction and pollution is a source of political disagreement along with all other aspects of environmental science related to climate change and ecological destruction. But bodies of water archive the history of their own encounters with humanity, particularly when human use exceeds simple transactions.

The Meenachal River in *The God of Small Things* archives various modes of human excess that have unsustainably disrupted the hydrological cycle. The evidence of those disruptions is described in the novel's present. In the novel's past, the hydrosocial cycle seems

relatively benign; the human population around the river uses it as a water source but do little to alter the river itself. The Meeanchal of 1969 appears to be little affected by pollution and human machinations, but when Rahel returns in the early 1990s, the cost of the hydrosocial cycle on the river during a time of globalization and development is everywhere visible. Where the river had once been robust and flowing, the narrator tells us, "Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now" (118). The river's decrease is due to the installation of a salt-water barrage that "regulated the inflow of salt water from the backwaters that opened into the Arabian Sea" (118), a project that allows twice as many crops per year for rice paddy farmers.

The salt-water barrage is an artifact of the human role in the hydrosocial cycle, standing as a marker of how humans insert themselves into the hydrological cycle in major ways. The purpose of such a barrage is "to prevent the entry of saline water into the polders of the Kuttanad region of the Kerala coast to facilitate agriculture of paddy fields during the summer seas" (Shivaprasad et al 1382), according to a 2012 study of the influence of the non-fictional barrage that affects the Meenachal River along with five other rivers in western India that discharge into the Cochin Estuary. The barrage, the study finds, has "resulted in drastic and ecological changes in the Cochin estuary (1382-3), including the "total collapse of juvenile shrimp fisheries," "the depletion of clam beds," "the growth [. . .] of pathogenic bacteria," "the accumulation of toxic contaminants," and the "proliferation of weeds" upstream that "severely restricts the natural flushing of pollutants" (1383). The study goes on to report on salinity and chlorophyll in the estuary waters, providing evidence for how the human construction of the barrage affects the hydrosphere.

The novel is less concerned with the scientific data indicating how humans have affected the flow of water than with the impact of human activities. The barrage itself is outside of the novel's traveled geography, though through its effects it is part of the river's hydrosocial archive. The changes in the river's shape and behavior documents of the effects of human intervention in the form of the barrage. The narrator describes the river as "[a] thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish" (118). The mud banks, which the narrator later describes as "steep" (119), give an indication of what the river once was and where its waters flowed. The exposed banks chronicle just how much the water has receded and how quickly; the topography has not yet adjusted to this new river. Elsewhere along the river, the narrator points out, "The stone steps that had once led bathers right down to the water, and Fisher People to the fish, were entirely exposed and led from nowhere to nowhere, like an absurd corralled monument that commemorated nothing" (119). Like the river banks, the exposed stone steps are artifacts of the river's past. If they are a monument commemorating anything, it must be a different era in Ayemenem's hydrosocial cycle, in which the human social interaction with the hydrosphere was more balanced and less invasively damaging to the river. The river-archive stores its own history in these structural artifacts.

Significant to the river's history and the changes that have come to it are the interlaced pursuits of development and global capitalism, both of which have a profound impact on the hydrosocial cycle. Indeed, Roy's critique of development and capitalism is leveled primarily through their impact on water, both in *The God of Small Things* and in her essay "The Greater Common Good," in which she argues against the construction of megadams, targeting the Sandar

Sarovar dam on the Narmada River in particular. In the essay, Roy argues that while proponents for dam construction see the dam as evidence of development and modernity—a project, as the title suggests, that is for the greater common good of the nation—such a perspective misses the extraordinary cost at which that development comes. "How can you measure progress," Roy asks, "if you don't know what it costs and who has paid for it? How can the 'market' put a price on things—food, clothes, electricity, running water—when it doesn't take into account the *real* cost of production?" ("Greater" 16). As an example of that "real cost," she notes that the alteration of the hydrological cycle in agriculture forces farmers to plant different crops, opting for the higher-value, water-intensive options (such as rice or sugarcane) instead of subsistence crops. She observes, "People stop growing things they can afford to *eat*, and start growing things they can only afford to *sell*. By linking themselves to the 'market' they lose control of their lives" (68). The influx of market-driven capitalism that follows the dam's disruption of the hydrosphere, she suggests, pushes farmers to grow crops against the interests of their own subsistence.

By pointing out the way that capitalism negatively impacts subsistence communities, Roy indicates how development is a part of the slow violence against such communities and the environments on which they depend. In "Progress and Violence," Shiv Visvanathan posits the idea that "violence might be intrinsic to modern science and technology" (160). He considers the easy activation of human rights discourse in situations of what Nixon calls spectacular violence, in which, for example, a single person or group is tortured, but notes that the same discourse remains silent in regard to the attritional violence of progress and development (Visvanathan 162-3). The reason for the silence is that development is widely perceived as "an outward sign of

inward grace: The scientific and technologically advanced somehow feel morally superior" (161). To accept development as a moral good requires a simultaneous dismissal of the ways that it damages vulnerable people and ecologies, either by ignoring those effects or by labeling them as acceptable losses. Visvanathan refers to the latter as "Social *triage*, a rational framework for treating vulnerable communities as dispensable" (170, emphasis original).[45] When Roy points out the hidden costs of progress in "The Greater Common Good," she is offering examples of social triage—a prioritization that focuses on the perceived "greater common good" of development at the expense of people whose livelihoods, homes, cultures, and lives are deemed expendable.

This is a theme that Roy addresses poignantly in her 2017 novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. As she irreverently describes the march of progress in India, a hallmark of which is the megadams that "lit up the cities like Christmas trees" (102), she identifies the human cost. "Away from the lights and advertisements," she writes, "villages were being emptied. Cities too. [. . . S]urplus people were banned" (102). In the inevitable conflict between the banned populations and the authorities, the plight of the people is reduced to media spectacle as reporters repeatedly ask them to share their despair and then turn to experts, who air their opinion that "*Somebody* has to pay the price for Progress" (103, emphasis original). Implicit in that statement is the notion of social triage. *Somebody* has to pay, and the implication is that the price has been extracted from the appropriate population. Roy offers a variety of people who are paying for progress with their bodies and homes, including the maimed survivors of the 1984 Union

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[45] Visvanathan connects the idea of triage in particular to ecologist Garrett Hardin's (1980) book, *Promethean Ethics: Living with Death, Competition, and Triage.* Hardin's main concern is with the problem of overpopulation, and he advocates for social triage to determine whether endangered populations, such as people suffering famine, should be given aid or left to die as a natural curative to overpopulation.

Carbide gas leak in Bhopal and a single representative of those displaced by megadams, in whose dreams "his village still existed. It wasn't at the bottom of a dam reservoir" (117). This character is what Nixon (following Thayer Scudder) calls a "developmental refugee" (152), meaning that he has lost his home due to development. This type of displacement is a common problem; Shivanathan reports that India "has more than 60 million refugees from development projects such as dams" (171). The dam refugee's dream in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* shows how development disrupts the hydrosocial cycle. In it, "his river was still flowing, still alive. Naked children still sat on rocks, playing the flute, diving into the water to swim among the buffaloes when the sun grew too hot. There were leopard and sambar and slot bear in the Sal forest that clothed the hills above the village" (117). The living river has a central role in sustaining both the human and animal populations around it, and the dream presents a balanced ecosystem in which humans operate alongside other creatures. In contrast, the dam and its reservoir have disrupted not only human lives, but also the animal and plant life, as evocatively captured by the incongruous image of a crocodile "[knifing] through the high branches of Silk Cotton trees" (117). The social triage that renders certain human populations expendable enacts the same prioritized violence against non-humans.

Another way that Roy sees an influx of global capitalism via the dam project in "The Greater Common Good" is the World Bank loans that subsidize the construction. She explains, "India is in a situation today where it pays back more money to the Bank in interest and repayment installments than it receives from there. We are forced to incur new debts in order to be able to pay off our old ones" (29). As Nixon points out, "The very notion of the World Bank, one notes, contains a dead aquatic metaphor. Banks shore up investments, control streams of

capital and global flows. If we pause to reflect on the submerged metaphor of the World Bank, we see that a river runs through it" (160). The metaphorical flows that Nixon describes here too often involve the very real control of water. The supposed generosity of the World Bank, whose mission is to "end world poverty and promote shared prosperity in a sustainable way" (*The World Bank*), ultimately contributes to poverty and the displacement of the poor who depend on the river, its fish, and the affordable food that doesn't require irrigation from the dammed river. "Aid," Roy explains plainly, "is just another praetorian business enterprise. Like colonialism was" (15). For Roy, then, the disruption of the normal hydrological cycle due to dams and barrages is inseparable from the empty promises of development and capitalism.

Where the essay deals with these issues explicitly, *The God of Small Things* is more subtle, the critique of development and capitalism and their combined impact on the hydrosocial cycle coming primarily from observations about pollution in the river. The pollutants are artifacts in the river-archive that chronicle the disproportionate human disruptions to the hydrosocial cycle. The river's polluted state and the role of developmental aid in that pollution are evident from the novel's first chapter. The narrator reports that the river "smelled of shit and pesticides bought with World Bank loans" (14). The pesticides, likely connected to the increase in rice paddy farming, offer evidence of the influx of global capitalism via World Bank aid. The river archives that evidence alongside other contaminants, such as "[b]right plastic bags" and "unadulterated factory effluents" (119). The "History House" hotel, another inlet of global capitalism into Ayemenem, adds to the pollution by bringing in guests on speedboats, which

"[leave] behind a rainbow film of gasoline" (119).[46] Add to that the fish, most of which, the narrator tells us, "had died. The ones that survived suffered from fin-rot and had broken out in boils" (14). These artifacts—pesticides, plastic bags, factory effluents, gasoline, dead and diseased fish—are all archived in the river as evidence of the intertwined histories of development and environmental destruction that indicate the unbalanced hydrosocial cycle in the anthropocene.

Even while the river archives the damage to the hydrosocial cycle, it also indicates how this damage affects the human population. In a more balanced hydrosocial cycle, water typically has a positive impact on human societies, except in the case of disaster.[47] Societies are generally able to rely on rivers as a source of food and drinking water, for hygienic purposes, and even for socializing. In the wake of the river's decimation and contamination, the river becomes unreliable. In "The Greater Common Good," Roy observes, "They can't trust their river anymore. It's like a loved one who has developed symptoms of psychosis" (50). The river's untrustworthiness in the novel leads the hotel to put up "*No Swimming*" signs, which constitute another set of artifacts in the river-archive that evidence the ecological destruction and the breakdown of the hydrosocial cycle. These signs, syntactically alongside the description of the "tall wall to screen off the slum and keep it from encroaching" on the hotel compound (119) are part of the hotel's effort to avoid the contamination of its guests from both toxic water and toxic

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[46] Roy returns to the image of interconnected tourism and water pollution in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* in the dam refugee's dream, in which "[t]ourists didn't go boating over his fields. leaving rainbow clouds of diesel in the sky" (117).

[47] Sonali Deraniyagala's memoir *Wave*, which recounts her experience of surviving the 2004 tsunami that devastated Sri Lanka and other coastal areas in the Indian Ocean, details just such a disaster.

poverty. In this way, Roy implicitly demonstrates the intimate connections between environmental and economic devastation.

Whereas the hotel guests can avoid the toxic water and the negative returns from the hydrosocial cycle, the impoverished residents cannot. The narrator observes "clean mothers wash[ing] clothes and pots" and "[p]eople bath[ing]" in the river (119). The old, implicit contract of how water is used and what the river provides is still operational for these people, even if their river has turned noxious. Unlike their wealthier neighbors and the tourists, the lower classes cannot escape the effects of environmental destruction. Like the river itself, they are victims of a broken hydrosocial cycle. Nixon argues that the people most negatively impacted by environmental crisis are the global poor, who cannot afford the luxuries like plumbing and treated water that provide the wealthy a means of escape. Such people, Nixon attests, "experience environmental threat not as a planetary abstraction but as a set of inhabited risks" (4). For the people washing in the Meenachal in *The God of Small Things*, the devastation of the river is indeed an inhabited risk that they have no choice but to take. Aarthi Vadde asserts, "The river's desecration records the cost of living in an age of transnational corporate development" (537). These bodies in the river, then, become living artifacts, their presence in the toxic water operating as evidence of both the malfunctioning hydrosocial cycle and the unequal burden it imposes.

Beyond the material artifacts the river archives, it also collects memory and history. As my previous chapter explores, Seamus Heaney thought of the bog "as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in it" (54). The bog's ability to preserve artifacts may have prompted Heaney to think of it that way, but as his poetry

suggests, the bog's memory extended beyond the material traces it preserved. Similarly, Edward Casey's insistence that "places gather" includes not only material objects, but also stories, ideas, and memories of that tend to be less material (24-5). The Meenachal operates as an archive that gathers memories and small histories beyond the material traces. Whereas the majority of the material artifacts in the river comprise a local history of the hydrosocial cycle, the river's other significant archival function within the narrative is preserving the ephemerality of memory and experience.

