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Project Title: Situating *Full Nelson*: the poetry sequence as a means of articulating the socio-cultural significance of space and place.

Title of Creative Work: *Full Nelson*

Part A: Proposal

Part B: Critical Exegesis

Date: 22nd August 2022

Research Question(s)

1. If 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (Bachelard, 1958, p.5) and 'home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and members of a community... [and] an irreplaceable centre of significance' (Relph, 1976, p.109), then how can a practicing writer assess this significance and create a new work that incorporates and affects the value of a particular 'irreplaceable centre of significance', 'space', or 'place'?
2. How can I use my position as writer-in-residence to develop and publish a poetry sequence in line with the social, political, and cultural aims of the *RV Furor Scribendi*?

Key Words: Space. Place. Psychogeography. Value. Culture. Poetry. Nelson.

Part A: Proposal

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Introduction

As a writer-in-residence on the *Research Vessel Furor Scribendi*, a canal boat repurposed as a public library that is currently moored on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, an opportunity has presented itself to write a creative work to be held in the library's collection (Peak and Morrison, 2022; SSW, 2021).

Considering the real-world connections of my poetry-writing practice to the residency on the *RV Furor Scribendi* (heron referred to as *RVFS*) and to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal as a local space, I have decided to develop a poetry sequence that explores the canal and its significance to local life, and also investigates the contesting values of 'space' and 'place' (Relph, 1976; Vidler, 1992; Bachelard, 1992; Massey, 2005).

The title of this poetry sequence will be *Full Nelson*. Nelson is the name of my Lancashire hometown and a town that values the Leeds and Liverpool canal (Peake and Greenhalgh, 2021).

Practical Context:

The importance of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal is highlighted by the Pennine Linear Park Project. The project is funded by the UK government and The Canal and River Trust to help local people reinvigorate the canal (Peake and Greenhalgh, 2021). I recently attained a role as a writer-in-residence on the *RVFS*, a fully functioning sculptural narrowboat, formed by artists Heather Peak and Ivan Morrison to operate as a living research vessel (SSW, 2021; Morrison and Peak, 2022). The *RVFS* allows for artistic and cultural collaboration with local communities and artists with opportunities such as workshops aboard the vessel. Therefore, I will use this placement on the *RVFS* to produce *Full Nelson* (see methodology/output) and position it in a professional context. However, the focus of *Full Nelson* will not solely be about the *RVFS*, rather the vessel

will be used to moor the poems to a real-world 'place' (Bachelard, 1958; Canter; 1977, Massey, 2005; Relph, 1976; Vidler, 1992). The focus of the poems will be on the communities, people, places in, and surrounding, Nelson, especially around the canal.

Theoretical Context

To situate this project and explore its themes, I will engage with the theoretical and philosophical concepts of 'space' and 'place'. For example, Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992) and Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) will be used for the critical understandings of perceptions of space and place. Massey's concept of 'the social cosmologies of space' will be used to evaluate *Full Nelson* in a social context, especially to see how the work is a 'product of interrelations' predicated on a real-world place (e.g. Nelson) which already has a history of 'stories so far' (2005, p.19). Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976), which argues that individuals and groups give value to a 'space' by changing it into a 'place' (p.109), and Guy Debord's concept of psychogeography, which is loosely defined as 'the effect of geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (Anon A, 2022), will also be used (see exegesis Part 1).

Critical and Practice-Based Contexts

Additionally, I will explore the cultural and literary theories of these themes. Alice Oswald's *Dart* (2002) is an example of a hybrid narrative poem that navigates place and space, specifically by employing a narrative of the River Dart through a range of voices and poetic strategies. Jo Bell's 'Navigation' (2008) explores the life of a boat-dweller and Roy Fisher's poem 'Birmingham River' surveys life around the waters of his native city. These will provide a context in which to situate my work.

A choice text that will underpin my stylistic and creative choices will be Octavia E. Butler's essay 'Furor Scribendi' in which the term is translated as a 'Rage for Writing' or a 'Positive Obsession' (2005, p.157). 'Furor Scribendi' advises writers to 'read', 'write' and 'persist' in their work (p.159). Further practice-based and practice-led resources will also be used (see bibliography). An accompanying literature review will be included to assess and analyse these texts and their relationships to the creative output.

