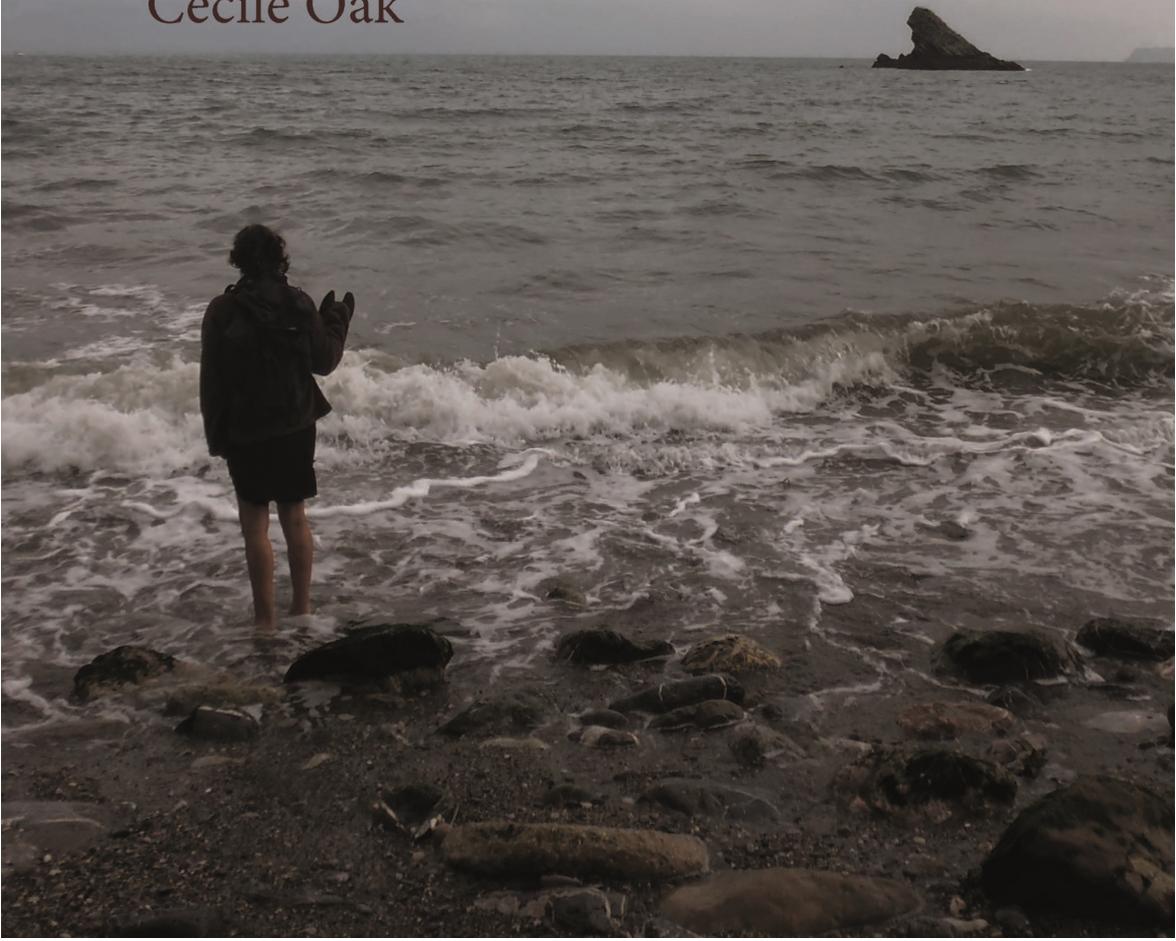


Anywhere

A mythogeography of South Devon and how to walk it

An Extract: Chapter 4

Cecile Oak



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A MYTHO GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF SOUTH DEVON

AND HOW TO WALK IT

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Note of guidance from the author:

Please feel free to read *Anywhere* in any way you want and take away from *Anywhere* whatever you wish; read it as a novel, as a failed conference report, as travel writing, as a meandering guidebook, as a textbook written by a drunken geographer. Or all of these. I hope that everyone, whether on the ground or in their imaginations, will use this book as a guide to making their own journeys in their own 'South Devon'.

The Stranger

Cecile Oak was born in Brianclose, Yorkshire. She was educated at the William Beveridge Community School and New College, Oxford. After graduating with a Double First in English, she worked in Paris as an independent curator and as creative director of the Les Nap gallery in the Chiaia district of Naples. After returning to the UK in 2005, she established herself as a leading agent and producer, notably with the Egalité agency. In 2013 she began full-time doctoral studies at Leeds University and was awarded a PhD for her thesis 'Heterotopian and chorastic trends in the progressive fatalism of Maeterlinck and Villiers De L'Isle Adam'. She presently lives in the south of Italy with her daughter, and lectures in Performance at the University of Tropea.

The Guide

A.J. Salmon was born in Coventry in the English West Midlands in the late 1980s. Despite a happy family background, he left school at 16 with few qualifications. Moving to Bristol he featured on the performance poetry scene and worked as the tutor of a poetry class in Horfield Jail. In 2009 he was found guilty of stealing over a thousand books from local bookshops and was jailed for six months, enrolling in his own poetry class. On release, he moved progressively westwards. After working as a freelance proof-reader, he dropped from view around 2009 having told a local filmmaker in Exeter that he would be on permanent pilgrimage. Since then reports of him are sporadic at best, but he continues to publish work in various magazines and with Triarchy Press, mailing his work from public libraries in Devon.



Chapter Four: Back into Paignton and on to Cockington Court

Paignton Zoo's giraffe house produces a fluctuating low-frequency drone which induces tremors, irritation, heart flutters and disturbance in the bodies of local residents, "waves passing through their buttocks and thighs". Folk blamed the heating system. But it turns out that giraffes hum; at least, according to biologists at the University of Vienna. Giraffes are communicators on the border between infrasound and what is just about hearable by us. The irritations and upsets suffered at Paignton are those of its giraffes; goaded by the refusal of the residents to interpret, translate and respond to what the giraffes are humming into their buttocks.

I take a room at a B&B on Totnes Road. Before exhaustion closes above my head I read a few pages of Steve Mentz's *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550-1719*, lent/given to me by one of the psychoswimographers. I'd worried about extra luggage, but it's worth its weight.

Mentz proposes two motors at work in the history of the colonial period, which isn't over yet: theft (that's obvious) and composture (as in the work of a compost heap breaking down dead stuff into nutrients). Modernity, under the pretence of producing itself, was stolen, via the Renaissance, from antiquity; posing as a re-birth: "[T]he past, like the recycling, never goes away. A composting model recognizes multiple presences in multiple states of decay... a fertilizing combination of the living and the dead".

Rather than discovery, and more than conquest, what characterises globalisation best for Mentz is shipwreck "reinscribing onto vaster and less-known spaces classical and medieval tropes of doomed ships and misdirected sailors. Shipwreck becomes less the exception than the rule".

Then, coming right up to date, Mentz challenges the idea of an "Anthropocene", an era in which humans become an independent geological force. Even if it is the fault of humans that the climate is in such an awful state, that still doesn't make it *our* climate or *our* era. In place of the Anthropocene's tale of dominant human influence on the planet, Mentz proposes a 'salad' of forces. But that still doesn't mean things are going to be OK.