In the scope of the novel, there are primarily two small histories that the river archives: the deaths of Sophie Mol and Velutha and the illicit relationship between Velutha and Ammu. The corresponding deaths of Sophie Mol and Velutha serve as the center around which the novel's circular narrative spirals. Sophie Mol's funeral is one of the earliest moments of disequilibrium in the novel. Long before Roy discloses who Sophie Mol is, she takes us to her funeral (6). It isn't until almost the end of the novel that readers learn that she drowns when she and her twin cousins attempt to run away in a boat that is capsized in the river's flow. The twins make it to the banks and go as planned to the History House where, hours later, the police show up and beat the sleeping Velutha almost to death. Sophie Mol's death is commemorated with an elaborate funeral and a grave marker proclaiming her "A SUNBEAM LENT TO US TOO BRIEFLY" (9). Velutha's death, on the other hand, goes uncommemorated. The text mentions neither a funeral nor a grave site. While Sophie Mol's body is interred in the earth, a presence even in her death, Velutha's death renders him a blank space. Roy writes, "He left behind a Hole in the Universe through which darkness poured like liquid" (182). While that hole represents the trauma his death leaves with the twins, it also points toward Velutha's absence from the record.

He goes uncounted, unremembered in the history of Ayemenem. Though the town's institutional archives might have preserved the police record justifying his arrest and death, which would include Baby Kochama's claims against him, that record would render him one of Foucault's "poem-lives" ("Lives" 169).[48] His whole life would likely be absent from the archive except his dangerous collision with power. Within the institutional grid of intelligibility, He would be knowable only as a dangerous Paravan criminal, the truth of his story and the contours of his life a Velutha-shaped hole in the archive. As Deepika Bahri suggests, "The narrator's lingering descriptions of the scene of events make of space and nature itself the repository of memory, each spot alive with its plangent resonance, recalling the terror that has taken place, as well as the remembrance and promise of things so deep into the past that they cannot be recalled so much as invented" (241). The river becomes the primary archive of Velutha's life and death as it revives him in Rahel's memory when she returns to the river's banks after a long absence.

Hydrosocialists are concerned with society on a broad scale, but the idea also points toward how water facilitates sociality on a small scale. Bodies of water bring people together for work as well as play—fishing and washing as well as swimming and boating. In *The God of Small Things*, the river is a sponsor for subversive relationships. Prominent among these are Ammu and Velutha's illicit relationship, which ends in Velutha's death and Ammu's total disenfranchisement. Both within that relationship and with the twins, the novel offers a view of the interrelationship between humans and non-humans that subverts the hegemonic human/

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[48] After discovering Ammu's indiscretions, Baby Kochamma files a police report claiming that Velutha had attempted to rape Ammu. She embroiders her story with slanted details of Velutha's reaction when confronted, his insolent behavior and lack of remorse, and she blames him for Sophie Mol's death and implies that he kidnapped the twins (245-8). Later, when Ammu attempts to set the record straight, her statement goes unrecorded in the chief inspector's organized paperwork (246).

nature duality. It suggests a more ethical way of living in the world, in which humans and non-humans operate as allies rather than combatants.

One way that the novel positions the river as subversive is through the twins' unusual relationship with it. The river operates for them as a type of school where they learn to see nature as vibrant. Vadde makes this argument neatly in her discussion of the novel's waterways, claiming that Roy establishes the backwater sphere as a third space that "shapes human subjectivity through cross-species solidarities" (524). This space fosters "bonds among humans" and "across human, animal, and vegetable lines" (524). Vadde focuses on the twins' "environmental literacy" (534), claiming that their ability to read and learn from the environment "results in markedly different values than Pappachi's and Baby Kochamma's" (535). Unlike their grandfather and great aunt, who are bent on a mastery of nature, the twins learn to live with an environmental consciousness. They see themselves as part of the natural world. This, Vadde suggests, is evidence of Roy's broader ethical project: "Roy routes human subjectivity through the ecological collectivity of the backwaters to articulate a more ethical vision of political and cultural belonging than the one provided by ascendant humanism and its accompanying ideologies of progress and profit" (536). By rerouting subjectivity in this way, Roy unravels the oppositional relationship of humans to nature. The river becomes a site where the edges of that duality are blurred, sponsoring in the twins a way of seeing themselves aligned with nature.

What emerges, then, is a new way of imagining the self in relation to nature, which resonates with what Gayatri Spivak refers to as planetary thinking. In her essay "Imperative to Re-imagine the Planet," Spivak writes, "I speak of an imperative to re-imagine the subject as a

planetary accident" (339).[49] She contrasts this mode of subjectivity with global agency, which she finds problematic because global agency is about power and control of the other. But "the planet," Spivak explains, "is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, indeed are it" (338). By entering into this understanding of the planet as Other, we are able to recognize our own status as Other. She writes, "If we imagine ourselves as planetary accidents rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us, it is not our dialectical negation" (339). Recognizing our own alterity as well as the planet's dissolves the dialectic of subjectivity and allows the possibility for a meaningful connection to emerge. In other words, Spivak calls for a shift in how we perceive ourselves as subjects in opposition to the non-human world. Ultimately, she believes that this way of thinking requires a more responsible existence. This call to a dialogic ethic toward the planet is echoed in Roy's ecoethic, through which she, too, advocates dissolving the duality and living in unity with the planet and with others, thus subverting the hegemonic division of human and nature. Roy represents Velutha as a planetary creature rather than a global agent. Throughout the novel, he is associated with the local environment. The narrator repeats an emphasis on his leaf-shaped birthmark which "[makes] the monsoons come on time" (278). It is as if Velutha is a force of nature himself. In the final chapter, Ammu notices "that the world they stood in was his. That he belonged to it. That it belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees. The fish. The stars" (315-6). Velutha's relationship to nature is one of mutual belonging. Like the twins, he too is a product of an education in the backwaters sphere.

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[49] This essay appears in *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* almost a decade after Spivak coined the term "planetarity" in *Death of a Discipline* (2003).

Roy's ecoethic is perhaps most evident in the final chapter of the novel, which relates the beginning of Ammu and Velutha's relationship.[50] This chapter comes as a surprise—after Roy's narrator has given the details of The Horror (Velutha's death), after Estha and Rahel have reunited in incestuous grief. After, it seems, everything has been told, Roy devotes this one chapter to Ammu and Velutha, in which the children have no role. While we read this chapter with full knowledge of how the relationship will end due to its socially transgressive nature, the chapter leaves that on the margins and emphasizes union in multiple forms. There is, prominently, the sexual union of Ammu and Velutha, which also indicates union between different castes and classes, and there is also the union between humans and nature. Whereas much of the rest of the text narrates the divisions between individuals, groups, and places, this chapter suspends those boundaries. The river has a central role in facilitating that suspension of boundaries as the site where Ammu and Velutha meet and consummate their relationship. On the first night of their affair, both characters come to the river as if by instinct, "As though she knew he would be there. Waiting. As though *he* knew she would come" (314). The river is a hybrid place, both natural border and traversable threshold, both social and natural space. Its hybridity makes it a symbolically rich site for the transgressive love Ammu and Velutha enact on its banks. Beyond its symbolic function, the river as a non-exclusive space available to everyone makes it the only space available to these characters; the narrator notes, "They knew that there was nowhere for them to go" (320). At the same time, the river as a socio-natural hybrid makes

[50] I derive the term "ecoethic" from Hubert Zapf's article "Literary Ecology and the Ethics of Texts" (2008), in which he argues that literature and literary studies "specifically focus on those interrelated dimensions of ecology and ethics that other forms of knowledge tend to neglect," positioning them as an essential element in the "evolution of that new global consciousness that we need to meet the challenges of the future" (865).

possible a deeper connection with the non-humans elements in and around the river. As the indiscriminate archive of human and natural history, the river sponsors a breakdown of divisions.

The last chapter emphasizes the connection between humans and nature by referring to the lovers' attraction and union as "biology" (312, 317, 318). Biology is a science of taxonomy and classification, in some ways linking it to the negatively coded domination of nature by humans that Roy develops through Pappachi's moth and Baby Kochamma's garden. Vadde identifies these two threads as "banal acts of violence committed against the non-human world by the novel's more privileged characters" (531). Pappachi's moth also represents an obsession with taxonomies, which Vadde identifies as "a discourse of discovery and possession, which prevents him from viewing the moth as a being in itself" (532). The carefully pinned and measured moth operates as a figure for the ideological subjugation of nature by human knowledge of it. Similarly, Baby Kochamma's garden does not represent a collaboration between humans and nature, but a grim determination to master nature; Roy writes that she is "[l]ike a lion tamer" (27). For Pappachi and Baby Kochamma, nature exists as something to be tamed, either through scientific classification or diligent pruning. They do not see themselves as part of the ecosystem in which they live.

On the one hand, then, the reference to biology in the final chapter seems to align with the sciences of entomology and horticulture that represent a problematic positioning of humans in relation to nature. On the other hand, biology is the broad category of science within which both human and non-human species are studied. The repetition here of the word biology, highlighted by the natural setting of the chapter, suggests that Ammu and Velutha are not separated from other natural processes that are going on around them. Another way that the text

creates a sense of connection to nature is through the emphasis on "the small things" (320), by which the narrator refers to the minute workings of nature, especially insects. The lovers observe and laugh about ants, caterpillars, overturned beetles, small fish, a praying mantis, and most of all, a spider to which "they linked their fates, their futures" (320). These creatures become companions—neighbors—to the humans, and the text avoids constructing any division between human and non-human life. In this way, the final chapter is subtly edenic, featuring only the two human characters amidst a cast of animal and plant life, suspended temporarily in this paradise of their making. Velutha even names the spider, mirroring the Adamic imperative to name the animals of Eden. Unlike Pappachi, who labels his moth for taxonomic purposes, Velutha names the spider not as an act of mastery but as a shift toward identification with another planetary creature.

It's important that Roy ends the novel in this edenic space because it highlights the ecoethic that she develops. Throughout the rest of the novel, paradise is invoked ironically to highlight the ecological destruction and economic problems of the region that grow out of an exploitative relationship between humans and nature. Ayemenem is clearly no paradise, despite the efforts of the tourism industry to market it as "God's Own Country" (120). However, in the final chapter Roy presents a brief vision of a more ethical way of living in relation to our world. It is the only hope she offers in the text, and we see in the final, edenic scene an unironic vision of paradise, of a union of humans with each other and with the non-human environment. It is a vision, in short, of a functioning ecosystem in which humans play their part not through mastery, but simply by existing.

The hydrosocial space in which Ammu and Velutha come together across caste lines and find a sense of commonality and community with the small lives of insects and plants, the same space in which their story is recorded in a landscape that remembers, is a space that makes it possible to hope for a better world. In the structuring of the novel, it is crucial that this chapter come at the end because it asks the reader to hope along with Ammu and Velutha. Even knowing their imminent and tragic ends, the novel holds out the irresistible promise of tomorrow. It asks us to dwell in that space with Ammu and Velutha, with their arachnid neighbor and the flowing river, in a place of hope and love and balance. It reminds us that for all the spectacular tragedies of the world, the small moments of tenderness, love, and neighborliness matter as well.

III. *The Hungry Tide*

While *The God of Small Things* indicates that the network of the hydrosocial cycle extends beyond the human realm in subtle ways, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* makes that network more apparent. Structured as present-day narrative in which readers glimpse the region's recent past through memories and a diary, Ghosh's novel brings together characters from a variety of backgrounds as a way of layering perspectives on the Sundarbans, a coastal region on the Bay of Bengal that is home to a vast network of rivers, small islands, and an extensive mangrove forest. Piya, a cetologist from the United States, comes to study the rare orcaella river dolphins. Kanai, a businessman and translator from New Delhi, comes at his aunt's summons to read a journal left to him by his long-deceased uncle, Nirmal. The rest of the characters are local people, most of whom have lived in the Sundarbans for generations. Among the locals, the primary characters are Fokir, a fisherman who acts as a guide for Piya's field work, and Kanai's aunt Nilima, who runs a hospital through her cooperative. This diverse human network—the

international outsider, the urban upperclass, and the local poor—allows the novel to explore the difficult question of how to address the needs of both human and wildlife populations by dealing with both conservation and social justice concerns. Because of the unique biosphere of the Sundarbans, where rivers are affected not only by the salinity of the ocean they flow into but also by the ebb and flow of the tide, the impact of water on social development is all the more evident. Moreover, as this novel dramatizes the competition between humans, plants, and animals for scarce land and water resources, it indicates how the hydrosocial cycle expands to include the impact of both water and humans on nonhumans as well. As with my discussion of *The God of Small Things*, I argue that the river in *The Hungry Tide* operates as an archive of the hydrosocial cycle, chronicling in particular the incursion of globalized politics through conservation efforts and changes to the biome that result from both of broad scale climate change and the influx of unsustainable fishing practices. Then I turn my attention to how Ghosh represents the river-archive as a site of knowledge production, primarily through Piya's research and Kanai's reading of his uncle Nirmal's diary from the Morijhapi massacre. I argue that the river-archive helps Piya to develop a more balanced ethic toward the work of conservation by offering her a new understanding of the interconnected nature of humans and non-humans.