Objective(s)

1. To build a sequence of poems that explores the value of 'space' and 'place'.
2. To create a sequence of poems that speaks/responds to local community issues, especially around the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
3. To build on research and creative processes to introduce my work in a professional setting.

Research Question(s)

1. If 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (Bachelard, 1958, p.5) and 'home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and members of a community... [and] an irreplaceable centre of significance' (Relph, 1976, p.109), then how can a practicing writer assess this significance and create a new work that incorporates and affects the value of a particular 'irreplaceable centre of significance', 'space', or 'place'?
2. How can I use my position as writer-in-residence to develop and publish a poetry sequence in line with the social, political, and cultural aims of the RV Furor Scribendi?

Methodology

Poetry is the chosen method of creative practice. The reason for this is to develop my primary form of creative practice (poetry-writing) in a professional setting on the *RVFS* whilst

investigating the subject of the Leeds and Liverpool canal in line with the themes stated above.

The poems will use metrical form, rhyme patterns, stanza breaks, and typography to resemble and represent these real-world places. Below is a projected timeline of creative actions and research processes.

Indication of timeline

Date	Research actions	Reading	Creative actions
06/06/2022	Proposal Engage with the source material.	Oswald's Dart Berger.	Outline
13/06/2022	Research home/space/ place	Guy Debord's - psychogeography,	Initial ideas
20/06/2022	Research and develop ideas.	Bachelard's The Poetics of Space	Development of initial ideas.
27/06/2022	Writer's journal and research logs.	<i>Tackler's tales</i> Massey - <i>For Space</i>	Writing
04/07/2022	Placement on the <i>RVFS</i>	Octavia E. Butler's essay 'Furor Scribendi'	Implementation of the writing process.
11/07/2022	Leeds and Liverpool Canal	Arts Council England= literature	Writing
18/07/2022	Leeds and Liverpool Canal	Vidler's <i>The Architectural Uncanny</i>	Writing Drafting and redrafting of works.
25/07/2022	Practice-based resources	Jean Baudrillard collection: <i>Cool Memories.</i>	Feedback
01/08/2022	Practice-based resources	Jo Bell's 'Navigation'	Editing
08/08/2022	Found resources	Roy Fisher's 'Birmingham River.	Writing Editing process.
15/08/2022	Found resources	Found literature	Final feedback.
22/08/2022	Reviewing finalized appendices/notebooks/ bibliographies.	More reading to be accumulated/included through the duration of the project	Editing Proofreading
29/08/2022 (Submission due 01/09/2022)	Critical exegesis. Revision of all work	More reading to be accumulated/included through the duration of the project	Finalised collection.
05/09/2022 (Viva Voce on 06/09/2022)	Viva Voce	Reading final work.	Practice for Viva

Output

The creative output, *Full Nelson*, will take the form of a sequence of poetry of around 50 pages.

This will be accompanied by a critical exegesis and a bibliography. A writer's notebook with additional drafts, revisions, feedback and renegotiations, and other relevant material will be included in an appendix.

Ethical Considerations

See appendix for RE1 Form

Word Count: 771 (excluding titles, questions, tables, and RE1 form [379 words]).

Part B: Critical Exegesis – Situating *Full Nelson*

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**Situating *Full Nelson*: the poetry sequence as a means of articulating the socio-cultural
significance of space and place.**

Part 1

Introduction

Full Nelson is a sequence of poems that explores the value of space and place, specifically the town, Nelson, Lancashire, and the canal boat, the *RV Furor Scribendi*. The sequence also explores the complexities of memory, movement, and the passage of time. It is a creative work that was produced in the investigation of the research questions:

1. If ‘all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home’ (Bachelard, 1958, p.5) and ‘home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and members of a community... [and] an irreplaceable centre of significance’ (Relph, 1976, p.109), then how can a practicing writer assess this significance and create a new work that incorporates and affects the value of a particular ‘irreplaceable centre of significance’, ‘space’, or ‘place’?
1. How can I use my position as writer-in-residence to develop and publish a poetry sequence in line with the social, political, and cultural aims of the *RV Furor Scribendi*?