I am trying to get to sleep now, but I am just as spooked as Mentz is by the prospect of a "coming era" of jellies which "beheads Anthropos, but at a great cost. In a heat death of supercomposture, everything becomes the same as everything else".

Eeee.

I didn't know then how many wrecks I would encounter: the South Coaster between Dawlish Warren and Starcross, the imploded diving ship in Plymouth, even Lethbridge's pool in his garden was the scene of a kind of controlled shipwreck, the Venetian galley with its slaves on Church Rocks, another slave ship sunk at A la Ronde, Crowhurst's 'Teignmouth Electron', Simon Chalk's 'Spirit of Teignmouth' which wrecked before it even sailed, Pete Goss's catamaran 'Team Philips', the Pirate's Chest café at Coryton Cove, incinerated, and T-189 sunk on top of HMS Venerable's wreck at Roundham Head (the last are two of over 100 wrecks in Torbay gone under in the last 300 years). Each is a ruin of an ambition; described through the figure, thieved from antiquity by Osip Mandelstam, of Ulysses and his "unbridled thirst for space".

That night I dreamed of a door that moved around on its own. It reminded me of Gwenda in Agatha Christie's 'Sleeping Murder' who asks to put a new door through a wall in her home, only for the workmen to discover that there has been one there before; she orders new steps and new wallpaper and in both cases she has chosen what was there years before.

The following morning, I immediately pass a door in a tall high wall, bricked up. Next to it is an entrance between two stubby pillars to a park. I feel drawn, but nervous. I read the information board guiltily, like someone in a gallery who consults a painting's label rather than trust their own judgement. I like the sound of the meadow, but I will give the woods a miss.

Stepping through the pillars, I am shocked by the change of sound level; the engines from the road are suddenly and absurdly muffled. A wave of quietness comes surging over me. It does not make much sense physically, I have only taken a couple of steps. I am in a pleasingly cool, dark tunnel of trees. The day has started hot and I am enjoying a shady, quiet transition.

Ahead, a mouth of sun opens upon the meadow. Beyond are the deep woods. Two paths join a third and in the middle of the base of the triangle a woman is seated, head back, eyes closed, lapping up the sunlight. To the right of her is an odd-looking tree: a huge, thick and even cylinder of green, its trunk encased in geometrical ivy, and then at the top, a single bough of the tree has escaped and sprayed out a canopy. An absurdist tree. I take the path to my left, intending to head back to the road, but the path keeps leading me to locked gates labelled NO ENTRY and I lack the cheek to climb them. The path takes me into the woods I did not want to visit.

I pass another strange tree. An even huger trunk, but this one with massing branches split and crumpled to the ground, the limp arms of a defeated fighter. I wonder about climbing up to it, but keep to the path tracking the edge of the woods. All it does is bring me to another locked gate and NO ENTRY and then uphill deeper into the trees. I hear voices. I turn and begin to retrace my steps, but notice there is a quicker way back via the giant tree. I pick my way down carefully, foothold to foothold, root to rock to slope, noticing that this clamber is down some older path: rusted and twisted remnants of railings are not quite hidden in the leaves.

Back in the meadow, two spaniels are playing in the shadow of a tree so perfect in its canopy that the scene looks like the final shot from something gnostic directed by David Lynch. I pass the drive to Primley Lodge and turn into Waterleat Road, and there, up a turning to the right, are the marks of a mill leat; the tops of two arches in a red stone wall almost buried by a rising road surface. I follow the road in a spiral up and around the hill, with the meadow and the woods hidden within it. I am in a band of suburbia, now. A study in small front gardens: bleak and Zen, crazy-paved, riot of colour, mess of lavender and leafy shrubs, manicured mini-lawn, concrete gryphon and giant snail. Each garden united by the same mildly individualistic indifference. And the house names: KYOTO, PARADISE CORNER, HARLEQUIN. Then it changes as the incline steepens – car graveyard, a garage labelled MAN CAVE – the houses are smaller, less display, grey pebble-dashing, until the gardens disappear altogether, to be replaced by concrete car-pads. A youth delivers bright red menus for a Chinese buffet.

A bumper sticker: 23RD JUNE. INDEPENDENCE DAY. Another: JUSTICE FOR SGT BLACKMAN.

From the top of a steep road, the waters of the bay are spread out, half deep blue, half sky blue. The giant buildings on the Torquay heights stand out. Monolith Monsters. A scream from a house nearby. Then silence.

The long road is so steep and the street arrangement so uniformly bound to units of dwelling that there appears to be no ‘street life’ possible. No marks of public presence, no place to sit or meet, a giant ribbon development of small houses, terraces and bungalows. A Reliant Robin struggles up the hill. A van signed MARK THE SPARK ELECTRICIAN. A house called CORTINA.

There’s an empty bungalow with a SOLD sign outside. I squeeze through the overgrown front garden and under the vast web of a giant Garden Spider, its huge body poised centrally. Inside, the furnishings have been removed, but from the creamy paintwork and the bronzy ceramics of the fireplace, and the original metal window frames at odds with neighbours’ PVC, it looks like this home has never been redecorated since it was first occupied; a particular type of hermitage.

And then it all changes, in a kind of cosmic gear shift I turn off near the bottom and up a hill enclosed by tall red sandstone walls, past a house called LODGE and through a gap in the wall and over a metal stile. I clamber up what looks like a possible track under the sweeping cloak of leaves, and enter a world of dens, of overhanging tree roots, of improvised grates and chimneys, a canyon in miniature, a fantasyland for growing up in, the red earth and the roots making this place fleshy and internal, shadowy and illicit, socialised and naughty. I notice that what I thought was a bank of earth is an old sandstone wall and I clamber back down the crumbling slope, around this wall, up a set of steps and through an archway, up another set and onto a ledge beneath a long wall that stretches away to my left. I climb up yet another set of steps and emerge in a low key public area with an incongruous purple and orange seat, and then into a small car park beside a large chapel.

I know, from Salmon, what this is. A Father Pinmore had come here secretly in the 1880s to view the property of a virulently anti-Catholic landowner. While a local accomplice distracted the bigot, Father Pinmore, the procurator for Marist Fathers who were fleeing a ban against religious orders in the French Republic, sneaked about the gardens, becoming stuck in a hedge, his braces snapping and his trousers falling down.

By 1883 a monastery had been established and the tall gothic building here was opened as its chapel; the figure of Mary – known to the locals as ‘The White Lady’ – made in cast iron, towering six metres above the roof, looks back to France. The Fathers were joined by Marist Sisters and a Marist Convent was established in Paignton; then one for Sacred Heart Sisters in Goodrington. These institutions have all gone now; the monastery closing in 1970. Reading Salmon, and later, when I find a very old plaque to Belgian refugees, here over a century ago, I was becoming aware of these temporary diversities, that come and go, and rarely leave such a trace as this grand chapel. In 1940, Breton fishermen and their families (32 in all) sailed into Paignton to escape the Nazi occupation; when they returned in 1945 they took even their dead back with them aboard their trawlers.