As I have explored with *The God of Small Things*, some of the major artifacts in the hydrosocial archive are the structures built around and in water that are intended to give humans easy access to the water or to make it usable to humans in one way or another. In *The Hungry Tide*, the very type of structures built indicate the role of water in shaping human societies. The houses and other buildings of the tide country are evidence of that role. Nirmal and Nilima's house, for example, stands "on a six-foot trestle of stilts" (33), designed to keep the house safe

and dry in the event of a tidal flood. In addition to housing, the badh (or embankment) is the primary artifact of the hydrosocial archive. In fact, Nirmal explicitly connects it to the archive. He says, "For the badh is not just the guarantor of human life on our island; it is also our abacus and archive, our library of stories" (168). While I suggest, instead, that the badh is part of the novel's larger place-archive of the river and its surroundings, Nirmal's recognition of the badh as a gathering place for stories and histories is of a piece with my argument. As this part of the novel continues, Nirmal recounts for young Fokir (whose mother is a friend of Nirmal's) the various histories that the dam preserves, focusing on where it has been repaired. One repair, he explains, resulted from a man trying to flood his neighbor's fields (168). Another repair was necessitated by a tidal wave and also bore the story of a corrupt contractor (169). In this way, Ghosh suggests that the history of the island of Lusibari is recorded on a structure built to restrain water. The existence of the structure points toward the mutual impacts of water and human society, and it records the ways in which water and society interact over time. But Ghosh doesn't stop there. The chapter ends with Nirmal taking Fokir to the badh, where Fokir identifies a soft scratching sound within the embankment as crabs. Nirmal notes, "Even as we stand here, untold multitudes of crabs are burrowing into our badh" (172), questioning how long the dam can stand against the combined forces of storms, tides, and crabs. In addition to highlighting the agentic actions of nature here, the presence of the crabs in the badh also indicates the wider scope of the hydrosocial cycle; it is not only humans and water that participate as actants in the cycle, but animals and other non-human life as well. The badh, with its storied repairs and its crab residents, evidences the network of affectivity in which humans are connected along with all other things on earth.

In addition to the structures designed specifically to manage the frequent flooding of the tide country, the novel indicates that water also shapes the patterns of life and human substance there. Because of storms and salinous tidal flooding, the soil of the Sundarban islands has little value for farming. Ghosh writes, "The soil bore poor crops that could not be farmed all year round. Most families subsisted on a single daily meal. Despite all the labor that had been invested in the embankments, there were still periodic breaches because of floods and storms: each such inundation rendered the land infertile for several years at a time" (67). Because of this, Ghosh explains, "Hunger drove [residents] to hunting and fishing, and the results were often disastrous" due to drowning, crocodiles, and estuarine sharks (67). The very patterns of life here are evidence of the hydrosocial cycle at work; the water dictates how people live and survive in the novel's tide country.

The river archive in *The God of Small Things* details the incursions of globalization via invasive capitalism, which leaves its traces through pollution, saltwater barrages, tourism, and the further destitution of the local poor. In *The Hungry Tide*, the river archive also indicates the impact of globalization on the hydrosocial cycle, though in less spectacular ways. The presence of global capitalism is more muted, tourism is non-existent, and the only presence of colonialism in the hinterlands of the tide country is relatively benign; the human population of the islands there was sponsored by the Scottish capitalist Sir Daniel Hamilton, who purchased the land and offered it free to anyone who was willing to come and work to make the land livable. Here, nature rather than culture is the primary object of colonization, as S'Daniel seems to have been relatively uninterested in imposing particular cultural rule. However, like the History House and the ghost of Kari Saipu in *The God of Small Things*, traces of S'Daniel's role in settling the

Sundarbans operate as a reminder of how empire stretches even into the remotest territories. Though a less haunting presence than Kari Saipu, S'Daniel's presence also lingers in the tide country both because he sponsored the re-peopling of the islands and because the island and village names are tied to him. Lusibari, for example, was named for one of his relatives (44). The islands also bear traces of S'Daniel's attempts to modernize them; Nirmal points out "a discoloured wire that ran along the wall" and explains, "S'Daniel had made arrangements for electricity" and another set of wires shows "[t]here were even telephone lines here" (45).

Where Kari Saipu was "Ayemenem's own Kurtz" (Roy *Small Things* 51), S'Daniel was the tide country's Marxist idealist. Nirmal shows Kanai a bank note written by the Scotsman and explains, "The words could have been written by Marx himself: it is just the labor theory of value. But look at the signature. What does it say? Sir Daniel MacKinnon Hamilton" (45). The banknote is an artifact in the broad archive of the tide country that serves, for Nirmal, as evidence of the Marxist foundations of the current society there. In his retelling of S'Daniel's inspiration to populate the islands, the purpose was "to build a new society, a new kind of country" where "people wouldn't exploit each other and everyone would have a share in the land" (45). "Here," Nirmal explains, "there would be no Brahmins or Untouchables, no Bengalis and no Oriyas" (44). But this utopic society could only be created by colonizing the natural spaces through clearing forests, killing predators, and building dams and embankments to keep the tide water from salinating the land designated for farming. So the river and its islands record the human interventions in the hydrosocial cycle, which impact not only human society and water, but the entire biome of the tide country. And while the human population there seems to be entirely comprised of Indian and Bangladeshi people, the effort to colonize the islands is

sponsored by external, British agents. The story of the settling the region and the material traces that activity created in the river-archive is, in part, a story of imperialism and globalization.

S'Daniel's imperial influence on the Sundarbans has long since passed in the narrative of *The Hungry Tide*, but there are other global incursions into the local hydrosocial cycle. One of these is the novel's suggestions of climate change. In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Ghosh writes that climate change "figures only obliquely in [his] fiction" (9). Here, Ghosh presents the need for novels that confront climate change directly, suggesting that contemporary fiction, including his own and Roy's, is insufficient in response to the climate crisis. He sees literature as both a way of "bearing witness, of testifying, of charting the career of the conscience" in relation to climate issues and as a form that makes it possible to "approach the world in a subjunctive mode, *as if* it were other than it is" (128). He notes that due to the many rivers and the proximity to the ocean and storm surges, the Sundarbans are particularly vulnerable to rising global water-levels, but at the time of writing *The Hungry Tide,* he thought of that as a local rather than widespread issue (6-7). While Ghosh feels that his novel doesn't adequately address the issue, climate change does have, as he says, an "oblique" place in it. John Thieme observes, "Ghosh never goes so far as to say that climate change is responsible for the devastating storms that periodically strike the region, but this seems to be implicit: the action comes to a climax when a tsunami-like wave swamps the tide country and throughout there are suggestions that the uniquely varied biodiversity of its eco-system is imperiled" (37-8). The first glimpse Ghosh offers of that imperiled ecosystem is Kanai's arrival at the port of Canning. His aunt, Nilima, meets him there and points out that the river has changed since Kanai's last visit when he was a child. "There isn't much water in the river nowadays," she

explains, “and at low tide it gets very shallow” (*Hungry* 22). Whereas Roy very clearly identifies the saltwater barrage as the reason for the Meenchal’s depletion, Ghosh has no corresponding explanation and neither is the question asked. It is simply stated as fact that the river has changed, and readers are left to draw their own conclusions.

Piya has a slightly more explicit take on changes in the local biosphere. When Kanai asks if she thinks the dolphin population has declined, she says yes, explaining, “There seems to have been some sort of drastic change in the habitat [. . .] Some kind of dramatic deterioration” (220). Piya doesn’t speculate about the possible cause of the deterioration because, she says, “we’ll end up in tears” (220), but she implies the slow violence of climate change, especially given Kanai’s statement that Nirmal, who died some thirty years prior, also noticed environmental deterioration. As Thieme points out, Ghosh speaks “explicitly about climate change in the Sundarbans in a 2005 interview for the *UN Chronicle*” (33), so it stands to reason that these moments of environmental change in the novel points toward a larger pattern of climate change. The novel chronicles the small, local ways that humans impact the hydrosocial cycle through dams, embankments, and other such structures, and it also offers evidence of the global scale of human impact in the anthropocene. The river-archive offers evidence of the ways that global practices affect local environments.

A related way that this novel deals with global incursions into the local is through international wildlife conservation efforts, which center around the Royal Bengal tigers native to the Sundarbans. The tigers themselves are artifacts in the river-archive, their existence evidence of the conservation efforts that have attempted to prevent the extinction of their species. Those efforts have created a conflict between the human and tiger populations that plays out in the

novel in two ways. First, the tigers of the Sundarbans are particularly well known as flesh-eaters. Nilima claims that as many as "[t]ens of thousands" of people have been killed in tiger attacks in the region (199).[51] Indeed, within the novel, tiger attacks are a central concern for the local population. The fear of tigers is so great that saying the word or even pantomiming a tiger claw is taboo. Kusum (Fokir's mother) tells the young Kanai, "No, you can't use the word—to say it is to call it" (90). This practical fear is intertwined with local religious beliefs centered around the mythology of Bon Bibi, "the forest's protectress," and "the tiger-demon, Dokkhin Rai" (292). Bon Bibi and her brother, Shah Jongoli, protect the forests of the Sundarbans and its people from the appetites of the tiger-demon. The story of Bon Bibi, related in the novel first through a play in Lusibari that Kanai sees as a child (88) and again through the translation of the tale that Kanai produces for Piya (292), shows Bon Bibi and Shah Jongoli saving a child from the tiger-demon. This story is an important part of the river-archive, not only as oral tradition but also in the shrine to Bon Bibi that Fokir shows to Piya (126) and similar shrines that Nilima says are commonly found outside of houses in the area because residents believe "the tigers, crocodiles and other animals do her bidding" (85). Like the tigers themselves, the Bon Bibi myth points toward the historic and continuing conflict between humans and non-humans in a place where all life must compete for space and other resources.

The second way that the conflict between humans and tigers plays out, both in the novel and in reality, is political. Under international pressure to halt the extinction of tigers, acreage in the Sundarbans was designated as tiger preserves to prevent further loss of habitat. Malcolm Sen

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[51] Divya Anand reports, "Sy Montgomery refers to the German biologist Huber Hendrich's unfinished study of tigers in the Bangladeshi part of the Sundarbans in 1971 which correlated the most frequent attack sites with areas having the saltiest water" (26). Though this study was never completed, its initial findings indicates how water affects non-human populations.

reports, “Initiated by Indira Gandhi's government in 1973, over 16,000 square kilometres of the country were turned into tiger reserves under the 'Project Tiger' Scheme” (367). Human populations were not permitted in the reserve sites, a prohibition that is the engine for the primary drama in the novel’s past.[52] Chronicled primarily in Nirmal’s diary, the historic plot of *The Hungry Tide* centers around a standoff between Bangladeshi refugees who had taken up residence on the island of Morijhapi—part of the Sundarban tiger reserve—and the Forest Department, whose responsibility it is to maintain the reserve. A largely forgotten event in Indian history, the novel’s dramatization of this conflict delineates the role of politics in mediating the competing spatial needs of impoverished humans and endangered tigers. In his diary of the standoff, Nirmal asks, “Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they even know what is being done in their name? Where do they live, these people?” (216-7). All Nirmal and the residents of Morijhapi know is that the conservation efforts that require their removal are “paid for by people from all over the world” (216). Later, in the novel’s present, Kanai spells out both Piya’s and his own complicity with these invasive conservation efforts. “[I]t was people like you,” he tells Piya, “who made a push to protect the wildlife here, without regard for the human cost. And I’m complicit because people like me—Indians of my class, that is—have chosen to hide these costs in order to curry favor with their Western patrons” (248-9). Both in the novel’s past and present, then, the conservation project is part of a global effort that privileges wildlife over impoverished humans. In that way, it pits humans against the tigers in a struggle for resources and survival. But the deck

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[52] The 2006 Forest Rights Act made provision for humans living in the area, giving “some of India's most impoverished communities the right to own and live in the forests” (Buncombe), meaning that some of the reserve lands are now legally occupied by human residents.

is stacked against the poor, who do not have the Forest Department to protect them or international advocates to support them. So part of the river archive, then, is the struggle between the human populations and globalization in the form of invasive environmental politics.

One way that *The Hungry Tide* is quite distinct from *The God of Small Things* is that it more overtly juxtaposes archives, particularly through the character of Piya who comes to the Sundarbans armed with knowledge of the dolphins and their history in the region. She brings along images of the dolphins to show fisherman who might be able to help her locate them (28), information about sightings of the dolphins in the past (36), and a history of the scientific engagements with the dolphins in India, complete with citations as if it were an academic paper (188-91). Piya carries with her, then, information she compiles from the scientific archive. Her research task in the Sundarbans is to study the dolphins and convert the data she collects into documents for the international scientific archive of marine biology. Significantly, Ghosh characterizes Piya's data-collection as if she is conducting archival research. Kanai notices Piya "watching the water with a closeness of attention that reminded Kanai of a textual scholar poring over a yet undeciphered manuscript: it was as though she were puzzling over a codex that had been authored by the earth itself" (222). If Piya's scientific knowledge is her first archive, the river becomes her second archive, its water, flora, fauna, and all other objects documents that she studies.