This critical exegesis will accompany and elaborate on *Full Nelson* to perform the role of ‘a contextualising text’ and ‘an explanatory annotation’ (Hamilton and Jaaniste, 2010). I have sequestered the exegesis into two parts. The first part will provide and review the relevant contextual background of the project and the cultural importance and impact of other creative and theoretical discourses in the field. The latter part of the exegesis should be taken as one with *Full Nelson* and valued as ‘a product and process of creation’ (Hutcheon, 2006, xiv) in an attempt to answer the research questions in the format of a creative work.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The ‘spaces’ referred to in the research questions refer to the spaces in which a person is situated, such as immediate spaces (homes, and/or habitations) and external spaces (architectural and built environments as well as other people and objects) which are assigned value as ‘places’ (Bachelard, 1958; Canter, 1977, Massey, 2005; Relph, 1976; Vidler, 1992). More specifically for this project, these ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ refer to the Lancashire town, Nelson, and the *RV Furor Scribendi* (heron referred to as *RVFS*) and the locality of their environments (homes, people, and objects).

According to Canter, ‘a place is the result of the relationships between actions, conceptions, and physical attributes’ (Canter, 1977, p158-159; Bonnes and Secchiaroli, 1995, p.172). Canter argues that ‘to know a place’, one must know the physical parameters [form] of the environment, the descriptions or perceptions [imaginings] that people hold of the environment, and the behaviour or anticipated behaviour [activity] that is associated with the environment. The togetherness of ‘form’, ‘imaginings’, and ‘activity’ is how ‘place’ is valued (Canter, 1977 p.158). Below is a visual depiction of Canter’s ‘Model of Place’:

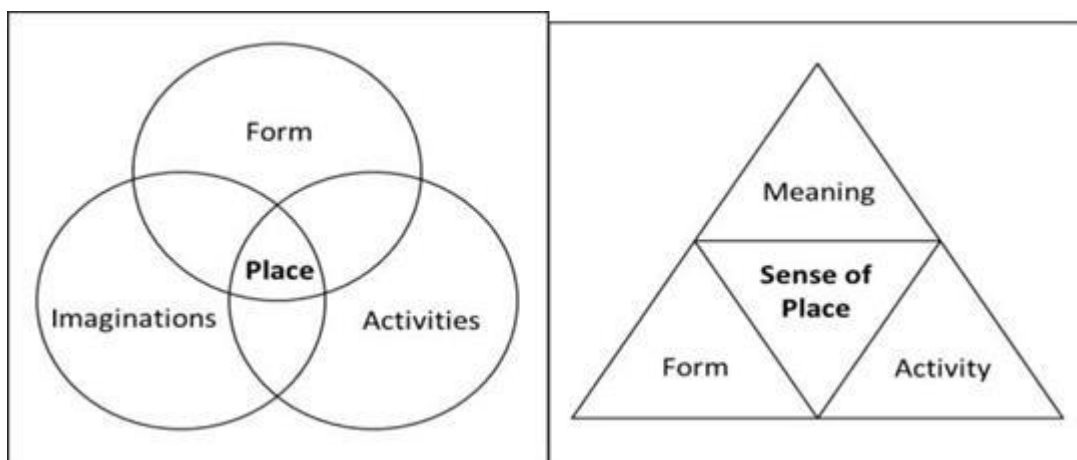


Fig 1:

Model of Place (Canter, 1977)

Fig 2: Sense of Place Model (Canter, 1977)

Vidler explores built environments against natural settings and investigates individual notions of the 'homely' in juxtaposition to the 'unhomely' (1992, pp. 17-18). Vidler's investigations conclude that each individual produces their own value, sentimentally and aesthetically, and each individual holds a 'situated perspective' (Holloway; 2022) of what it is to be 'comfortable' or 'homely' (1992, p.18) in any particular space. Vidler further explores the theorisation of spatial form to investigate how individuals and groups assign value to intimate spaces. He concludes that this is done by creating 'special forms' (Vidler, 2015, 00:02:00 – 00:06:00). Vidler uses the example of 'x marks the spot' (2015, 00:02:00 - 00:06:00) to show how temporary spaces are assigned value because of social interaction and documentation (photographs, films, and literary works). Whether this 'x' marks a place of treasure or a place where a dead man is found (perhaps even 'more permanently' photographed), Vidler shows how social interactions, personal relationships, and events, in certain locations, create value for individuals or groups (2015).