The church had wanted to remove ‘The White Lady’ to their new building in town, but gave in to local pressure to leave it where it is; though what jumble of devotion and superstition lay behind these appeals might be rich to investigate; what Gravesian condensing of divinity?

Today the building houses a charity that runs a food bank and furniture provision in the town and provides counselling services. Later I experience a similar feeling at Oldway Mansion; a power around loss and spectral return, except that here it is of God and not a sewing machine. This is evidenced in the wreckages of old things: that where secularism, persecution and the decline of manufactures had all failed to destroy them, neo-liberalism with its indifference to the integrity of gods or machines, has triumphed in its destruction of varieties of public space. Yet it cannot quite dominate their ruins. I don’t think to try the door of the chapel. I would not have hesitated if this was an Anglican country church; and I wonder later how much, apart from time, separates me from the culture of that bigot landowner.

At the bottom of Monastery Road, where it runs into Winner Hill Road, I feel as if I am coming into the Saxon part of the town. These are the tiny streets deplored by the planner Thomas Sharp, who was inspired by Haussmann’s demolitions in Paris; I had never heard of him, until I read of him thanks to Salmon. Part of that same contempt for working class life, a ‘for their own good’ that likes to present itself as liberal, and that is, as I walk, taking such a kicking through the medium of Brexit.

Totnes Road, Waterleat Road, Waterleat Avenue, Clifton Road, Winner Hill Road, through gateway and up steps to car park of monastery building, Berry Drive, through path to Monastery Road, left onto Winner Hill Road, right onto Winner Street.

The road brings me directly out, shockingly and abruptly, on the recent murder scene on Winner Street. I immediately recognise it from the pictures in the local paper. Flowers are beginning to wilt in small bouquets. A Polish woman, Agnieszka Szymura, a shop worker, was knifed and died in the street. A man, Toryino Williams, has been charged with her killing. (The case will never come to trial; before my journey is over, I read online that Williams has been found dead in his Exeter cell.)

A house named THE OLD LABOUR CLUB – a 1990s’ relic of the Blairite turn in the Labour Party. Blair is making noises about “a return” to British politics, and about the absence of a political force “at the centre”. Real or otherwise, the ‘council estate’ vote for withdrawal from the EU has terrified a political establishment that included rather more people than even they imagined; prudishly admonishing the ill-informed and fearful, then fleeing wildly to embrace, trick or, once again, ostracise them. But the winds are not getting back in the box.

Off Winner Street, I turn into Palace Avenue and in a charity shop buy a copy of *Sir Constant: Knight of the Great King* by W.E. Cule and a sweet-looking 1930s’ box of travel draughts. Later, when I open the box I find that there is no board, only counters. I am delighted! I have bought a game without limits, each square borderless and conceptual. A board made of frisky Labradors. I begin to leave the draughts in niches and on narrow ledges, wondering if I might one day return to move them on to another concept. Hadn’t Yoko Ono or one of those Fluxus types played chess with only pieces of one colour? Without a board, the game of war becomes a dance.

Back onto Winner Street, between strange swimming sperm gates and through Sign Walk, into a car park ringed in breccias in Crown and Anchor Way, named after the pub where Torbay Lodge no. 427 was founded in 1772 and thrived until a dispute over ritual in 1824 climaxed with the Senior Warden gathering up every apron he could seize and throwing them onto the open fire. Along another breccia wall in Tower Road, I pass a red, mediaeval tower, wrongly attributed as the site for a Bible translation that never happened here; like the writing of ‘The Waste Land’ in a Torquay bus shelter or the filming in Ocombe Woods. So many towers in this town, unexpectedly, and many of them, not just here, but at intervals along my entire walk, are Italianate; thieved parts of modernity stolen from the Renaissance to claim ‘civilisation’ for industries driven by imports of ideas and goods.

Into Gerston Place; I feel I might be overshooting something, as if I am one of those pebbles of limestone, smoothing too much in the flood of waters and polishing in sand; sliding over things. I halt at the mildly staid body of an old Institute turned ‘Enterprise Centre’, the words “SCHOOL OF ART AND SCIENCE” carved in its best custard stone. Down its side it spills its guts, four metres up, in an extraordinary mural, gross in its Pre-Raphaelite sentimentality and vicious in the irony of its erosion: the badge of Painting is now worn completely empty! Long lost is whatever image it had used to represent itself to itself.

I feel bad walking away, re-tracing my steps, like I am being painted-by-numbers; I am exhausted, though the day has hardly begun, and this neglected and

constricted place needs a whole conference to itself. Few gems of nothingness as beautiful as this ever were. Such images beat my prose with a wooden spoon, hard against the edge of the mixing bowl. I run away slowly. Back to the tower made up of fruitcake rocks layered by flash floods, and turn up Church Path. It must once have been far less metalled than now. I check out the hall that has invaded the red walls, errant gravestones and mediaeval stone ornaments leaned up alongside its rubbish bins. A nervous elderly woman comes out to check on my noseying around the church hall bins; as politely as I can, I reject her offer of a coffee – perhaps because I think she thinks that I may be *in need* – and retreat to the neighbouring graveyard, with its gorgeous gas lamps, so long unused that even their adaptation to electricity is now redundant; a glass bulb fallen from its rusted socket and wedged in the frame.

The Star of David on the guttering of St James Church is a mark left by Isaac Singer, the sewing machine magnate, who came here with his Parisian wife, having been refused property by the anti-Semitic elite in Torquay; he paid for the renovation of this mediaeval church, with a vestry added by his grandson. A white slab at the foot of the church wall argues: “Those we love don’t go away, they walk beside us every day”. Its sentimentality gets me in the guilt bone.

A man emerges from a door to know nothing of the things that intrigue me about this building, but he does inform me that the suspiciously modern looking representation of the martyr was carved before the convention of showing James (of the Camino) with “sea shells”. Shipwreck pilgrimage: James’s corpse washed overboard in a storm, it emerges unharmed on the coast, covered in and protected by scallop shells. For one kind of pilgrim the many ribs of the scallop lead to a single point; for another the ribs begin at a single point and move outwards.

The tower of this church, one tower among so many, is red and fleshy. Even a cursory glance along the side of the outer wall gathers up some odd patterns: diamonds carved in limestone erratics and swirls in patches of concrete. Around the porch is something possibly Moorish. Inside it is far more brutal; a great empty space where folk would have gathered, standing, while priests gibbered behind rood screens, the mediaeval font like a fat hammer hollowed out. Gashed into the side of the nave is a darkness, and within it the representation of a shrunken and desiccated corpse, its skin sucked right back onto the bones. The face is drawn tight over the skull. The chest flesh stretched over rack-like ribs; the one leg left alone by Reformation vandals is thin, like a walking stick. A curtain stretched shallowly over a model made out of matchsticks. The only thing untouched is the monkish head of hair, shaped in the fashion of a 1970s’ glamour girl, a Purdey. Its eyes are like the holes on a ‘crazy golf’ course. I take photos but can’t get the sense of meaningless skin over a stiff structure of order, of wetness disciplined by wires. I try to get it on my grotty digital, but the light is too low; my final attempt is solid blackness.