In the river-archive, Piya comes to appreciate the value of the mediating presence of local knowledge. At first, Piya privileges her initial knowledge and epistemology, but she eventually recognizes the value of Fokir's river knowledge. Laura A White argues that Fokir's is an embodied knowledge. She suggests that because he is illiterate, "the knowledge that Fokir

possesses about the rivers, the dolphins, and the legends of the Sunderbans is recorded not in a text, but within his body" (525). Piya's knowledge, in contrast, is largely dis-embodied. A scientist trained in the Western academic system, Piya carefully documents every bit of data, inscribing what she sees onto paper and mapping the expedition via the digital cartography of her GPS. Piya's technology represents an incursion of Western epistemologies into the Sundarbans. As Pablo Mukherjee argues, Piya's use of binoculars "literally embodies the panoptical knowledge machine of colonialism" (152). But Piya's technology is ultimately useless without the aid of Fokir's embodied knowledge. Her primary technologies, binoculars and GPS, may represent the Western gaze and the colonial tool of cartography, but those tools and Piya's depth of knowledge about the orcaella are flummoxed without Fokir's embodied knowledge of the river. She has to access the river-archive through Fokir's mediating presence before she can proceed with her research. Ultimately, then, Piya's two archives—her scientific knowledge and the river—come together with Fokir's help. Piya herself recognizes that she needs his help and his knowledge in order to generate new knowledge, which in turn becomes part of the river-archive when her data sheets are swept away by the flood and also part of the scientific archive about the dolphins when she reports her initial findings in grant applications for further research.

The broad gathering of the river-archive changes how Piya sees her own research—as one part of a bigger store of knowledge about the life in and around the river. The time she spends studying the river-archive sponsors in her a broader view of the Sundarbans and the complicated procedure of addressing the intertwined issues of social justice and wildlife conservation. For most of the novel, Piya has a limited capacity for compassion toward the humans in the region. When she is first on the river with the Forest Department guide, she spots

Fokir in his boat and asks the guide to take her to him so she can ask him about the dolphins. She neither knows nor cares that she has put Fokir in danger by alerting her guide to his presence, but as he attempts to elude confrontation with the Forest Department, she does recognize how this situation could compromise her research. Piya knows "it was up to her to put a stop to this chase —her work would be in jeopardy if word got out that she was interfering with local people" (38). This unilateral concern for her work reveals a callousness toward the people with whose lives and livelihoods she is interfering. Similarly, later on she is horrified by villagers who kill a tiger trapped in a cowshed. She is either ignorant of or callous toward the plight of the human population in regard to the large predators that kill both humans and livestock at will. She dismisses the human death toll as mundane; "[E]verywhere in the world dozens of people are killed everyday—on roads, in cars, in traffic. Why is this any worse?" she asks (248). Kanai tries to explain it to her, arguing that global expendability of the "poorest of the poor" was the only reason the tigers' appetite was excused. He urges, "[J]ust ask yourself whether this would be allowed to happen anywhere else" (249), but Piya is unmoved, arguing for the value of wildlife conservation in the habitat that nature intended (249).

In the end, however, Piya's time at the river-archive teaches her what is at stake in conservation efforts. The cyclone that comes at the end of the novel serves as an important moment that helps to shift Piya's attitude about conservation. In the human-nature conflict that the tigers represent, Piya sides with the animals over the humans, as indicated by her distress about the villagers killing the tiger and subsequent indifference toward the human casualties. During the storm, Piya and Fokir take shelter in a tree. When the eye of the storm reaches them, giving them a moment of peace, they notice a tiger resting in a nearby tree. Ghosh writes, "It

became aware of their presence at the exact same moment they spotted it" (321). The tiger simply watches them as they watch the tiger, neither making a move toward the other. The scene tacitly suggests a moment of trans-species solidarity. Both the humans and the tiger are, in this moment, neither prey nor predator but simply planetary creatures trying to survive an ecological catastrophe. Though this moment won't, ultimately, eliminate the human-tiger conflict in the novel's Sundarbans, it serves as a reminder that in the wake of climate change, all species' fates are intertwined. Piya realizes that human populations are as vulnerable as the tigers she and others like her are so eager to save. Fokir's death is problematic because he sacrifices himself to save Piya, essentially enacting a microcosmic social triage that prioritizes the Western science and conservation represented by Piya over the embodied knowledge of local populations represented by Fokir. At the same time, however, his death effectively recalibrates Piya's perception of the expendability of humans. Both because she cares about Fokir and because the storm exposes her own vulnerability, Piya comes to see the effects of climate change and conservation efforts not as abstract and faceless, but as embodied risks for real people.

Fokir, the dolphins, and Nirmal's account of the Morijhapi massacre all shift Piya's understanding of what is at stake in global conservation efforts, and through the knowledge she gains on the river, she develops a different model of conservation that will work with the local human population to improve their lives while also preserving habitat and the lives of endangered animals.[53] Having changed her position on the ethics of social triage, she tells

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[53] The Ewaso Lions organization in Kenya is an example of an organization attempting to enact this kind of socially-integrated conservation model. Working closely with local communities with a particular focus on conserving lions, Ewaso Lions aims to promote "co-existence between people and wildlife" and develop "improved conservation practices that help people and wildlife" ("Ewaso"). In addition to educating local people about lions and employing them in research and outreach programs, Ewaso Lions has a secondary focus on empowering women through education and craft-based businesses.

Nilima, “I don’t want to do the kind of work that places the burden of conservation on those who can least afford it” (327). The time she spends studying the river-archive sponsors in her a broader view of the Sundarbans and the complicated procedure of meeting the needs of social justice and wildlife conservation.

IV. Conclusion

The God of Small Things and *The Hungry Tide* both end with a sense of optimism, for which both have been criticized. But neither offers a naive optimism. In *The Hungry Tide*, Piya’s return and new plan represents a potentially problematic model of recruiting local people to advance Western goals; however, the novel takes us to the start of her residency there. We don’t get to see how it plays out. The purpose of the novel is not to indicate a formula for how to combine global and local conservation and social justice concerns. Were that the goal, surely the final scene would be Piya victorious, her orcaella flourishing alongside her new human community of fishermen and their families. By bringing us to the beginning of her project, the novel instead highlights that Piya has changed. Her encounter with the river-archive and the people and animals that live there have altered her perspective on the intertwined issues of conservation and social justice; what it offers is not a model to follow but hope that better options are available than what we see in most global conservation efforts.

Similarly, the final chapter of *The God of Small Things* may idealize the relationship of Ammu and Velutha along with their total immersion in the non-human world, but it isn’t a naive idealization. Readers know their imminent future and the chapter itself hints at what will come. When the novel concludes with the promise of “tomorrow,” readers know that it is a promise that will not be kept. The long view of history in the novel takes us, as Bahri suggests, “into the

archive of natural history" (214), but it does not move us beyond the realm of small things. Whereas Rahel feels that the broad view of deep time and the global history of spectacular tragedy minimizes her own personal traumas, the novel itself negates such a view. By drawing human history within the realm of natural history and giving meticulous attention to the minutia of nature, the narrator instead suggests that within the scope of natural history, everything matters—Estha and Rahel, Velutha, rivers, spiders, fish. All of these small lives are worthy of record in the natural archive. As a child, Estha understands that "only what *counts* counts" (208), but the rebellious action of noticing the small things and remembering history's victims (of the human and non-human varieties) suggests that everything counts. Every rotted fish scale, every child defecating into a diminished river, every spider and the offspring they create, every person whose caste gives license to state-sponsored violence. In the scale of natural history—the "Earth Woman's" time, so deep and wide as to be almost unfathomable (Roy *Small Things* 52)—every life counts.

By ending optimistically, both novels invite readers to hope anyway, against the odds, for a better future. They encourage readers to continue to search for more ethical ways to live in the world. In representing the river as an archive for both the human and nonhuman, these novels recast human history within the broader context of natural history, dissolving the nature/culture binary and offering a perspective in which the world is comprised of small things and small lives and small histories, all of which matter greatly and are worthy of preservation in this planet's vast archives. Where institutional archives turn amnesic towards people like Velutha and situations like the Morijhapi massacre—a sort of archival version of social triage—Roy and Ghosh suggest that landscapes and waterscapes remember and record those stories alongside

evidence of ecological destruction. Thus literature not only draws attention to gaps in the institutional archives, but also reminds us of the deep interconnections between our own lives and the environment. Within the expanded grid of intelligibility of the place-archive, we can understand ourselves and our history as a part of a much larger, planetary whole.

The court ruling that recognized the rights of Ganges and Yamuna Rivers in India is an expression of that interconnectedness and indicates one way to enact policy that works for the good of the people and the environment, and novels like *The Hungry Tide* and *The God of Small Things* inspire us to continue to work toward improving both policy and personal actions by recognizing our place in the world not as separate from what we label nature, but as part of it. As Spivak says of the planet, "[W]e inhabit it, indeed are it" (338). By representing humans as part of the network of relations that is our planetary environment, Roy and Ghosh urge us to see environmental ethics holistically. They posit an ethical position that is, like water, a socio-natural hybrid, taking into account the inseparable needs of humans and nonhumans. Their novels show whose lives are at stake in social triage approaches, dramatizing the fact that, as Ghosh suggests in *The Great Derangement*, "[t]he Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity: those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits all of us" (62-3). By representing the interconnections between humans and nature, and by reminding that the poorest people are those who will suffer most from climate change, literature pushes us to rethink our ethical stance toward the non-human world.

Chapter Four

Paradise and Palimpsest: Tourism and History in Kincaid's and Walcott's Island Archives

"**M**ust have been part of Eden, it's so full of peace and rest," Jamaican poet Una Marson declares in her poem "Jamaica" (73, bold original). Published in her 1932 volume *Heights and Depths*, this seven line acrostic poem lauds Jamaica as a paradise due to its natural beauty, which "make[s] you feel it's good to die / **I**n a spot that's so near heaven" (73). Marson's poem taps into a long tradition of thinking of Caribbean islands as paradise; indeed, it is a tradition that dates back to the original colonization of the islands.[54] However, while the majority of "Jamaica" seems to be a romantic encomium of her island home, the enjambment in the lines quoted above indicates a crack in the facade by implying that life on the island leaves one eager for death. In the same volume, Marson returns to the image of the island as paradise in a similarly titled poem, "In Jamaica." This poem offers more details about for whom the island is paradise. In the fourth stanza, Marson writes,

> O, it's a wonderful life in Jamaica
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> For the tourists who visit this shore,
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> There's golf, there's dancing, and swimming,
>
> And charms that they ne'er saw before
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> They call it a garden of Eden[.] (78)

Up to this point in the poem, Marson has been describing the experience of residents satirically by proffering an idealized line and immediately subverting it. She notes, for example, "It's a lazy

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[54] For more on this, see Ian Strachan's *Paradise and Plantation*. Strachan carefully recounts the use of paradise discourse from Columbus to contemporary tourist industries.

life we live here / Tho' we carry a fair share of work" (78). She also goes on to note that it's a "glorious life" for those who have "merely enough / But it's a dreary life for the beggars / and the large slums are all pretty rough" (78). In a similar fashion, Marson points toward inequitable racial politics on the island, noting that it's a happy life for children "Not poor, and whose skin is light, / But the darker set are striving / and facing a very stiff fight" (78). After her tongue-in-cheek noting of the island's problems, Marson turns to the tourists in the above-quoted lines. The juxtaposition of the hard life for many of the residents with the tourists' experience of luxury and recreation draw particular attention to who gets to enjoy the island as a paradise. "*They* call it a garden of Eden," Marson writes, "they" operating as a clear distinction from the "we" of the previous stanzas. Jamaica's status as edenic paradise is determined by whether the person viewing it is a tourist or a resident.

Paradise and tourism are enduring themes for Caribbean writers. Many writers express, like Marson, ambivalence toward these combined notions. Others are more directly critical of both paradise discourse and the tourist industry. In this chapter, I examine how Caribbean literature represents the effects of tourism on the place-archive. I begin with a discussion of Jamaica Kincaid's jeremiad on tourism, *A Small Place*, looking in particular at how she represents the loss of formal archives and history to the demands of the tourist industry. Then, I focus on Derek Walcott's epic poem *Omeros* as the central text, arguing that this poem displays the tripartite tension over the history of the island: indigenous histories that are covered over by colonial histories, both of which are elided by the tourism industry's efforts to market the island as an a-historical paradise. In developing this tension, Walcott creates a sense of place-archives that draw together the various threads of the island's history, creating opportunities for an

alternative historical narrative that will allow residents to reassert a sense of identity against that which is imposed upon both the people and the place by colonization and invasive tourism. I argue that Walcott's place-archive functions to widen the net of what is included in the island's historical narrative, placing artifacts of slavery and colonization together within a broader context of natural history and creating space for healing and renewal as evident in Achille's eventual ability to reconstitute his fragmented identity through his encounter with the place-archive.

I. Tourist, Resident, and Paradise

To begin, I want to examine the difference between how tourists and residents experience a place, and how paradise discourse affects those experiences. Marson's poem "In Jamaica" gestures toward the significant distinction between tourists and residents—namely, that tourists have the luxury of experiencing Eden, a place devoid of toil, economic need, and racial injustice. The tourist paradise, as the poem indicates, is a place without history. Meanwhile, the residents of that supposed paradise cannot escape their work, their poverty, or their oppression. Though Marson's poem does not mention history specifically, it is implicitly present in the daily struggles of the residents. Philosopher F E Sparshott's discussion of the primary ways that people relate to their environment offers a helpful way of thinking about the differences between tourists and residents. In "Figuring the Ground: Notes on Some Theoretical Problems of the Aesthetic Environment," Sparshott focuses on two ways that people encounter the world, which are "primarily the relation of self to setting, and secondarily that of traveler to scene" (13). These are, respectively, the resident and the transient. Sparshott identifies three primary differences between the resident and the transient. First, he explains, whereas the transient sees the

environment as "gross forms and qualities" and "what is there to be seen," the resident "reacts rather to what has taken shape in his mind" (15). The transient, in other words, can only interact with the place on the basis of what can be observed, while the resident filters the observable place through his or her experience of that place over a longer duration of time. Second, Sparshott explains that the transient "must associate what he sees [. . .] with experiences he has brought with him from elsewhere," but the resident "associates places rather with what he knows happened or still goes on there" (15). The transient, then, interprets the new place in relation to other places and knowledge, whereas the resident understands a place on the basis of its history. Finally, Sparshott explains, "to the transient, what he sees is a mere facade with no inside and no past; to the resident it is the outcome of how it got there and the outside of what goes on inside" (15). All of these distinctions suggest that transients view an environment as surfaces devoid of significance outside of what they impose on it, but residents understand the environment with dimension and context. Of particular importance is that a resident's understanding of place is intimately bound up with knowledge of the past. For a resident, as Sparshott develops the term, place is always an archive because its very composition bears witness to its past.