Vidler draws on Bachelard's critical understanding of the perceptions of space and the connection between physical and mental spaces (Bachelard, 1958; p.11; Stilgoe, 1994). According to Bachelard, 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (1958, p.5). In essence, an individual or group can negotiate how any space is perceived, whether through thought, imagination, experience, interaction, or dialectics. Supporting this, Relph theorises that individuals and groups give value to a 'space' by changing it into a 'place' (1976, p.109) and Massey states that 'the social cosmologies of space' are valued as 'place' by their 'social contexts' which are malleable and can be 'reinvigorated' with meaning (2005, p.62).

These theoretical underpinnings of 'psychogeography' (Debord, 1955), which is 'the effect of a geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' (Anon A, 2022) formed the

basis of my investigation into the individual and socio-cultural value of the ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ in and around, Nelson, Lancashire, and the *RVFS*, and how I was able to incorporate these theoretical notions into a new creative work. The earliest application of these influences can be seen in the development of the research questions, especially with the direct citations of Bachelard and Relph.

The Locality of Nelson and the *RV Furor Scribendi*

Lancashire is ‘a place where everyone matters’ (Harding, 2006, p.1), or ‘natters’ if you accept the edit of the ‘m’ into an ‘n’ on the A-road that marks the border of Cumbria and Lancashire.



Fig 3: Creating Conversations: *everyone natters* (Anon, 2016)

In a 2002 Lancashire County Council meeting, it was concluded that culture matters in

Lancashire:

It matters because it lies at the heart of the quality of life for Lancashire people. It matters because it is about people doing things which please and excite them and which help them to realise their potential. It matters because it helps to bind communities together. It matters because it contributes to the Lancashire economy and the standard of life for Lancashire people (Council, L.C. 2002, p.3).

In light of Canter’s ‘Model of Place’ [form / imaginations / activity], this value assessment shows how ‘Lancashire people’ know and value the importance of the local area; to ‘Lancashire people’, these spaces and places ‘matter’ (Canter; 1977; Council, L.C. 2002, p.3).

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal is ‘Lancashire’s largest industrial heritage monument’ (Anon J, 1997, p.68). It has an important role in the history and culture of East-Lancashire, especially in the development of Nelson as an industrial town which was directly correlated to the development of the canal (Clark, 1990, 2014; Miller, 2018). With its untapped potential, Nelson was once cited as the ‘America of Lancashire’: a place without a past (Leaver, 1998). Nelson grew very quickly due to the emerging industry – its population grew to over 20,000 people by 1891 - the town was primarily concerned with cotton weaving and textile production, therefore mills took many of the early sites (Miller, 2018, p.16). However, since the decline of the industry, many of these original sites have closed down (Miller, 2018; Peake and Greenhalgh, 2021, p.10). This ‘industrial heritage’ and decline is brought forward into *Full Nelson* through poems such as ‘The Workers’ Town’ (p.21), ‘The Weaving Shuttle’ (p.16), ‘Northern Monkey’ (p.22), and ‘Pigeonhole’ (p.52).

The Super Slow Way (SSW) is ‘a cultural development programme’ (SSW, 2021) that concentrates on a 20-mile stretch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal from Blackburn to Pendle, which includes Nelson. The SSW’s strategic approach aims to integrate ‘people and places’ in the local area and work with residents and artists to develop social spaces where ‘people can express their own cultural identities and celebrate their own everyday creativity’ (SSW, 2021). The *RVFS* is a project commissioned by the SSW. The *RVFS* is a functioning, repurposed, sculptural narrowboat which operates as a ‘living research vessel’ and ‘a floating library’ (Peake and Morrison, 2021). The *RVFS* project seeks to reinvigorate the perceptions of the canal and the local area by working with practitioners through creative interaction (SSW, 2021).