I give up and wander off as a man enters the church and resolutely strides down the centre aisle, leaning slightly backwards. He is like a structure in baggy trainers and hoodie. His eyes are over-alive; I already warn myself against him. He throws

himself, out of control, into a seat on the front row of the pews, pulls himself up straight, then takes his hands to his face and begins to sob until his whole body rocks back and forth. I find myself walking towards him; a man is disintegrating before my eyes, his limbs shake violently. I know he has noticed me, but... From his mouth come odd gulps; a dog stitched to a bird. I offer to leave the church, to vacate it for this man and his desperate sorrow.

“Would you rather I left you alone”, I hear myself saying, as if I am speaking of someone else, “or would you rather talk about what is troubling you?”

“Can I talk?”

“Of course. Please.”

“I’ve had bad news. Bad, bad. Terrible news.”

I cannot read him. His hood falls back to reveal a head too big for the frame of sticks and metal stands that poke around in his trainers. His eyes are loganberry red.

“My sister killed herself with drugs, just like an overdose. Yesterday. I just heard.”

That accent comes from somewhere around Birmingham.

I assure him that this is something terrible. I want to soak up his pain. But after that, I have no idea how this is supposed to go. I am speaking from a fake-efficacious script, of which I have only ever seen a tiny part, but I am doing my best.

“You are right to feel as you do. A terrible thing has happened and what you are feeling is a right thing to feel.”

The man speaks of demons and I think of movies rather than real ones; he says he is starving and I think he means metaphorically; but he has neither eaten nor slept for three days. I don’t notice the significance of anything beyond wondering how I should not offer him the tenner I have; that he is in need of a kind of sustenance that that cannot buy. I hold my hands, as gently as I can, behind my back; steeling myself against any kind of performance. I do not offer the tenner.

He says that he is thinking “mad things”; he skates carefully around the words, but, without saying as much, I know he is thinking of joining his sister unless someone can come up with a better idea. I once again affirm the reasonableness of his response to such a shattering event.

He doesn’t quite say “at peace” but that is the spirit of what he seeks. He is alone, he says. I ask him what brought him to the town. I am hoping to trigger some other narrative for him to hang onto.

“I was abused by our father. She was too. But no one ever believed us and they drived us away, and now it’s he, that bastard, sitting at the Christmas table. She had demons. I’ve been hearing the same voices as her. I’ve been thinking mad terrible things.”

“No. There is nothing mad or wrong in what you are feeling. Given the things you have experienced, it’s really completely right and normal for you to feel and think mad things. To get that terrible news, you are right to be feeling in a mad way. That’s a human thing to feel like that.”

“I’ve been so cold. No hot food and that. I’ve got no one here. No friends, nothing.”

“Then you are being incredibly strong to take this kind of news on your own. You are quite right for it to hit you so hard. You’re a sensitive person. You feel it.”

I am trying to buy time. But I cannot keep repeating myself. I have kept to the script as I imagine it; but I am aware of reaching the bottom of the only page I have.

The man is here, in a church, it is a final resort.

“I haven’t been in a church since I was christened.”

A last chance chancel. This is no game. But I can be a mirror; reinforce his feelings, hoping to intuit some other way to keep him alive for a few minutes. Keep him where he is for the moment. I dare not leave him and fetch someone; where would he go? What might he do? But at the same time – what am I willing to commit to him? What is he going to ask of me?

I’d known how things would work up to this point, but now I am running out of ways to affirm this suffering man. He talks of demons again.

“If I was to go and fetch a priest? There’s a coffee morning in the church hall I passed it on my way, they’d be able to get in touch with the minister. Is that something that would be helpful?”

To my surprise, he nods enthusiastically. But I am not too sure and I am not going to leave him yet. A woman in black comes creaking through the door. She is young and old; elegant, but clumsy, somewhere between beautiful and drawn, a hint of the stretched stone corpse about her grace; I think she might be a friend or even a partner of this man – I am running multiple scenarios – but she chooses a pew near the back and begins to pray.

I break her prayers.

She immediately embraces the man; once she has listened to me. Gets his name and gives hers. Why did I not think of that, do that? She praises me – “you are a good woman” – and sends me to the vicarage. But I am not, I have had to strip away most of me, to get rid of the fear and embarrassment. Just to be able to listen. Outside, the light is bright and unreal; the vicarage reached through a door in the old wall. I ring an unpromising bell but, after a while and then a creak, a rigorously washed and rotund woman answers, listens to my faltering narrative as if suicidal folk gather at the church regularly (maybe they do) and then thanks me peremptorily, hearing me for the performer I am, and shuts the door.

Moments later, on the street outside the wall, the priest or minister overtakes me on her way to the church. I lean on the graveyard wall, breathing hard, beside what Salmon says are the latrines of the old Bishop’s Palace; in a yew tree a pair of jays are being bullied by magpies. The romanticist walkers write of their inner lives bouncing off the independent world just beyond the boundary of their skin, but I feel no distance. I feel totally compromised.

I walk on. Ashamed and in a kind of trance. I stumble along the road beside the church, cross the road and help myself down the steep stairs, trying to leave the

encounter behind me; too real to be any part of my playful journey. It would be evil to incorporate it. I am writing about this with real misgivings and I have changed almost everything about it. I want to abandon it, like a stone or a building I can no longer afford to upkeep, or something amputated in an operation, something no longer part of me that is required to be handed over; rent to a landlord. I feel horror at the thought that Hazlitt was right and that ‘the walk’ is always and eventually about ‘the self’, when “long-forgotten things, like ‘sunken wrack and sunless treasuries’, burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again”. I look around for some side-of-the-pool to put my hand on.

Up on the wall of the former brewery of Starkey, Knight and Ford are mouldings of three barrels, the three tuns of the badge of the Worshipful Company of Brewers, a livery company of the City of London, and a larger badge higher up, with a white silhouette of a knight’s head on a green background. I imagine it is Sir Constant whose book weighs heavy in my backpack. I look for somewhere to sit for a while. Behind the flats is a beguiling set of successive arches, dark and pink and recent, but if I sit there I am in someone’s garden. By the Clink, a mediaeval lockup, there is a circular flower bed and I sit on the red sandstone edge of that.

In an hour I have read Cule’s book. It is wonderful. I had expected a clumsy evangelical text, but this (if stripped of its allegorical container) turns out to be an elegant symbolist drama. Later, I will read much of the Victorian and Edwardian literature produced (or adapted to film) in the areas of South Devon that I walk, works cited by Salmon – Mills, Mallock, Froude, Trevena – and it is always tainted, somewhere, by a sickly biological supremacy. There is always a flag or a race or a class. But ‘Sir Constant’ is unlike them all.

I’m not a fool. I can see that Cule’s book excludes plenty, but I am impressed by its confidence in its narrow field to expand out to absolutes without losing touch with its objective correlatives, without requiring physical rather than philosophical or ethical enemies. A conceit around John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*, the book takes its Christian allegory for granted and then finesses around its ornaments, like a mystic briefly disorientated in a theatre of memory. As a student of Symbolist art and performance, I recognise where I am with Cule; on an August Strindberg highway with a Maeterlinck sensibility.