It is important to note that the transient/resident categories that Sparshott develops are not as fixed or polarized as what I have presented here. Sparshott also recognizes this (more on which to follow in my discussion of *Omeros*), but focuses on describing the transient and resident to establish his argument. Because these terms function within a spectrum, they are perhaps less empirical categories than they are normative generalizations; certainly not all travelers see only surfaces, and just as certainly not all residents have a historicized perspective

of the place in which they live. However, even as generalizations, these categories offer a way to begin thinking about how a place is perceived differently by short-term visitors and long-term inhabitants. The texts I examine in this chapter deploy similar, though less explicitly constructed, characterizations of tourists and residents, so Sparshott's terms are a useful tool for exploring Kincaid's and Walcott's ideas on tourism. It's also worth noting that for Sparshott, the term transient is not necessarily pejorative. His essay doesn't laud the resident as morally superior, or decry the transient as unethical. In the landmark 1976 study of tourism, *The Tourists: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Dean MacCannell warns against glib critiques of tourists, noting that such critiques are not aimed at act of travel itself, but rather that tourists are "satisfied with superficial experiences of other people and other places" (10). However, he argues, "All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree; it is a basic component of their motivation to travel" (10).[55] The trouble, then, isn't necessarily a moral lapse but rather the tourist's lack of experiential knowledge. Sparshott's description of the transient describes rather than censures the tourist's satisfaction with surfaces. Similarly, my intention here is not to pass moral judgement on travelers, but rather to follow Kincaid and Walcott in questioning how the tourism industry in the Caribbean disrupts a historicized sense of place in the islands for both transients and residents.

Because tourists are necessarily transients, they are often subject to the pitfalls that Sparshott describes. Many tourists are unable to see the place for anything other than how it

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[55] While MacCannell's book serves as an important corrective to the kinds of criticisms leveled at tourists, his central claim that "we are all tourists" (191) is in some ways mitigated by his assertion that "Tourists are purveyors of modern values the world over" and that they have a particular "curiosity about primitive peoples, poor peoples, and ethnic and other minorities" (5). Though certainly this observation is a product of its time, it nonetheless indicates that the "we" who are tourists are not, in fact, people from cultures deemed non-modern, the poor, or ethnic minorities. MacCannell's tourist is implicitly white, affluent, and Western, an assumption that goes unstated and unaddressed in the original and subsequent editions.

immediately appears to them, devoid of history or contemporary issues. To some extent, all tourism industries hinge on this transient lack of knowledge or understanding. In Ireland, for example, a majority of the guided tours available to travelers are essentially mobile history lessons.[56] Tour companies assume a lack of historical knowledge from tourists and attempt to add depth and meaning to cityscapes and landscapes through story and information. The tourism industry in much of Europe and the United States operates on a similar basis, though at least some historical knowledge can be assumed in the major cities. In much of the Caribbean and other tropical locations, however, the tourist industry assumes a lack of historical knowledge from tourists and actively works to hide reminders of history. In these places, the tourist industry is predicated on the perpetuation of an illusion of paradise for visitors. In *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*, Ian Gregory Strachan studies the deep connections between the "labor-free" paradise that the island plantations offered to slave owners and the paradise discourse that now dominates travel marketing in the Caribbean. Strachan writes that embracing paradise discourse "usually means feeding metropolitan escapist fantasies and creating an atmosphere of comfort, entertainment, delight, and ease; in short fashioning an 'out of this world' experience" (11).[57] Maintaining this fantasy relies on the labor of black residents serving (typically) white tourists while simultaneously erasing reminders of

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[56] In Northern Ireland, this kind of tourism often relates to the recent history of the Troubles in Belfast. For more on this, see Sarah Brouillette's discussion of City Bus Company's "Living History" tours, which take tourists to sites of significant violence from the Troubles.

[57] Both Ian Strachan and Sharae Deckard work to illuminate the connections between concepts of paradise and economic exploitation. Deckard writes, "Paradise is inextricably linked to the 'long' modernity of the capitalist world-system, implicated in the discourses of material exploitation and colonization that originated in the fifteenth century and developed throughout the Enlightenment into the present" (2).

the history of how and why those black residents came to be on the island.[58] If, as Paula Gunn Allen points out, "The sin Adam and Eve committed in the Garden of Eden was attempting to become knowledgeable" (245), the corresponding sin of the island paradises often seems to be historical knowledge.

The idea of the island as paradise is a complicated web of connotations in the Caribbean. Strachan explains,

> [T]he word 'paradise' comes to signify much more than the first habitation of Adam and Eve once it is adopted to describe the colonized Caribbean. At various periods in the past five hundred years, paradise has been associated with notions of the primitive, innocence, savagery, and lack of civilization, as well as of ignorance and nakedness, health and happiness, isolation from the rest of the world and humanity, timelessness, nature's beauty and abundance, life without labor, human beings' absolute freedom and domination over nature as God's stewards on Earth, and connections of paradise with concepts of wild pleasure, perpetual sunshine, and leisure. (5)

To some degree, this constellation of associations feeds into the idea of paradise that governs both the marketing of islands as vacation destinations and tourists' experiences of the islands. Sparshott argues that transients' experience of a place is mediated by what they bring with them from elsewhere, so for the tourist, the islands are mediated by these ideas of paradise which have been developed over centuries in literature, political discourse, and tourist marketing. Michel-

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[58] The majority of Caribbean tourists are white, but there are black travelers as well. Strachan notes that some African American tourists travel to the Caribbean out of a sense of heritage, choosing to spend "their money in an independent black nation with whom they share cultural and historical ties," but others come "with an air of superiority similar if not identical to that of white tourists" (13). Because Kincaid's and Walcott's engagement with tourism in their texts focuses primarily on white tourists, I share that focus here.

Rolph Trouillot argues that the conceptual production of the West depended on the idea of utopia, an idealized "Elsewhere" connected to the discovery of the Americas. He writes, "The symbolic transformation through which Christendom became the West structures a set of relations that necessitate both utopia and the Savage" (15). From the beginning, then, Western involvement in the Caribbean was mediated by an idealized image of the islands. Moreover, Melanie A Murray observes that in the English literary tradition, "Tropical islands as utopian sites provided an imaginative alternative to industrialization, poverty, or war, depending on the historical moment" (28).

Both Strachan and Murray suggest that the idea of the island as paradise is deeply tied to primitivism and escape not only from a particular historical moment, but from history itself. In *Literary Primitivism*, Ben Etherington re-evaluates scholarly engagement with literary primitivism. He argues that writers such as Aimé Césaire use primitivism to "negate the social logic of globalizing capital" and to "reawaken the possibility of a social reconciliation with nature" (xiii). He labels this mode of primitivism "emphatic primitivism," and it can be understood in contradistinction to "philo-primitivism" (10). Quoting Daniel Sherman, Etherington defines philo-primitivism as "an expressed affinity for people or peoples believed to be living simpler, more natural lives than those of people in the modern West" (10). Philo-primitivism "has a broader historical purchase" than emphatic primitivism, which "was manifested with a much more specific historical zeitgeist" and by people who might have been cast as "primitive" (10). The kind of primitivism deployed in paradise tourism marketing is philo-primitivism. On the one hand, then, the marketability of the concept indicates a yearning for a renewed connection to nature. Indeed, the term suggests not only primitive people, but also

the undeveloped landscapes in which they live. On the other hand, that longing often simultaneously expresses a desire for a-historicity, especially when it connects to paradise discourse. To long for Eden is to long for a historical blank slate. As transients, then, island tourists who come looking for Eden have a highly mediated experience of the island which may lead them to see it as a series of a-historical surfaces.

Where paradise discourse exacerbates the problems of a transient's experience of the place, it also disrupts the resident relationship to place. The intentional a-historicity of the island paradise not only erases the lived experiences of poverty and exploitation experienced by indigenes, but also distances them from their own history. For example, the genocide of the islands' original, Amerindian inhabitants is erased by the notion of the island as a virginal paradise. Additionally, as Strachan notes, "The majority of black Bahamians (90 percent of whom are of African descent) know little of their people's past" (125). The history of the transatlantic slave trade and resulting forced labor are elided by a tourist industry that relies on offering a timeless and peaceful paradise to visitors, in which even the natives are a part of the experience; Strachan reports a poster seen "in Dominica in the early 1980s that read, 'SMILE. You are a walking tourist attraction'" (130). The residents of the islands are disconnected from their own history and from the history of their island homes. So while their own relationship to place has more depth and substance than the transient, they nonetheless face a disruption in that relationship.

II. "You are a tourist": Tourists and Residents in *A Small Place*

In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid's intended readership is unambiguous. She begins her jeremiad by writing, "If you come to Antigua as a tourist, this is what you will see" (3). She's

speaking to tourists and potential tourists here, and her use of the second person both implicates the reader directly in her discussion and separates the reader from herself. She reinforces her identification of her readers a few sentences later, as she declares, "You are a tourist" (3), moving from the first conditional tense to the present and thereby intensifying her rhetorical stance; it is no longer a question of *if* "you" come to the island, but rather a total collapse of any distance between her reader and the tourist she imagines. For the first section of the book, "you" is the dominant pronoun as she creates a detailed image of the tourist experience of the island while highlighting what that experience hides and erases. In the subsequent sections, the dominant pronouns are "I" and "we" as she offers up the experience of residents of the island in contradistinction to the tourist experience of the first section. Her audience remains tourists, and American and European tourists in particular. In this section of the chapter, I consider how Kincaid's division of "you" and "we" corresponds with Sparshott's tourist and resident in order to draw attention to the role of history in determining those categories. I argue that Kincaid's exposition of the island's landscape and cityscape indicates that place operates as an archive, and that the repeated figure of the unrepaired library points toward an archival gap that is the island's history.

As the use of second person suggests, Kincaid sets up a dichotomy between tourists and residents on the island from the beginning. In the first section she is implicitly the resident, acting as a sort of tour guide who points out the distinctions between what tourists see and experience and what residents see and experience. She notes, for example, that while the hot, dry climate of Antigua is a draw for tourists, who come to the island for a vacation in the tropical sunshine, it creates difficulties for people who live there. "[A]nd since you are a tourist," Kincaid

explains, “the thought of what it might be like for someone who had to live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought, and so has to watch carefully every drop of fresh water used [. . .], must never cross your mind” (4). For the tourist as figured by Kincaid, the ecological conditions under which the residents live is unimportant. Kincaid almost suggests that the island only really exists for the tourists “for the four to ten days you are going to be staying there” (4). Because their stay in the place is short-term, tourists have the luxury of being unaware of the difficulties caused by a climate of drought. For the average tourist, as Sparshott suggests, immediate visual experiences, along with preconceived expectations, are the sum total of the place. The sight of a sunny, beach-filled island and the marketing that proclaims it as a cheerful paradise make it difficult for tourists to consider the problems that constant sunshine might cause for the people who live there.

This is how the majority of the first section goes; Kincaid explains what tourists see or experience largely by also showing what they don’t see and what they would not know without being told by a resident. In addition to the difficulties of drought, the unreliability of health care facilities (9) and lack of a proper sewage system (14) are also offered as local problems of which tourists are blissfully unaware. For Kincaid, this willful ignorance is inexcusable. She writes, “The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true: A tourist is an ugly human being” (14). She explains that “you” are typically a very nice person at home, but that changes the moment “you” decide to travel. What changes the nice person at home into an ugly person as a tourist is precisely a failure to understand either the history or the present of the island. Worse still, the tourist mistakes the problems of the island for paradise. The nice person turns ugly tourist when “you make a leap from being that nice blob just sitting like a

boob in your amniotic sac of the modern experience to being a person visiting heaps of death and ruin and feeling alive and inspired at the sight of it" (16). The tourists' failure to interpret what they see as "death and ruin" rather than tropical paradise is, for Kincaid, their unforgivable flaw. They see only the facade of landscapes and cityscapes, mediated by centuries of literature and tourist marketing of this new Eden.