Fig 4: The RV Furor Scribendi (Peak and Morrison, 2022)

I applied to an ‘open call for artists’ (SSW, 2022) and was subsequently enrolled as a crew member and writer-in-residence on the *RVFS*. This was inclusive of a short residence on the vessel, Helmsman training, complete with a boating licence from The Royal Yachting Association, a graduation ceremony, a poetry performance, and a ‘Workshop on the Water’ with artist Heather Peak and SSW director Laurie Peake (Morrison and Peak, 2022; SSW, 2022). The results of this collaboration are evaluated in the latter part of the essay.

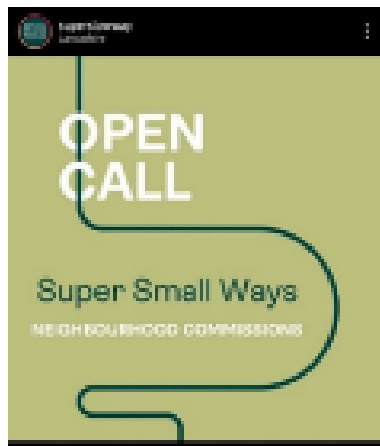


Fig 5: Open Call: Neighbourhood Commissions (SSW, 2022)



Fig 6: Open Call: Workshops on the Water WSSW, 2022)



Fig 7: Writer’s Residencies (SSW, 2022)

The placement on the *RVFS* opened-up opportunities to produce *Full Nelson* in a professional setting whilst employing creative and inclusive solutions to bringing a wider visibility to the boat and the local area, which aligned with SSW’s strategic approach:



Fig 8: Potential Projects (Peake and Greenhalgh, 2021, p.28)

Fig 9: Potential Projects (Peake and Greenhalgh, 2021, p.29)

Further to this, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership’s *Cultural Investment Strategy* (2020) highlights the importance of ‘connecting the county’s cultural opportunities through developing a new compelling narrative for residents, visitors and businesses’ (Fogg, 2020). I tried to create this ‘compelling narrative’ by centring *Full Nelson* in Nelson itself and addressing the immediate landscape in, around, and between Nelson and the *RVFS*. This pushed me to make considerations of the value, heritage, and culture of these ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ because ‘a story can change a forgotten city’ (Paget, 2022), or indeed, affect a small ‘forgotten’ industrial town such as Nelson.

Literature in the Field: (Poetry and Prose)

As all texts are in some way connected to a network of already existing texts or art forms (Sanders, 2006), it was important to situate *Full Nelson* alongside already established literature, especially from the local area, such as Mather’s *Tacklers’ Tales* (1993) which weaves together

some humorous narratives of Lancashire life, and the work of Mike Clark (1990, 2014) who spent a lifetime researching and documenting the history of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

An early influence on the poetic conventions of *Full Nelson* was Oswald's *Dart* (2002). The collection explores the notion of 'place' by using the River Dart to situate and navigate a long-form poem. Some of *Dart's* sections follow the River from the individual perspectives of a 'naturalist' (2002, p.5), a 'forester' (2002, p.11), a 'water nymph' (2002, p.11), a 'stonewaller' (2002, p.33), and a 'boatbuilder' (2002, p.35). Oswald creates a narrative of movement in lines such as 'What I love is one foot in front of the other' (2002, p.2) and uses the contrast of poetic and prosaic form to find a voice, syntax, or lexicon that suits each particular narrative and theme.

For example:

What I love is one foot in front of another. South-south-west and down the contours. I go slipping between Black Ridge and White Horse Hill into a bowl of the moor where echoes can't get out

listen

a

lark

spinning

around

one

note

splitting

and

mending

it

and I find you in the reeds, a trickle coming out of a bark, a foal of a river.

(2002, p.2)

The mesmeric imagery and language of the poem carries *Dart* forward, which arrives at the mouth of the sea: 'where my name disappears and the seas slides in to replace it' (2002, p.46).

Similar to *Dart*, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was an opportune place from which to develop *Full Nelson*.