I hope I will meet some of the book’s landscapes and characters – the narrow valley, the empty suit of armour, the way channelled through a single doorway, the Black Knight who rises secretly in the night and changes personal maps; I think maybe I already did. But will I “fall under the spell of the city” and “see pleasant visions and rejoice in them, not being aware that they are visions only: and... lose all measure of Time and Duty”? Is Cule predicting that road of sloganised T-shirts and one-armed bandits, cafés and chip shops and tattoo parlours, pigeon wire around the classical pillars, and ancient Egyptian gods guarding its casino?

I love the book’s chapel of voices that suddenly unfolds: “and lo! The walls of the great cross parted, leaving a wide doorway with a fair and open path beyond”. I

had already felt small moments like that; when everything seemed closed off and then, suddenly, a way had opened up.

I am re-reading the passage that caught me hardest; when Sir Constant, the questing pilgrim-knight, stays at the castle of Sir Joyous and at night discovers that his host's portrait changes from "bright and smiling in countenance" to one of "wild laughter, the brows grown heavy and leaden" and the label on the painting changes too, first to "Sir Pleasure" and then to "the name of that mighty enemy of the Great King whom men call Sir Self".

In my head I re-run the story; so the fear of pleasure is what is painted over with the whitewash of "joy" and "fun" and it is Sir Self who is the enemy and Great King of everyone.

I don't know... I am still puzzling over my partial inversion, when my self-indulgence is interrupted by a call to my phone. One of the conference organisers ringing from Plymouth: am I still in Paignton? Can one of her students, who lives in the town, come to speak with me about her research? Half an hour later, the wait spent re-reading my favourite parts of *Sir Constant*, Eileen arrives – a mature student, like me. She asks if perhaps she can show me around?

I never did quite understand what her research was, or why it would help her to walk with me. But walk we do and she commentates on whatever I show an interest in. Like the houses raised up on supporting walls, because there is nothing but sand under us, even this far inland we are on salt marshes, moisture rising with the tides and filling the cellars. I am not sure if she means right now. Nothing is fixed here. There is a 'Blue Velvet' feel; of lines not to cross. It feels very suburban, even in the middle of the old Saxon town, provincial and reassuring, yet it is also manufactured against doom; the storms at sea, the tides of working class holidaymakers, the lack of a clear identity of its own. Are towns supposed to have that any more?

I lead Eileen into backstreets and down an alley with a ballet school in a peeling warehouse: "for children aged 2½ to 21 yrs"; a gravestone tucked in a cubbyhole; "the best and most beautiful things cannot be seen or even touched": garden ornament Gnosticism – this in an elaborate car port that includes a former public drinking fountain, a spitting lion head painted royal blue; a ladder with most of its rungs missing; the almost illegible sign for a E VIC MEN'S CL B. I miss the ancient monument; its sign has been bent so far back into the hedgerow by a passing vehicle, but not a wildly tiled backyard with ceramic trees and birds and patterns that look like aliens from old 1950s' movies, and a plaster Pan. Then we explore up an old lane.

Eileen begins to narrate the journey in a way I could not: the haunted cottage, with the 'for sale' sign, that is always changing hands, NIGHT WORKER SLEEPING PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB, thick mud oozing up from under a manhole cover, orange trees, the remnants of an older monastic presence and stories of the more recent one I had already stumbled on, a billboard torn in half to reveal a cartoon removals worker with a terrifying grin brandishing a tiny house; it is hard to tell the Protestant chapels from the warehouses, both sport absurd facades.

Eileen points out the first Catholic Church; now housing. It had been a Baptist Chapel and when the builders were filling in the baptismal bath, another Peggy's Pool, Father Mulkern had joked: "There goes the last of Original Sin!"

All the time there are odd lengths of out-of-place wall, some grand, some stumpy and painted thickly; all speaking to an old arrangement, Saxon maybe, ill at ease with the recent town. It isn't a sinister thing; but a kind of irritated magic.

On the corner of Southfield Street and Cecil Road, by the zebra crossing are rubedo steps of breccias up to an elevated sliver of orchard. The old red apple warehouse, up for sale, seems positioned in the ruins of something much, much older; that is how the Marist chapel felt too, and the coffee morning church hall in the Palace ruins, anonymous modernity in old shells, while the houses here are palimpsests. Even the stuffy Conservation Plan attributes an "otherness" to them, Salmon says.

I am only a few feet above the pedestrians passing by, but the elevation has made me invisible; the afternoon walkers with buggies and preoccupations do not look up. On Southfield Street, we climb some steps to a semi-private garden that looks out over the town. The mediaeval and Italianate towers of the two churches pin the town to the sky. This is a welcoming private space, an assemblage of different subjective pruning and plantings, displays and deferences. The piping of the handrails, a wooden rail added to the metal one and then rotted away, the friendly jumble of privet and rhododendron, a deformed plaster pixie twisting his sightless eyes, scallop shells dropped from the concrete wall and leaving behind juvenile fossils. Looking out across the town, I think of the 36 slaves recorded here in the Domesday Book. Who were they? What mark of them is here? Those amputated walls?

Eileen takes me into the Catholic Church, The Church of the Sacred Heart and the Little Flower, where she is a worshipper. Inside, I am drawn to the statue of the Protomartyr of Oceania, Peter Chanel, founder of those Marist fathers whose chapel I had blundered upon; endowed with "marvellous meekness", his robes are of the same resonant blue as the lion fountain. There is a certain Dali-esque realism to Chanel's statue, a sur-reality, an above real, that has been lost in the victory of Parliament and text and in the dust of all those smashed statues and rood screens.

French priests and nuns, Irish fathers, Breton fishermen and their families, the Belgian refugees in the First World War. Salmon says that Agatha Christie's model for Hercule Poirot was a Belgian refugee. There is this heritage of asylum in these small towns, and yet no one seems to celebrate it much. Maybe no one knows it.

I say goodbye to Eileen, who has for a few loops within a tiny part of the town been a guide.

The giant milk bottle on the corner is not the wooden original but a concrete replacement, and was not always white. 'Itch Itchington', a local 'artist', once repainted it in Coca Cola colours as an incoherent protest against sugar and invisibility, after first leaving a severed pig's head at the town's branch of McDonalds. The milk bottle, once advertising a dairy, has long floated free of function and

become a simple, meaningful beauty, a Pater aestheticism, a symbol of bottle for symbol of bottle's sake. It is my favourite thing I have seen in Devon so far. The dairy itself, is not. It has become 'Women of Worth', an arm of World Christian Ministries: "liberating women and children". From the numerous pictures of white women handing over medicines to women of colour it is very clear who is doing the liberating. Christ is very white here. The seagulls keep up the screaming. On an advertisement hoarding 'The Black Farmer' is waving a union flag over his head, his arms lifted as if in surrender.

In Cecil Mews a garage-top sculpture of drift wood writhes wildly. I slide between the breccia walls like a limestone pebble polished in the cold flash flood sizzling across hot Permian sands. In Higher Polsham Road a single Georgian villa is a painful reminder of an elegance that once prevailed here.

FOR THAT MODEL RAILWAY EXPERIENCE. Closed down and boarded up.