In paradise, there is neither poverty nor history, but as Marson's poem "In Jamaica" reminds us, the island is only paradise for the tourist. Kincaid's chronicle of the problems that residents face, of which tourists remain unaware, begins to suggest the ways in which the island is no paradise for its residents. However, it's not only poverty but also history that haunts the islanders. Kincaid asks, "Do you ever try to understand why people like me cannot get over the past, cannot forgive and cannot forget?" (26). She offers evidence throughout of the ways that history, specifically the island's colonial history and the slave trade, continue to resonate in the present. Some of her examples are relatively benign. In the beginning, for example, she mentions a speed-limit sign, noting that it is "a rusting, beat-up thing left over from colonial days" (6). Elsewhere, her examples are more intense, as when she observes, "[I]t would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up" (14). For the resident, Kincaid suggests, the past is inescapably present both in the human-made features (such as the sign) and in natural features (such as the ocean). As Sparshott suggests, the resident "associates places rather with what he knows happened or still goes on there" (15), and Kincaid's narration casts her in the role of resident. Because she develops her resident ethos by interpreting natural features and in-situ artifacts, she points toward a place-archive that is knowable for residents in a way that it is not for tourists.

In addition to the sign and the ocean, Kincaid's place-archive includes a library as an important and reoccurring image in the text. She first mentions the library early on, telling her tourist reader, "It's a good thing you brought your own books with you, for you couldn't just go to the library and borrow some" (8). Continuing, she explains that Antigua's only library was damaged in an earthquake in 1974 and never repaired. She wryly describes the sign on the library doors that declares, over a decade later, that "REPAIRS ARE PENDING" (9). Both the library and the sign are "from colonial times" (9), she explains, observing that Antigua became independent shortly after The Earthquake. The library becomes an artifact in Antigua's place-archive, operating as a reminder of the colonial system that created it, the natural disaster that damaged it, and the postcolonial corruption (42) that has left it untouched in its decay for so long. As a resident, Kincaid sees it not merely as a damaged facade, but rather as documentation of the island's history and present.

Kincaid returns to the library again in the third section of the book, wondering why a new library hasn't been built, leaving the island's only library in a temporary space above a dry-goods store (42). She describes the beautiful, useful facilities of the old library in comparison with the current space, which is too small for all of the old holdings so most of the books "are in cardboard boxes in a room, gathering mildew, or dust, or ruin" (43). She complains that the librarians cannot locate materials and reminisces about her childhood experiences using the library. Kincaid never directly relates the ruined library to the island's troubles, but it stands as a figure for those troubles nonetheless. It is here in her description of the library that she observes, "In Antigua today, most young people seem almost illiterate" (43). She connects this

phenomenon with a poor postcolonial education system, but its location in the section on the library is not a coincidence.

For Kincaid, it seems, Antiguans undervalue both education and the library in a way that is particularly devastating to young people. She doesn't directly specify who or what causes this, but she indicates an ineffective government and the tourism industry as at least part of the problem. Kincaid attempts to contact the Minister of Education about library repairs but finds him unavailable: "at the moment I wanted to ask him this question he was in Trinidad attending a cricket match" (48). The Minister of Education, she explains, is also the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Sport. Not only are the Minister's attentions spread thin, but Kincaid explains that there is also a strong coupling of culture and sport—she writes, "In Antigua, cricket is sport and cricket is culture" (49). She indicates that this cricket-culture is the Minister's primary point of focus, leaving education and the library unattended. Kincaid's other avenue of influence to save the library is a woman associated with the Mill Reef Club, an exclusive private club "built by some people from North America who wanted to live in Antigua [. . .] but who seemed not to like Antiguans (black people) at all" (27). The woman she goes to see about the library had been "very active in getting the old library restored" (47), but the woman responds, "The government is for sale; anybody from anywhere can come to Antigua and for a sum of money can get exactly what he wants" (47). Her comment points again toward the government as a problem, but she goes on to indicate the role of tourism. Kincaid reports (and elaborates) the woman's explanation that the part of St John where the old library is located "was going to be developed, turned into little shops—boutiques—so that when tourists turned up they could buy all those awful things tourists always buy" (48). The tourist industry, then, takes precedence over the library and, by

extension, education in Antigua. An artifact in Antigua's place-archive, the library serves as evidence of both past and present issues.

The ruined library, itself an institutional archive of a kind, points toward the ways in which such institutions are unreliable keepers of history in the islands. In one sense, the library's unreliability is simply an access issue. Because the library and its holdings are largely damaged or inaccessible, it cannot function as a preserver and distributor of knowledge. However, even before the earthquake damaged the library, the version of history it contained was suspect. Kincaid describes its offerings as "the fairy tale of how we met you, your right to do the things you did, how beautiful you were, are, and always will be" (42). The library, like institutional archives that hold historical documents, was a tool of imperialism. Kincaid says as much, in the previous section, observing, "[Y]ou loved knowledge, and wherever you went you made sure to build a school, a library (yes, and in both of these places you distorted or erased my history and glorified your own)" (36). The library does not offer a full and accurate history of the island and its black residents, Kincaid suggests, but only a colonial history of the territory. Kincaid's own sense of residency is disrupted by the unreliability of institutional archives, because what she knows of the island is filtered through a colonial lens, which she indicates has not been sufficiently undone in the postcolonial era. Even the incomplete picture created by colonial history is no longer available to a people who seem, according to Kincaid, increasingly stupid (44). In an economy that prizes tourism above education, residents have been deprived not only of their own history but of any history at all. The place-archive that Kincaid develops in her verbal tour of the island helps, but her primary focus in *A Small Place* is to point out social and political issues on the island that arise from its colonial past and neo-imperial incursions in the

form of tourism. Her goal, then, is not to write a new history out of the place-archive, but her critique points toward that archive as a way of filling in the gaps left by the insufficient institutional archives.

III. Tourism and the Island Palimpsest in *Omeros*

Derek Walcott writes specifically about the difference between what he terms "travelers" and "natives" in his 1992 Nobel lecture, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory." The dichotomy he develops is similar to Sparshott's dichotomy.[59] He expresses a particularly negative view toward travelers, especially in regard to their lack of relationship to the place. He writes, "The traveller cannot love, since love is stasis and travel is motion. If he returns to what he loved in the landscape and stays there, he is no longer a traveller but in stasis and concentration, the lover of that particular part of the earth, a native" (77).[60] For Walcott, then, there are primarily two ways that people can experience the world—either as a traveler or a native. The trouble with travelers, he suggests, is that they cannot love a place. For them, the environment in which they travel is never more than a series of surfaces, "the islands passing in profile" (77), something easily forgotten. In contrast, natives, by their "stasis and concentration," live in a state of loving relationship with their environment.

Walcott's poetry often engages themes related to travel and his discomfort over his own status as a traveler. Some poems reinforce his assertions about travelers. For example, in

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[59] I haven't found any evidence that Walcott was familiar with Sparshott, but the similarity in their thought is striking. Given their closeness in age—Walcott was born in 1930 and Sparshott in 1926—they may have had similar educational formation.

[60] Walcott's use of the masculine pronoun here seems to be intended as a universal pronoun. However, as Strachan points out, "Walcott's is an Eden without women" (205), and in *Omeros*, Walcott writes, "The New World was wide enough for a new Eden / of various Adams" (181). Conspicuously absent in this statement is the possibility of various Eves, so it seems likely that the masculine pronoun here is significant of a perception of a specifically male connection to place.

"Homecoming," published in the 1997 volume *The Bounty*, Walcott writes of his love for the island laid out in cultural, geographic, and botanical details—Sesenne's singing, "the names of rivers who bridges I used to know" (434), and the "star-fingered frangipani" (434) are all examples of the details of "home" the speaker uses to express his love for the place. However, the island speaks back to Walcott, scolding him for his absence. He writes of the trees' "fitful disenchantment with all my turned leaves" (435). They chastise him for preferring "the gutturals of low tide sucked by the shoal / on the gray strand of cities" (435)—a figure both for the English language and for travel—to their own, rooted language. The speaker attempts to defend himself against the charge, declaring, "I have tried to serve both" and "I was sure / that all the trees of the world shared a common elation / of tongues, grimmer with linden, *bois-campêche* with the elm" (435). For the trees, this is Walcott's treachery. "We remain unuttered, undefined" (435), they tell him. Beginning here and going through the final stanza, the poem is primarily about language and Walcott's regret that he has written in English but not St Lucian patois. Homecoming is doubled in the poem, a return from travel and a linguistic return. In both senses, the island voice indicates that the speaker's lack of rootedness is a betrayal. As a literal and linguistic traveler, he has failed to truly love the place.

While "Homecoming" and other poems reinforce the traveler/native dichotomy Walcott presents in the Nobel lecture, many of his other poems trouble it. The sequence of twelve poems in *White Egrets* (2010) titled "In Italy" is an example of Walcott's expression of love for Italy, although he experiences it as a traveler rather than a native. In the fourth poem of the sequence, he writes, "I have come this late / to Italy, but better now, perhaps, than in youth / that is never satisfied, whose joys are treacherous (575-6). The suggestion is that now, Walcott is satisfied by

this country that is not his own. Notably, he continues, "[W]e never are where we are, but somewhere else, / even in Italy" (576). In the context of his traveler/native dichotomy, he suggests here that we are never natives, that we never achieve stasis (even in Italy), but he seems to be able to love the place all the same. In the eighth poem, he imagines the Italian landscape asking him, "do you know any / landscape as lovely as this, do you know a / drive as blest as this one?" (578). Walcott expresses a love for the landscape not only as a traveler, but as one who is in the process of travel, driving through the countryside. His answer to the imagined question is to recall another travel experience, driving along the coast in Monterey, further indicating his status as a traveler. In the eleventh poem, he notes that "Here on the blazing instance of an afternoon, the tiring / heart is happy" (580), and he begins the final poem by proclaiming "Over and over I will praise the light that ranges / over terra-cotta wall in Naples" (580). This sequence roundly indicates that a person's ability to love a place is not, in fact, predicated on their status as a traveler or native as Walcott claims in his earlier work.

Omeros, Walcott's Caribbean epic, at times expresses the dichotomy he discusses in the Nobel lecture but also troubles it. Written primarily in three-line stanzas resembling terza rima, this poem spans over three hundred pages and draws on *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* loosely as it tells a story of various residents and natives on Walcott's home island, St Lucia. The story features a love triangle among Achille, Helen (who primarily operates as a figure of the island), and Hector. Achille and Hector are fishermen, but Hector becomes a taxi driver to make more money. Initially, Helen and Achille are lovers, but after a fight, she goes with Hector instead. Uprooted by Helen's departure, Achille goes on a dream-journey to visit his African ancestors and comes back a more integrated person. After Hector dies in a car crash, Helen comes back to

Achille. The poem also features the British Major Plunkett and his Irish wife Maude, transplants to the island after the major's military service left him with an ambiguous mental illness. For the majority of the poem, Plunkett attempts to write a history of the island inspired by Helen. He abandons the project after Maude dies. The other significant character in this poem is the first-person narrator, Derek, a native who has left the island and returned for a visit. Derek narrates some of his experiences abroad and attempts to reconstitute his own fractured identity by reconnecting with the people and place of the island.

The relationship between people and their environments has been noted by a number of critics as central to *Omeros*. In *Epic of the Dispossessed*, Robert Hamner suggests that in *Omeros*, "homecoming and the establishment of roots are paramount themes" (29), noting the significance of Walcott's connection between people and place. Much Walcott scholarship focuses on the Adamic man—one who lives without the monuments of history—in his poetry. Paul Breslin, for example, reads the healing motifs of *Omeros* as a reconciliation with the past that is also a "release from historical burden" (249) which characterizes Walcott's "'Adamic' ideal of direct relation to one's physical environment" (248). Bonnie Roos takes up Walcott's Adamic poetics in a different register, focusing on the environmental politics of *Omeros*. She writes, "Walcott's *Omeros* addresses immediate and concrete concerns about the exploitation of the people and lands of St Lucia through the use of a compellingly good story" (230), and she finds that Walcott's work is particularly "optimistic" because of "his belief that it is possible to challenge the system of hierarchies itself through a revision of the biblical Eden myth" (232). The continued interest in the Adamic man is justified by Walcott's discussions of that trope in his 1974 essay "The Muse of History," and by the previously-mentioned focus on the relationship to

place that occupies much of his poetry. However, for as much as Walcott advocates a need to escape history, the past is everywhere in *Omeros* and many of his other poems. My aim here is to examine the tropes of the tourist paradise and Walcott's own New Eden concept in *Omeros* in order to show how the past is overwritten like a palimpsest and preserved in the island's place archive. Drawing on Sparshott, I look at Walcott's depictions of tourists and residents to show how residency is disrupted by tourism and the controlling metaphor of paradise. I argue that the island operates as a place-archive that creates space to remember and reconcile the layered and multiple histories of St Lucia.