Oswald's following collection, *Woods etc.* (2005), also carries forward *Dart's* themes. However, in place of a long-form poem, smaller lyric poems such as 'The Autobiography of a Stone' (2005, p.16), 'The Stone Skimmer' (2005, p.17), and 'Shamrock café' (2005, p.31) are used to investigate and tell the stories of places and people, and their respective value relationships. Similarly, the UK Canal Poet Laurette, Jo Bell is interested in 'looking for meaning...below the surface' (Bell, 2013, 00:00:39; ACNI 2013). Bell's poetry collection 'Navigation' (2008) captures the life of a boat-dweller and explores the deep friendships which 'furnish our lives' (p.1). Another poem that was influential on the production of *Full Nelson* and its concern for value was Roy Fisher's 'Birmingham River' (1994) which opens with a rhetorical question of place and value, 'Where is Birmingham River?' (p.1) and proceeds to survey life around the 'living river' (p.1).

John Berger's *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos* (1984) is a prose and poetry collection separated into two sections, 'Once' (p.3) and 'Here' (p.47), that meditates on time and space: 'The poet approaches language as if it was a place' (1984, p.22) says Berger. Similarly, Jean Baudrillard's *Cool Memories* (1990) is a prose-poem 'journal' (p.100) and a 'subtle matrix of idleness' (p.234) which also meditates on place. The two texts, in their creative exploration of place, provided a constant influence on *Full Nelson*. This is perhaps exemplified in a comparison of Berger's and Baudrillard's final lines to my own in *Full Nelson*:

'What reconciles me to my own death more than anything is the image of a place... With you I can imagine a place where to be phosphate calcium is enough'
(Berger, 1984, p.101)

California is not what it was
Rome too is not what it was
No more imperial cities
No more crazy societies
Where is one to go?

Berlin Vancouver Samarkand?
(Baudrillard, 2010, p.233)

You are here
(Qureshi, 2022, p.63)

Part 2:

Full Nelson: The Poetry Sequence.

Full Nelson employs various strategic approaches of poetic form, such as measured lines, vignettes, and typography, to explore the themes of space and place expounded in the chapter ‘Theoretical Underpinnings’ (above). In a similar light to the poetic conventions of Oswald’s

Dart (2002), I used my hometown, Nelson, and the *RVFS* to situate the poems in *Full Nelson*.

Whilst writing *Full Nelson*, I adopted Jo Bell's advice to 'try and write something about the environment I'm living in... every day' (Bell, 2013, 00:00:47). As my environment centred around Nelson, and the *RVFS*, *Full Nelson* explores these two 'places' and their interconnectedness, both to each other and my own life. It could be said that *Full Nelson*'s poems are loosely based on personal experience, if not strictly of first-hand experience, then the experiences I have encountered during the research.

In practice, I focussed the new work on the social, political, and cultural aims of the SSW and the *RVFS* (above), whilst attempting to produce a work that expressed an individualised experience of place. I followed three simultaneous processes:

- (a) undertaking the actions of creative writing,
 - (b) using creative writing in a professional setting (on board the *RVFS* to produce a new work and/or specialised knowledge),
- and
- (c) using the new work to assess, value, represent, and add value to real-world places (Nelson and the *RVFS*).

Bell states that 'writing about the canals is easy, it's staying in touch that is the hard part' (2013, 00:00:35). However, with the community access and custodianship entailed by the residency, I was able to 'stay in touch' (Bell, 2013, 00:00:35) by forming new relationships, not only with the creators and facilitators of the *RVFS* but also to local places and people.

In the scope of this latter part of the exegesis, I will discuss, review, and analyse 5 selected poems that illustrate the poetic strategies that were used to produce *Full Nelson*. I will also explore the influences of the contextual, theoretical, and literary frameworks detailed above.

'Abandoned' (p.7)

‘Abandoned’ was an attempt to try and assess and provide further value to a real-world place by using Vidler’s theoretical insights of marking a spot with an ‘x’ (Vidler, 2015, 00:02:00 - 00:06:00) and a newspaper story that details the drowning of two young children in a particular ‘spot’ along Nelson’s ‘murky’ canal (Anon G, 1999). The result is a poem that deals with the hidden and transient value of a place, especially concerning an individual’s ‘situated perspective’ (Holloway, 2022; Vidler, 2015).