Passing empty shops on Torquay Road, approaching the Mansion, I am thinking of how the rich have so clearly fled deeper into the countryside and behind their gates. How the big houses – Oldway, Redcliffe, Cockington, Torre Abbey – are all now in the hands of trusts, councils or hoteliers. The super rich have abandoned any physical accountability; their remaining visibility is the spectre of their former homes.

Coming at Oldway Mansion, climbing up the rocks, over exposed terracotta pipes and around scruffy palm trees about its fenced-off Grotto, dank water and cheap building-site Heras panel fencing, bantering warily with a group of young larrikins. Even though the sign on the steps up says "Mansion", I am caught unprepared, coming through the trees, for what I see. The scale, the detail, the theft, the de-composture. This is fabulous, this is Axël's Castle!

And this is being left to rot?

I follow a line of goats' masks, cast by Voltaire's of Paris, and then take the steps up to the southern side of the building, with its giant croquet lawn, emerald in the midday sun, a green rectangle commanding the fractal suburbs on the opposing hills. There are two Sphinxes here with the same, very human, female face; the model for the Statue of Liberty, Isabelle Eugenie Boyer, the wife of Isaac Singer. In this stone version of her, she looks away, not in disdain I think, but as if much more interested in something that is not quite here. Up above, under the gable, are symbols of warmth, wisdom and reason, abstraction and growth.

Just after I pass through, the house and grounds become the set for The Chuckle Brothers to play the live action version of the Hitman game; Paul and Barry guide a local man playing Agent 47 to 'take out' a Serbian arms dealer.

In the gardens there are figurative representations of Pan, hooves crossed, and a baby Bacchus with a tail (like a freakshow on Facebook), an imp carrying the mind to higher things, sur-irreality – these were 1950s' replacements for a broken muse and some putti representing secular passions. Two more giant and abstract Sphinxes guard the car park, wearing ram's heads for headdresses; one is treacherous, the

other merciless; more purloinings from antiquity. Strangulators, squeezing the entrance. The association of learning and bad luck; that after the ordeal of education everything still remains to be done. They wait and wait; the riddles that would allow them to end their slaughters and ascend to heaven are unanswered.

The Pans are slow, great and still stone cold dead. Inside – or maybe it has been removed by now? – a copy of David’s huge painting of Napoleon’s crowning of Josephine. Women are worshipped here, but always on terms decided by men.

The great structure is suspended above a nothingness, disconnected from a monastic timetable of belief and tidal crafts of fruitcake palaces, losing its noses, eroded here and there, beginning to be rubbed by a lack of repairs, becoming formal and structural and more of an idea than a place. I think it is beautiful and unreal in its wreck, renovation would end its ruination. But in this interregnum it can float, unfunctioning, its excess of symbolism elevated by the administrative mess left by its entanglement with the economic downturn.

An elderly man – “been here 40 years, still an outsider, of course” – tells me that rain pours in through the collapsing ceilings. The council has “let it go”.

Under some unruly tree cover beyond the circular Riding School there are extensive remnants of something ornately carved: a collapsed archway, possibly. A crash of columns, cornices, capitals and corbels. All coated in emerald moss. A definition of inside and outside is no longer required.

A ram-horned, dolphin-headed, feather-armed, trumpet-handed mutant at the foot of a tree.

The whole place is a diffraction of neo-classical theft and post-2008 composure; I love it. Never mend it, never give in to the outrage.

At the junction of Oldway and Upper Manor Road is a heterotopia, a cluster of spaces marinated with the ooze of vinegar and batter. Outside the Oak Tree Forge, rammed into the pavement, its roots crammed with cement, is a large oak tree. Opposite is a driveway with stumpy pebble-dashed pillars and in a garage forecourt is an odd, triple-layered concrete cake that has slid apart; different varieties of found art. Why have I not noticed before that there is so much free entertainment to hand?

“When once we have begun to look with curiosity on the strange things that ordinary people pass over without notice, our wonder is continually excited by the variety of phase, and often by the uncouthness of form.... We can scarcely poke or pry for an hour among the rocks, at low-water mark, or walk, with an observant downcast eye, along the beach after a gale, without finding some oddly-fashioned, suspicious-looking being, unlike any form of life that we have seen before.”

Charles Kingsley, *Glaucus, the Wonders of the Shore* (1855)

The junction is busy with cars and pedestrians. Cider Press, Yarn Barn, thatched cottages and a pub with oddly-shaped windows: diamonds, triangles and thin

rectangles. I take a simple pleasure in the line of cream and chocolate concrete bollards. At the Spiritualist Church on the corner an advertising hoarding promises a training for “deepening your evidence [for] the intelligence behind the communication; understanding the use of clairsentience in blending with the communicator... and being able to emanate from oneself the essence of the spirit communicator”. It spells “contracts” instead of “contacts”, as if everything is a ‘trade deal’ now. This week’s medium is Jonathan Brown FROM LEAMINGSTON SPA. Beyond a show room, full of 1960s’ Rovers covered in dust, I stop for lunch.

Church Path, through churchyard, the church of St John the Baptist with St Andrew and St Boniface, Princes St, along footpath by The Clink, though concrete arches, Littlegate Street, Milbrook Road, then Kirkham Street following it to the right and then left at the T-junction, right onto Cecil Road, right down Mill Lane, past Kirkham House, onto Littlegate Street and left down alley past dance studios, left into Churchward Road, right into Cecil Road to the end and the milk bottle, go back 20 metres and into Cecil Mews going North, cross Cadwell Road and straight on along back alley to Higher Polsham Road, Torquay Road going North, doorway into Oldway Mansions gardens, through gardens and round Mansion to the left, Oldway Road, at junction with Oak Tree Forge, right into Upper Manor Road, left onto Torquay Road and cross over to Brambles for good homemade food, restaurant quality at café prices (Braised beef and fresh vegetable including swede for £6.95).

Across from Brambles and the smashed windows of Fosse Healthcare (“Here to help”), past the ghost advert on the side of the Conservative Club, I climb up a handful of red stone steps and into Preston Gardens where something exotic has died. Its bark foamed up into a whale head bluntness. A thatched cat chases a thatched rat across a rooftop. There is no sun to read the sundial.

Turning up Preston Down Road, a sign says: “live happy! With Slimming World!” – John Trevena would not have been pleased; this is the kind of hedonism that would ruin the English stock. There are the faintest hints in the shaping of an exterior chimney, an arch and in a portal of that ‘taste’ that had once been a ‘culture’, even if it was someone else’s. A garage, its cream door buckled, oozes bed bases and a mountain of leaves: the miscegenation of interior decor with the oak groves has burst the boarded cave.

I get caught up in a hunt for a cat around here. Passing a set of garages, a black cat with white markings crosses my path. I only notice it because of the superstition. A few streets on, taped to a lamp post, is a poster for a ‘missing cat’, Domino, and a photo of a cat very like the one I have just seen. I ask a passer-by for directions to the address on the poster and race off to it. Why this strikes me as going off on a tangent when I only have tangents to go on I can’t explain, but it feels like an irritating diversion from my walk; a chore I could have done without. The owner, who is both

graceful and grateful, says that Domino has been missing for five weeks, but that there have been numerous sightings and she saw him herself once, but was unable to catch him. She thanks me and goes for her car keys.