While tourism is the central concern in *A Small Place*, it is a bit more oblique in *Omeros*. It is less specifically an object of wrath, but Walcott represents it as an inescapable and shaping force on the island and in the lives of the locals. Indeed, tourism is present from the very beginning of the poem, which opens with Philoctete, an injured fisherman, talking and smiling "for the tourists, who try taking / his soul with their camera" (3). Tourists and problems of the tourism industry pop up throughout the poem, never quite taking the focus away from the island's residents but subtly reminding of the ways that tourism affects those residents. In some cases, the presence of tourism suggests the ways in which the industry rehearses the system that undergirded slavery and imperialism on the island. For example, in the first incursion of Walcott's first-person narrator, Derek describes the experience of a waiter at a tourist facility attempting to carry beverages to guests on the beach. The narrator notes, "The waiter was having a hard time // with his leather soles. They kept sliding down a dune" (23). The absurdity of a beach waiter's uniform including shoes ill-suited to walking in sand is striking, particularly as it is the image of a black man serving lounging white people, wearing the expected uniform of

luxury hotels determined by a different climate and conditions. Deckard argues, "Far from reversing underdevelopment, paradise tourism reinforces economic dependence, encourages the persistence of a culture of Euro-American mastery opposed to indigenous servility, and commodifies sites of indigenous cultural resistance as exotic entertainment" (11). The scene in *Omeros* in which the leather-soled waiter attempts to make his way across a sandy beach full of white tourists demonstrates the entrenched roles of "Euro-American mastery" and "indigenous servility." Later, Walcott makes this connection between the tourism industry and slavery more explicit in Maljo's campaign speech. A former "fisherman-mechanic" (105), Maljo decides to run for an unspecified political office. Delivering mobile speeches via megaphone from Hector's transport as they drive through the island, he says,

> *Every vote is your ticket, your free ride*
>
> *on the Titanic: a cruise back to slavery*
>
> *in liners like hotels you cannot sit inside*
>
> *Except as waiters, maids.* (107)

Maljo campaigns against the status quo, pushing back against the politicians that openly welcome tourist industries. Nicknamed Professor Statics because of the megaphone and his own "short-circuit prose" (105), his campaign operates as a disruption of the standard statements of those politicians. He articulates the problem of the tourist industry, in which residents can only participate in serving positions. While a hotel maid may not quite replicate the conditions of

slavery, Maljo's point is valid; the tourism industry recycles the economic structures and social hierarchies in which indigenous populations and people of color serve white people.[61]

Herein lies the distinction between the tourist/resident experience of a place. The tourist receives service from the resident, and the tourist's privilege allows an unawareness of the economic and social structures of which they are a part. As Kincaid suggests in *A Small Place*, the tourist not only fails to think about the conditions in which the locals live, but she or he *must* not think about them in order to preserve the illusion of paradise.[62] While Walcott never writes from the perspective of the tourists, he similarly implies that their experience is predicated on a willful ignorance of the lives of the island residents. In perhaps the most directly anti-tourism passage, Walcott describes how an unnamed village is shaped by tourism. "It had become a souvenir / of itself" (310), Walcott writes, "Its life adjusted to the lenses // of cameras that, perniciously elegiac, / took shots of passing things" (311). He suggests that the village has become a sort of simulacrum of itself, made in the image of the camera lens and tourist gaze. The use of "elegiac" as a descriptor here suggests that something has died, or perhaps is in the process of dying, as the phrase "passing things" subtly implies. Here, the timelessness of the island seems to be disrupted; the possibility of death and other "passing things" indicates temporal movement. However, the text here seems to come from a resident's perspective rather than a tourist's; surely tourists don't imagine their vacation photos to be "pernicious." Indeed, the phrase "passing things" carries a double meaning that captures the two perspectives: for the resident, it is the movement of things into the past, but for the tourist, it is surfaces passing

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[61] Walcott returns to the tourism/slavery connection in a poem from *White Egrets* called "The Acacia Trees." Regarding the building of "yet another luxury hotel," Walcott characterizes such developments as "these new plantations / by the sea; a slavery without chains, with no blood spilt" (563).

[62] See pages 4, 14, and 17 for examples.

through space, as if seen from the window of a tour bus. These lines serve as an important reminder that while the island is marketed as a timeless paradise for tourists, it is not timeless for residents. The tourism industry may create an illusion of a-historicity, but it does not render the island a-temporal.

In describing the effects of tourism on the village, Walcott continues, "The village imitated the hotel brochure // with photogenic poverty, with atmosphere" (311). The very idea of "photogenic poverty" is evidence not simply of the callousness of the tourists Walcott imagines, but also of their inability to fully understand what they are seeing. To return to Sparshott's definition, transients (tourists) see a place as "a mere facade with no inside and no past" (15). The photogenic poverty that pleases shutter-happy tourists is not, for them, evidence of economic problems or the difficult lives of residents. It is only a facade, nothing more than a sight they encounter while passing through. Because of the uneven power structure, the village accommodates this lack of understanding, and indeed commodifies it. Walcott notes that some of the tourists have "a snapshot of Philoctete showing you his shin" (311), which we know from the beginning that he did "for some extra silver" (4). The tourists take their photos and move on, enjoying an a-historic paradise where the lives of the island residents only register as tourist attractions.

While tourists do show up periodically, and the economic and social conditions of a tourist economy simmer in the background, the majority of the poem focusses on resident characters. But with these characters, Walcott troubles the tourist/resident—or, to use his own

terms, traveler/native—dichotomy.[63] No character fits entirely in one category or the other, and the poem suggests a kind of continuum between the two poles along which the characters move. Achille is, perhaps, the character that most neatly fits into the dichotomy. He is literally a native of St Lucia, not a transplant, and not a tourist. His life and being are shaped by the island, and as a fisherman, he relies entirely on the island's ecosystem for his livelihood. In both Walcott's and Sparshott's terms, Achille is a native or resident. Walcott explains, "The Caribbean is not an idyll, not to its natives. They draw their working strength from it organically, like trees, like the sea almond or the spice laurel of the heights" ("The Antilles" 83). The resident Achille is similarly organically connected to the island, which is evident from the beginning of the poem, in Achille's reckoning of the culling of trees for pirogues, a scene that is characterized by line after line of pathetic fallacy. Achille even speaks to the tree he is cutting as if it has agency. He says, "Tree! You can be a canoe! Or else you cannot!" (6). As he continues to work on shaping the trunk into a canoe, Achille "felt their hollows / exhaling to touch the sea" (7). These lines suggest that Achille understands his environment as more than just surfaces.

For Bonnie Roos, this opening scene is troubling. "On the one hand," she writes, "the trees as 'nature' seem to 'speak' to the fishermen, and their death is acknowledged and given meaning through the art of poetic metaphor. On the other hand, these Caribbean fishermen are once more exoticized through their unique tie with nature, becoming animal-like in their practices, or in treating the trees as 'bearded elders'" (233). Roos sees this not only as an uncomfortable connection with the native savage trope but also as a re-inscription of the biblical

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[63] Sparshott also recognizes that the dichotomy is not fixed. He writes, "In practice this polarity is not absolute [. . .] but everyone who can remember what it is like to get to know a place one has moved into can testify to the reality and importance of the changes such knowledge brings" (15).

Eden trope, in which man's relationship with nature is one of dominion.[64] Certainly the theme of dominion is present in this scene; Breslin also reads it in these terms, noting that "the work of cutting down trees is an exercise in agency, and a celebration of the men as conquerors rather than victims" (252). What Roos and Breslin point out, then, is that Achille's connection to place is predicated on dominion. For Omaar Hena, the scene is perhaps more problematic than a representation of human mastery over nature. He suggests, "Walcott metaphorically compares the felling of the trees to the extermination of native peoples, cultures, and religions" (34). The opening scene, then, is not only a reflection of ecocide but also genocide.

However, the problematic associations of the opening scene are mitigated to some extent by the animistic agency that Achille ascribes to the place, which suggests that he views himself as part of his environment rather than separate from it. Neil Evernden explains that animism is "an indication that the speaker has a place, feels part of a place" (101). He sees such metaphoric language as "the extension of the boundary of the self into the 'environment'" (101). Moreover, this connection between Achille and place can be read in the context of Etherington's recasting of literary primitivism. For Etherington, "emphatic primitivism" is a rejection of "the capitalist world system" (33) and presents "the possibility of a social reconciliation with nature" (xiii). In this context, Achille's apparent primitivity indicates a potentially ecologically desirable position of the self in relation to nature. So, whereas there is a sense of mastery in this opening scene, it also expresses Achille's perception of himself as a part of his environment, pointing toward his sense of residency and his status as Walcottian native.

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[64] As Trouillot suggests, these two tropes are connected at the root and it wasn't until the nineteenth century that the idea of utopia and the savage were conceptually separated (17).

As the poem moves along, though, Achille's status as resident is problematized, beginning with his relationship trouble with Helen. As a number of critics have pointed out, one of the registers in which Helen operates in this poem is as a representation of St Lucia, so Achille's relationship to her represents and reflects his relationship to the island. Breslin explains, "Since she is identified with the island itself, [Achille's] anger arises in part from the fear that losing Helen would also mean dispossession, placelessness" (255). When Helen leaves him, it seems as if the island has also deserted him. During this time, his seasonal occupation of fishing is disrupted by the hurricane season, and he runs out of money. He has to take a job on the Plunketts' pig farm, and in desperation he also turns to treasure diving and illegal conch fishing. At this point in the poem, Achille's relationship to the island is less about his connection with and love for it than it is about economics. Hena points out that, in fact, Achille's economic concerns are evident from the beginning, specifically in the name of his canoe. Hena notes, "[T]he name 'In God We Troust' ironically appropriates and distorts the US motto [which] lends supposed divine authority and meaning to an image that lacks actual or substantial value" (35). But whereas Achille seems relatively carefree at the naming of his canoe, he gradually becomes increasingly worried about money. Even his perception of the landscape reflects this: he notices, "the hillside bamboos were broke / as he was" (48). In breaking the line on the word "broke," Walcott both emphasizes Achille's economic preoccupation and indicates a disconnect between Achille and the island.

The most obvious illustration of this shift in Achille's sense of place is when he decides to dive for conchs. The text makes it clear that this activity is illegal, and what its purpose is: "shells was not to be sold / to tourists" (39). Roos discusses the environmental context for

Achille's actions. She explains that conch fishing is illegal in many places and continues, "The practice depletes the conch numbers . [. . .] By extension, it reduces the sea animals and fish on the reefs that feed on them. Such actions are effectively overfishing—something that matters tremendously to the community of men like Achille, whose lives depend on fishing" (235). Whereas the earlier scene of cutting down trees showed Achille taking only what he needed and thinking of the environment as a sort of partner in his activity, this scene shows Achille working against the environment. His environmental exploitation doesn't pass without guilt; as he removes the conchs from the water, he "consider[s] the deep pain / of their silence" (41). The fact that he still conceives of the environment in animistic terms suggests that he has not ceased to be a resident, but his exploitation of it indicates that his sense of self has been distanced from his role in the ecosystem. His final reflection that the conchs "were not his / property any more than Helen" (41) connects his activity with his feelings of dispossession.

That sense of dispossession is what makes Achille's trip to Africa necessary. As Hamner observes, Achille's journey begins when he is in his boat "preoccupied with the irretrievable loss of Helen" (71). His sense of residency and connection to his environment has been destabilized, which leads him to question his identity. Seven Seas, a blind man who serves as a symbolic representation of Homer in the poem, explains to Philocete, "His name / is what he out looking for, his name and his soul" (154). For this, Seven Seas explains, he must go to Africa. Traveling through space and time, Achille finds a heritage and a history there. He is able to recover and confront the history of enslavement, and according to Breslin, this allows him to move forward. Breslin writes, "Once this act of recovery has been accomplished, the past as 'history,' a crippling deformation of the present, falls away, allowing an Adamic consciousness of the

present as open, facing toward the future" (251). Achille's journey to Africa, then, allows him to move into a closer relationship to nature. His sense of dispossession is eliminated, which is evident immediately on his return. As his pirogue approaches the shore, he looks up and sees "*his* island" (156, emphasis mine). The inclusion here of the possessive pronoun represents not only possession but also a sense of belonging.

Achille's status as resident is restored and reinforced by his reunion with Helen. Just as his previous split with her signaled his dispossession, their reunion indicates that he has been restored in his relationship with the island as well. As Breslin observes, Achille's "role as worker, as suitor for Helen, and as secure possessor of the land Helen symbolically represents are intermeshed so that success in one entails success in the others" (255). So Achille's reunion with Helen and restored residency are, as Breslin points out, accompanied by his successful return to fishing. In his restored state of residency, Achille also regains his sense of himself as part of an ecosystem. This is especially evident in his disgust with commercial fishing that has depleted the fish supply near the island. Achille wonders if he is

> the only fisherman left in the world
> using the old ways, who believed his work was prayer,
> who caught only enough, since the sea had to live,
>
> because it was life? (301).

Achille's response is significant because his primary problem with commercial fishing is not how it challenges him economically, but how it affects the ecosystem of which he is a part. This demonstrates a striking change in Achille; it wasn't so long ago that he was also damaging the

ecosystem for economic reasons. Now, he has clearly moved back into a balanced relationship with his environment. He is once again a resident. This recalibration of identity happens as a result of his encounter with the past.