The poem follows two walkers along the canal towpath at the site of the drowning. They walk ‘with softness, care / not to fall into the level water / like those two children’ (p.7). The narrator of the poem captures a photograph of the other participant who feeds ‘the swans pellets’ (p.7). These actions focus the poem on its final short stanza, when the photograph is mentioned again, with the narrator stating: ‘Later, we saw a brown duck, / who knew well the colour of herself / blending into the abandoned mill’ (p.7).

If, as Vidler theorises, ‘x marks the spot’ (Vidler, 2015, 00:02:00), then the individual or participant who ‘marks the spot’ imposes the value of the particular place from their own situated perspective (a person may put an ‘x’ on whichever place they like). In the poem, this ‘x’ is the photograph which provides the evidence of ‘a brown duck’ (p.7). This photograph affects the narrator’s perceptions of the value of the ‘canal’ and the ‘abandoned mill’. This suggests that the value given to a particular place by an individual is not fixed but transient. Second to this, it can be said that this value is prone to actively change with the input of new experiences or information, such as revisiting a place, or seeing a photograph of a particular site again, as is seen to happen in the poem. If the additional knowledge and experience (of a place (i.e. a photograph) can affect its value, then, the value given to a particular place can be reverse engineered to suit its

purpose. Therefore, a new poem, such as ‘Abandoned’, can affect a real-world place that already has a ‘myriad of stories going on’ (Massey, 2013, 00:02:52).

In practice, ‘Abandoned’ was written to test Vidler’s theory of marking a place with value and using a photograph to further that value. The poem tests this hypotheses and theory successfully, with the resulting poem showing, through its simple narrative, the implications of an individual’s ‘situated perspective’ on the value of a particular place.

Panopticon’ (p.18)

Another attempt at assessing a real-world place was made in ‘Panopticon’, which is a typographical representation of Burnley’s Panopticon ‘The Singing Ringing Tree’ (Anon K, 2022). The structure is a 3m tall ‘tree’, erected on Crown Point, a place which offers clear and unbroken views over Burnley and Nelson, and is constructed from 21 layers of galvanised steel pipes that ‘sing’ as the wind blows through them. The Panopticon’s architects state that they employed a mix of ‘storytelling’ and ‘technical innovation’ with an ‘integrative’ and ‘responsive system’ to build this structure as a ‘family of parts’ (Lui and Tonkin, 2022). The general definition for a panopticon is ‘a disciplinary concept brought to life in the form of a central observation tower placed within a circle of prison cells’ (Anon F, 2022).

These ideas are taken forward into the poem, in which the sights, sounds, and characters around the Panopticon are represented, whilst the objects of the poem participate and act as if, not in a prison but, in ‘moorlands unbound’ (p.18). From the ‘little girl [who] presses the finger on a paper map’ to ‘the man [who] pisses on a tree like a claim’ (p.18), these images are uninterrupted

like the unbroken views around the Panopticon and provide a quiet meditation on fleeting moments in time which occur in a specific place.

I developed the idea by using the Panopticon's structure to design the poem. I utilised the architects' original plans (Lomholt, 2021; Lui and Tonkin, 2022) and opted for a 2D profile sketch which was a suitable form for a poem.

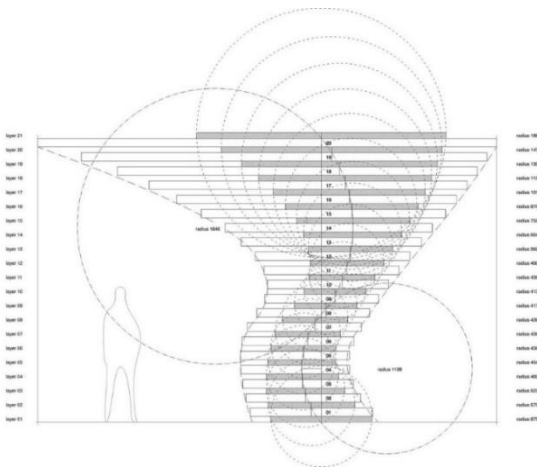


Fig 10: Architect's sketch (profile);
The Singing Ringing Tree, Burnley
(Lui and Tonkin, 2022)