I rejoin my original route at a care home, where the road kinks round to the right. Two Filipino careworkers are taking a break on a bench. Eavesdropping, I nearly miss an almost overgrown turning onto some kind of track opposite. It begins dispiritingly at a utilities junction box. Then the path gets trapped at the ends of back gardens. Feeling that I am half-trespassing, I tread quietly. I hear the snuffling of a suspicious dog behind a fence and tip-toe gently. A concrete Romanesque archway has been breezeblocked, a wooden door has rotted solid into its frame; a gaping hole where a huge length of fence has blown down onto a plane of decking reminds me of the BNP graffito. Then it changes. It all changes. The psychogeography of a frightened siege town, of meaninglessness and hoaxery offered as normality, of the rows of closed shops punctuated by financial services with satirical names – Concise Wealth, Accounting 4 Everything – becomes an emotional landscape of relief and surprise. The abject track at the backs of the houses enters deep into the treeline and a world unimaginable so close to suburban roads.

These woods disrupt the nuclear logic of the suburbs. Raised roots and red earth, a thickening of feeling. Silent dogs creep up to sniff at my groin. The apologetic owners, two similar looking women – sisters? – know not to disturb the train of my thought. I follow them down the long red path tunnelled in trees. According to the information board this is Ocombe Woods, the valley of the oaks, “Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland” free of human intervention (and garden escapes) since at least 1600. I like “semi-natural”; that’s how I feel; conditional, contingent. When the path opens out onto a field, there is a view back to where I have walked today and yesterday: the churches, the pier, Redcliffe, Oldway. I can hear the whistle of a steam locomotive. The seagulls are gone; now there are crows, robins, leaves in the wind, and silence. The shade beneath the trees becomes darker; I notice that there are little paths off from the main track, up to a fall of creepers, a spring that has seen a huge collapse of branches; climbing into the chaos I can make out the sharp edge of a stone structure in there. These smaller and fainter tracks off from the main path are markers of the locals’ attachment to the groves, the springs, the everyday magic of their long dead ancestors. This was all something important once.

Coming down I hold onto a branch as thick as my arm which breaks like a joke prop and I slide and tumble down onto the main track.

One of the twin-like women has paused where the stream from the spring crosses the path, crouching down to wash her hands; she looks up, as if she is waiting for me; as if she has something to say. I hang back until she is gone. I don’t know why I ignore her.

Before exiting this wonderful space through a large rusty iron gating, I hunker in the grass for a long pee. The bank of dark trees rises like a wall. I hear women’s voices in a back garden nearby.

On Sandringham Drive, its scimitar curve like a ripple of blast, I find three concrete frogs painted white on a thick front gate pillar; I find it strangely cheering that one has almost eroded out of all recognition. Outside a house called WHISPERS a van from Oak Tree Forge is parked. Walking knits everything together. I cross a busy road to look at the transmitter pylon there. Its sign warns "IF YOU HAVE A CARDIAC PACEMAKER OR BONES REPAIRED BY METAL/PLASTIC BONE IMPLANTS YOU MUST SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE BEFORE ACCESSING THIS SITE". The spectacle is corrosive.

Dame Sylvia Crowe, the pioneer landscape designer for nuclear power stations and hydroelectric dams in the mid-twentieth century saw these installations, even a single mast or a pylon, as "the outlier of human influence. Its prototype is the obelisk used by the 18th-century gardener to bring all the intervening land between the mansion and the distant monument firmly within the influence of civilisation... to banish untamed nature from the view". There are messages hidden within the signals.

At Occombe Farm I visit the deli and wander through the outdoor tables of the café; just as the neat lawns of Sandringham Drive have been something very different from the dire car crash of meaning down by the coast, so now I find a layer of something else; subsidised right-on-ness. Here there is a different way to meaning, defined by the stratigraphy of inclusion and exclusion. The best intentions poisoned by the grinding and infuriating refusal of the lowest to be righteous, to grasp what is best for them. Their persistence in rebellious self-harm and suicide. I construct Swiftian suggestions in my head.

I make my way down the narrow and heartless lane to Cockington. There is a brief respite on the John Musgrave Heritage Trail, named after and funded by a former British Intelligence Officer active in the Middle East; his body damaged by polio, he had walked with the mending flesh of subsequent surgeries.

Occombe Farm is growing flowers; just a small patch in a large field, but I hope they might soon fill it to its edges with bright colours.

Back on the nasty little lane, I wave to an approaching young driver, who does not kill his speed, but rashly misses my body by millimetres, pressed hard into the nettles of the hedge. I had felt in my chest an awful inevitability in the moment before he missed me.

I pass under three massive trees with pinnately lobed leaves. There are long stretches of straight road and my mind begins to relax to the tall walls of hedge that hem in my anxiety and turn it yellow and green.

Then coming up the lane, on their way to look for Gallows Gate and a field reputed to be 'hollow', are a group of ramblers who, gamely, had attended the conference; or attempted to. I had seen them at the conference venue, and later one or two of them had turned up for the papers. I hadn't heard any of them ask a question or make a point, but they had looked a little different from others at the conference. They say they all felt a little daunted, even snubbed. Though they had hardly arrived before the

conference was over, it has made a big impression on them. They are puzzled to discover that there is more than one way of walking.

“Isn’t walking all the same? That’s what brings us together?”

They all agree with each other.

I try to explain how a “universalist” idea of walking might actually exclude those who feel marginalised.

“It brings you five together and that’s fabulous, but what if I was wearing a burqa, would walking bring us together then? There might be different kinds of walking that would be necessary; different people may have different ideas about what they are free to do or where to go. Not everyone would see the countryside as a benign place...”

The women worry about how this imaginary companion might get over the stiles in her burqa.

“It’s not a garment designed for public footpaths.”

I shift the grounds. “Or imagine if they were a wheelchair user?”

The women had liked Will Self’s talk and found him clever, charming and funny; they didn’t seem to mind his kind of divisiveness. They had come to the conference because it was local “and something different”.

“Different from what?”

Different from the other ramblers they had met, who, they say, tend to be snobby and exclusive, walking too far and too fast and certainly never ever getting lost.

“We’re a bit mad!”

We say goodbye and for a while I watch them make their happy way up the dangerous lane. They do not look back, but I can see they are already in deep conversation about something. I wonder why they are so attracted to something like the site of a gallows and pit (hanging for men, drowning for women); or the massive subterranean passages discovered in the mid 1960s, running for “hundreds of metres and 12 metres below the surface”. What could that be? The passages ran through a field called Daddy Croft – ‘Daddy’ sometimes interpreted as ‘dead’, sometimes as ‘Devil’. Were these passages a kind of massive necropolis? Certainly much, much bigger than necessary for what the gallows would supply; its victims probably brought up this lane. Had people turned out to gawp at them? Did they gawp at Athelstan’s anti-British crusade? Or at William of Orange’s morbid procession, landing at Brixham and riding this way at the head of “200 Blacks brought from the plantations of the Netherlands in America” all wearing “Imbroyder’d Caps lin’d with white fur, and Plumes of white Feathers, to attend the Horfe”?