History poses a problem for Walcott, whose poetics often rely on invocations of a New World Eden and an Adamic Man. Indeed, Walcott's essay "The Muse of History" and his Nobel lecture "The Antilles: Fragments of an Epic Memory" both indicate at best an ambivalence toward history. In "The Antilles," for example, Walcott states, "We make too much of that long groan which underlines the past" (68), and in "The Muse of History" he asserts, "It is time the slave surrendered to amnesia. That amnesia is the true history of the New World" (39). In these essays, Walcott suggests that history belongs to Europe and has little place or value in the New World. His concept of the "Adamic Man," which he discusses at length in "The Muse of History," develops a preferred poetics that is unbound from the past. He explains, "The truly tough aesthetic of the New World neither explains nor forgives history. It refuses to recognize it as a creative or culpable force" (37). Essentially, Walcott is interested in a poetics energized by the newness of the New World, a second Eden in which to recreate the world. He wants a fresh start. For all of that, however, Walcott's poetry at times expresses a distinct interest in the past. This, too, is acknowledged in his aesthetic in "The Muse of History" as he explains that the New World poetic isn't naive, but rather "its savour is a mixture of the acid and the sweet, the apples of its second Eden have the tartness of experience" (41). Walcott's relationship to history, then, is in some ways unclear. As Strachan notes, "Walcott seems to reject the imperialist accusations of 'historylessness' as an absurdity while at the same time embracing the accusation, the absurdity, and exploiting its efficacy as an empowering metaphor for Caribbean life. [. . .] Such a maneuver

generates ambiguity" (214). I agree with Strachan that Walcott's position toward history does have some ambiguity, but I think that ambiguity derives in part from an unacknowledged distinction between the past and history, which is produced in institutional archives.

In "The Antilles," Walcott observes, "The sigh of History rises over ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over apart from the ruins of sugar estates and abandoned forts" (68). Here, Walcott does not recognize natural history. He seems to capitalize History as a way of separating the concept he's working on, history as determined by the institutional archives of the Global North, from the past. His poetry, however, suggests instead that history and the natural world can be interconnected. His poem "The Sea is History," not only connects the idea of history, so much maligned in his essays, and the natural world, but also invokes place as an archive. It positions the sea as a space that gathers monuments, battles, martyrs, and memories and stores them away. He writes,

> Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
> Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
> in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
> has locked them up. The sea is History. (253)

"The sea," he asserts in the poem's title and in the above-quoted lines, "is History." But these lines and the rest of the poem suggest that the sea's primary historical function is archival in nature. It is a space that gathers material traces and memories of a past that the poem, in questioning where these traces are, suggests are not satisfactorily found elsewhere. The sea operates as the primary archive of the history Walcott's speaker wishes to share. In a similar, though far less explicit way, place operates as an archive in *Omeros*. Strachan suggests that

Walcott "condemn[s] all alternative histories as histories of victims" (214), but Walcott does posit alternative histories in his epic in the palimpsest landscape, which includes precolonial history alongside slavery, colonial history, and the present.

The landscape remembers the island's full history. The flora and fauna, along with natural and human-made features, all document this integrated, inclusive history from the beginning. In the opening scene, for example, the narrator focuses on an iguana, remembering that the island was originally called Iounalao, meaning "Where the iguana is found" (4). The iguana becomes a figure of the island's memory, as the narrator writes that its eyes

> ripened in a pause that lasted for centuries,
>
> that rose with the Aruacs' smoke till a new race
>
> unknown to the lizard stood measuring the trees. (5)

The iguana reminds readers that the island's current residents were not the original possessors of the land and archives the destruction of the Arawaks as part of the island's violent history. Because Walcott casts the iguana in this way, as an artifact of the island's place-archive, it later operates as a figure in which Walcott distinguishes between the kind of history prized by the Global North and the reconciliation of the island's multiple histories that he champions.

Plunkett has taken it upon himself to write the history of the island. Walcott explains, "So Plunkett decided that what the place needed / was its true place in history" (64). His expressed intention for taking on such a project is for the island and its people—especially Helen. Plunkett intends to write "Not his, but her story. Not theirs, but Helen's war" (30). He wants to rescue the islanders from a historical narrative that has unfairly represented them. Walcott writes, "If History saw them as pigs, History was Circe" (64). For Plunkett, then, "History" has transformed

them rather than representing them as they are. However well-intentioned the major is toward the locals, though, the shape of his project is dictated not by the island itself but by British involvement there. Even as he tries to write Helen's history, it is filtered through a European lens. The history he attempts to write is the Battle of the Saints, in which the British defeated the French to take control of the island, which suggests that for Plunkett, the island's history begins with the British presence there. But his research still acknowledges the function of place as an archive, as he goes to various locations where notable events from the battle happened. On one such expedition, he sees an iguana on an old cannon. Remembering that the island was originally named Iounalo after the lizard, Plunkett says, "'Iounalo, eh? It's all folk-malarkey!'" (92). The narrator clarifies the major's thoughts further, explaining, "History was fact / History was a cannon, not a lizard" (92). For Plunkett, then, History does not extend to include non-European histories. It doesn't include folk histories or alternative stories. In his mind, History is an import to the island, and whatever was there before, signified by the iguana, isn't included in that category.

Plunkett's partial ability to understand the place-archive indicates that although he is not a native of St Lucia, he may be situated toward the resident end of the spectrum. Other than an unrealized desire to tour the important imperial sites, Plunkett is quite happy to remain on the island. This is particularly evident when he strolls along the wharf while waiting for Maud to be finished at Mass. Observing an old freighter there, he "felt a great tenderness for it, / that it went nowhere at all" (258). Like himself, he imagines that

> it had had enough of the world. It once
>
> had great plans for leaving, but after a few tries

> it had grown attached to the helmeted capstans
>
> to which it was moored and the light-surprising walls
>
> of its retirement. (258)

Plunkett, likewise, has grown attached to the place of his retirement on the island. By Walcott's terms, then, this stasis means that Plunkett is able to love the place. He is also marked as a resident by a shift in where he feels at home. He thinks, "England seemed to him to be merely the place of his birth" (61), and his last trip there was marked by discomfort and disapproval. He remembers, "On their last trip home he'd been shaken by it all" (251) and "Level-voiced London unnerved him" (253). During this visit, he misses "the roar of his island's market, palm-fronds talking // to each other" (253). Here, Walcott uses the possessive pronoun "his" and pathetic fallacy to indicate Plunkett's sense of belonging in the island. He has, as Michael Malouf suggests, "'gone native,' or at least has tried to assimilate to the island by refusing to drink with other expatriates and by becoming a local pig farmer" (153). In other words, Plunkett has tried to incorporate himself into the life of the island as a resident. His shift toward residency is, perhaps, what allows him to take an interest in the island's history. The place ceases to be an a-historic paradise for him, although his perception of what counts as history fails to include indigenous and natural history, which remain in his mind part of the amorphous and insignificant past.

While Walcott revisits the idea of the sea as history in *Omeros*, here the sea is figured not as a vault but as a document. As Achille returns from his voyage to Africa traveling along the seabed, Walcott notes, "[T]he parchment overhead // of the crinkling water recorded three centuries / of the submerged archipelago" (155). The ocean here is figured as a kind of

palimpsest, a document which has been written and overwritten with various historical moments. He figures the ground in a similar way, particularly in the scene in which Achille is helping Seven Seas do yard work. Seven Seas makes a comment about the Arawak, noting, "This used to be their place" (163). A few lines later, Walcott writes,

> It was
> one of those Saturdays that contain centuries,
>
> when the strata of history layered underheel,
> which earth sometimes flashes with its mineral signs,
> can lie in a quartz shard. (163)

Like the ocean parchment, the land also contains centuries, the past kept and embedded in its many layers. Walcott continues, "Gradually, Achille // found History that morning" (163). He discovers an artifact, a totem of some kind etched into stone that may be an Arawak item. His response is to take it from its place in the ground and toss it away, which can be read as an example of Walcott's dismissal of history. For Achille, the artifact is nothing but an "obstruction" (163), though Walcott indicates its potential value by noting, "A thousand archaeologists started screaming / as Achille wrenched out the totem" (164). As we have seen, Walcott's expressed position toward history in his prose work is a preference toward amnesia, and Achille's dismissal of the artifact symbolically enacts a recognition that history must be tossed aside in order to produce something new. Indeed, the whole scene, in which Achille and Seven Seas are burning the natural detritus of the yard, suggests a clearing of the past in preparation for the future. However, while the human characters dismiss the past, Walcott indicates that the place itself

preserves it. He writes, “Instantly, like moles / or mole crickets in the shadow of History, / the artifacts burrowed deeper into their holes” (164).

The trope of paradise, and a specifically Edenic paradise, runs throughout the poem. It is at times related to tourism, but elsewhere expresses a sense of longing for a new beginning. The Plunketts, for example, come to the island hoping for a sort of clean slate. When the major leaves for war, he thinks he will never see Maud again, but feels that if he does they will have to find a different life

> not on this grass cliff but somewhere on the other
> side of the world, somewhere, with its sunlit islands,
> *where what they called history could not happen*. Where?
>
> Where could this world renew the Mediterranean's
> innocence? She deserved Eden after this war. (28, emphasis mine)

Plunkett is looking for paradise, then, when he settles on St Lucia. In *Islands of the Mind*, John Gillis argues that islands have occupied a significant place in the Western psyche, operating as a multi-faceted metaphor. He writes, “In Western cosmogony water stands for chaos, land for order. Islands are a third kind of place, partaking of both earth and water, something betwixt and between. As liminal places, islands are frequently the location of rites of passage. We do not just think with islands, we use them as thresholds to other worlds and new lives” (4). This perception of the island as a threshold to a new life is part of Plunkett’s motivation to come to St Lucia. By signaling that he is specifically looking for Eden, the text indicates that it is not only a new life but a new world that Plunkett wants. To be even more specific, that new world paradise should

be completely a-historic, a place where "history could not happen." Plunkett's longing for a new world without history in some ways matches Walcott's stance toward history. However, the poem itself presents a more complex interaction with history than Walcott's prose would seem to suggest. With both the seascape and the landscape function in *Omeros* as archives of the island's layered histories, Walcott doesn't seek so much to erase history as to consolidate these multiple histories. His edenic vision is of an integrated history, an infinitely readable palimpsest where all of the layers find representation. It is from acknowledging the island's histories that it becomes possible to recognize that the island has a future.

IV. CONCLUSION

Marson, Kincaid, and Walcott suggest in their work that the marketing of Caribbean islands as paradise creates for tourists a sense of the islands as a-historical spaces of unlimited leisure, which tends to obscure the difficulties faced by island residents and the local labor force that sustains the illusion of paradise. I have been arguing here that for Kincaid and Walcott, the incursion of the tourism industry in Antigua and St Lucia disrupts a deep sense of place that Sparshott might call "residency" by alienating islanders simultaneously from their own history and from the broader history of the islands. In the absence of institutional archives, place becomes the archive to which these writers turn for understanding both the past and the present. Their work expresses Martiniquan writer Éduoard Glissant's statement, "Our landscape is its own monument. The trace that signifies it is traceable in it. It is all history" (qtd in Ette 287). Put another way, the landscape is its own archive, both record and repository of local histories. The palimpsest landscapes and seascapes of the Caribbean have a long memory, preserving traces of pre-Columbian indigenes, colonial rule, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and plantations, even as

they continue to chronicle postcolonial corruption and neo-colonial incursions of tourism and global capital.

Here, as in the other texts this dissertation studies, the place-archive becomes a site of healing and hope, a space where the human/nature duality is flattened enough to see human history within the broader scope of natural history. These texts posit the possibility of remembering even when institutional archives become amnesic, especially in regard to individuals and groups who, like Roseanne of *The Secret Scripture* or Velutha of *The God of Small Things*, are undesirable in tidy historical narratives. They suggest that events like the Morijhapi Massacre matter and are worthy of memory. They remind us that however much we imagine ourselves separate from our natural environments, we are not only connected to but are, in fact, a constituent part of the world's vast ecosystem. Recognizing place-archives recognizes that our history is part of a much bigger story that writes itself across peat moss and rosebushes, waterways and iguanas. It gives us an extended grid of intelligibility in which to interpret and contextualize our history. In that way, these texts are disruptive. They push readers to reevaluate received historical narratives and the relationships between humans and nature. Using narrative and poetry, Barry, Heaney, Roy, Ghosh, Kincaid, and Walcott all take us beyond the academic boundaries of history to expose gaps in that narrative, posit possibilities, and inspire ethical practices toward our human and non-human neighbors. They encourage trans-species solidarity and remind us that we are all artifacts of infinite value in the great gathering of the planetary archive.

My intention in this dissertation has not been to suggest that the institutional archive is morally deficient, but rather to explore its incompleteness, to find its limits and consider other

ways that we have stored and interpreted history. Indeed, in a political age of "alternative facts," the value of archives as a principle of credibility is, perhaps, more important than ever. But it is equally important to recognize that documents and transportable artifacts that fill institutional archives, and the histories such objects aid in producing, are not the only ways that people collectively remember and make sense of their past. Where scientists and historians are doing their part to indicate how places can operate as archives of the world's human and natural histories, I have tried to indicate here that literature also has an important role in allowing us to see how place-archives not only benefit under-represented human histories, but also help us to see ourselves within the broader network of natural histories from which we have never been separate.

The texts I have discussed in this dissertation represent a range of histories, peoples, and ecologies from around the world, but there is more work to do to understand the significance of literary place-archives and for whom they are most valuable. Where I have focused primarily on how places archive the intertwined slow violences of poverty and climate change, I have left questions of gender and sexuality largely on the margins of my argument. And in a world of increasing migration—especially as people flee climate change and violent conflict—I am left wondering how places will archive these mobile histories, and how authors will capture it. How will our landscapes commemorate the increasingly severe ecological disasters? In what ways will our uses of space in the future reflect our responses to our changing climate? Eavan Boland's poem, "The Oral Tradition," posits language and place as "an archive [to] shelter in" (133). My work here has attempted to show how, for the authors I have studied, language and place function as just such a sheltering archive, offering not only history but hope.

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