Despite its traffic, I am not glad to get off the lane and onto a gravelled Geopark Cyclepath; it all feels very bossed and managed and I take the first turn onto a red earth path I come to, sidling up beside fields and down steps to what I later learn is a ‘haha’ in the grounds of Cockington Court. I have wandered into a stately home!

In the field beyond the haha a young deer is being chased by ravens.

As I walk down 'Yonder Lawn' I think I am descending into a gentle park. An hour later, when I put together the gonzo information boards, chats with a possible priest and other visitors, the helpful man at the Court, bar staff and consulting Salmon, it all tells me that I am not.

I am deer, and this place is ravens.

Preston Gardens, Old Torquay Road, Preston Downs Road, at care home cross left onto footpath behind backgardens, same path through woods, at the old metal barrier turn right and walk uphill, at T-junction of paths, go right and into field, following path to the left into bushes on the other side of field, ignore the immediate right hand turn up to gate and carry on through the trees, follow signpost to 'Ocombe Woods' across field and into trees, and out into field, past phone mast into woods with signboard 'Ocombe Woods', turn right immediately down crumbled concrete path and turn left at the bottom past the information board, carry straight along for a few hundred yards until the path splits, take left lower or right higher, where the paths meet bear to the right, when the path forks take the right, through metal gate next to long wooden bench, Lindsay Road, left into Sandringham Drive, left into Preston Down Road, Ocombe Farm, Cockington Road, John Musgrave Trail, Cockington Road/Totnes Road, left just before Warren Barn through gates and onto gravelled cyclepath, take right hand turn onto first red earthen footpath, take the first footpath turning to the right and then swing left through the stone portal, and immediately take the right hand set of steps down to the grass...

A Mythogeographical Afterword

Although I have written plenty about mythogeography as an experimental approach to the site of the performance of everyday life, a space of multiple layers best understood when in motion, I have never subjected a site to a sustained exploration, analysis and description using mythogeographical principles. Fragments, yes – Queen Street in Exeter, a route through Suffolk – but these projects were limited in terms of the conclusions arrived at or of usable and reusable findings to pass on to others.

Wanting to put the idea of mythogeography to a sterner test, and drawing on almost 20 years of wandering and performance-making across South Devon, I have set out in this book to gather insights, make analyses and write conclusions equivalent to conducting research in cultural geography and publishing it as a book-length study.

In order to write from multiple viewpoints, I adopted two fictional voices: Cecile Oak, a researcher who is a stranger to the area, and A.J. Salmon, who shares my familiarity with the terrain and with some of its histories. Thus I am presenting this work as a hybrid of stranger's and expert's geography. Once settled on my approach, I then began to walk Cecile's route. Some of it I had walked before, but not all, and when I walked I had in mind Cecile's narrative. Using a technique I have described in detail in *The Footbook of Zombie Walking*, I did not pretend to be her, did not pretend to be able to imagine her feelings, but walked with her narrative in mind, thinking about how the terrain might inform her fiction and how her story might work itself out in it.

As with many of my books for Triarchy Press, I hope that, beyond the particular circumstances of South Devon, the techniques of exploration and description can be used by others. I hope that this mythogeography can take its place as a collection of techniques guided by multiple but coherent principles alongside other recognised practices like mobility studies, spatial analysis, nomadology and psychogeography.

Part of the mythogeographical technique is to use lay, expert, specialist and unrespectable materials together. The other side of this coin is that anyone should be able to use mythogeographies like 'Anywhere'. This book is published under a Creative Commons licence, so please use the book to do new things, to change it into something it isn't yet. Use it as a map or handbook or model to be departed from, as a resource for research you haven't even imagined yet. Please use it as a toolkit and a guidebook for making your own journeys in your own 'South Devons'.

Mytho/Crab Man/Phil Smith

Appendix

Four mythogeographical lenses

Layering: an investigative and questioning lens, it adopts Tim Ingold's anti-'global' model of knowledge. According to Ingold, one learns more by an ever closer familiarity and deeper entry into the layers and textures of the world, rather than by uninvolved, cool and elevated examination or distant spectatorship. It seeks to expose the hidden, and to liberate the repressed as if these were especially meaningful; it assumes that there has been organisation rather than coincidence, until proven otherwise. It seeks to illuminate or point to ironies. Its characteristic sites are the archaeological dig, the crime scene and the palimpsest. It seeks to encourage hypersensitivity to the hidden or ignored meanings of the everyday, and to detect evidence for structures through the further dis-assembly of already fragmenting evidence, seeking meaning in texture, grain, minutiae, details, marginalia and etiquette.

Rhizomatic interweaving: this lens takes from Doreen Massey the idea that space is made up of trajectories rather than boundaries. Its re-assembling of disparate elements and journeys is complementary to the inquisitive dismantling of the Layering lens. Its key tactics include *détournement* (the re-use of moribund art forms and media through adaptation, juxtaposition and disruption to new ends) and assemblage. The latter, as described by Deleuze and Guattari refers to the collection of divergent forms, practices and objects in ways that continue to maintain their differences within their collectivity. From Deleuze and Guattari this lens also takes its resistance to roots and identity, rather seeking 'being' in the weaving of connections between small groups led by their margins and through spiral distributions and disseminations of small but non-localised behaviours, tasks and provocations.

The making of 'anywheres': despite the resistance of mythogeography to bounded space and identity, it has a constructive agenda for the making of 'anywheres'. These are heterotopias rather than utopias. These are places of interconnectivity and

diversity, irony and bricolage rather than conformity to principles. ‘anywheres’ are domains that are characterised by hybridity and unboundeness and do not conform to state or local boundaries, nor to national, local or sectarian identities (though they are not necessarily always local, small scale or ‘human-sized’). They are places where many sites co-exist within a single site (like the ‘ambient hubs’ of situationist psychogeography). Tim Edensor adds to this another aspect: the fluid chaos of numerous parallel behaviours, characters and compartments in one space, in unordered flux. He sees the potential (or affordance) for this where there are problems in the ordering of space: “weakly classified space[s]... not under the sway of some overarching convention of ordering... have the potential to facilitate imaginings, epistemological dislocations and memories better than others” Such spaces are a socialisation of the idea of ‘cosmopolitanism’, seeking to transfer the cosmopolitan capacity and ethics – and, in particular, Kwame Anthony Appia’s ethics of strangers, which revolve around our responsibility to those beyond any co-identity – from the trajectory of privileged individual to common, public spaces.

The self-mythologising of the activist: mythogeography applies the same principles to persons as to spaces. Through this lens mythogeography seeks a breaking down of identities, social roles and functions while avoiding the development of alternative milieus, adopting the critique of such milieus by The Invisible Committee. Mythogeographers disrupt themselves; then, in turn, disrupt this disruption. So mythogeography’s self-mythologisation is a limited one; temporary and transferable (it is not unique). This is similar to the adoption by anti-artists of shared pseudonyms such as ‘Karen Eliot’ or ‘Luther Blissett’. The adoption of a limited self-mythologisation attempts to transfer the playfulness of a subversive identity from the mythogeographer to their ‘myth’; entangling the performer with the site of their performance.

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WALKING/MYTHO GEOGRAPHY