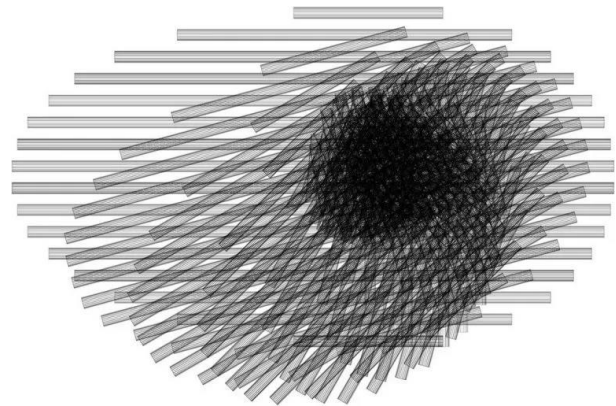


Fig 11: Architect's sketch (bird's eye);
The Singing Ringing Tree, Burnley
(Lui and Tonkin, 2022)

I used 21 lines to represent the 21-layer structure of the Panopticon. I organised the lines in a similar shape to the structure of the panopticon. I then 'echoed' these lines in a bold typeface to further symbolize the 'singing' of the tree. To strengthen the form further, I also used 322 words to represent the 322 pipes in the structure (Lomholt, 2021).

In the finalisation of the poem, my focus was on moulding the best poem I could into this preconceived structure. This may have meant that some potentially stronger lines were edited or omitted to better fit the structure. The effect this had on the project is untold and cannot be easily

evaluated and quantified. However, when considering ‘Panopticon’ as a new work that provides additional value to a real-world place, it is a fitting answer in the investigation of the question: ‘how a practicing writer can assess this significance [of place] and create a new work that incorporates and affects the value of a particular ‘irreplaceable centre of significance’.

Another poem in *Full Nelson* that attempts to assess and provide value to a real-world place is ‘The Weaving Shuttle’ (p.16). The poem celebrates a recent monument, ‘a 12m high steel sculpture of a weaving shuttle’ (BBC, 2011) which is placed in Nelson’s town centre and symbolises Nelson’s industrial heritage (Anon J, 1997, p.68; Leaver, 1998; Miller, 2018, p.16). In a similar fashion to ‘Panopticon’ (p.18), the typographical design of ‘The Weaving Shuttle’ uses shape to represent sculpture. The poem was written as both a representation and a dedication to the weaving shuttle. If, as above, ‘Panopticon’ can provide additional value to a real-world place, so can the poem ‘The Weaving Shuttle’.

‘Be like the River’ (p.62)

As mentioned, The *RVFS* had a huge influence on the project from the onset. Early into the project, a workshop on the *RVFS* offered up a space to perform some of the new poems. This was conducted in a workshop alongside representatives from Super Slow Way, The Canal and River Trust, and the *RVFS*. There was also an open public viewing on the canal path. Therefore, when writing the poem, there were active considerations of any commercial and professional contexts: i.e. the canal, the *RVFS* as a cultural vessel, The Canal and River Trust as an environmental body, and of course the performance of the poem in front of a live audience.

'Be like the River' was the chosen poem at the performance. The poem works as an analogical look at existence, movement, and life. The phrase 'Be like the River' was written as a specific dedication to the Canal and River Trust. In the poem, lines such as the title 'Be like the River' and 'to fish the fish / and catch the trout' may seem repetitive or tautological, however, the purposeful repetition of these phrases brings about a cumulative effect during a performance, and subsequently affects an audience.

This event was recorded and used on social media platforms to promote the *RVFS* (appendix). The collaboration with The Canal and River Trust, The SSW, and the *RVFS* allowed me to employ the strategic approach of 'creative and inclusive solutions' (SSW, 2021) in the production of the poem, not only by championing the canal and the *RVFS* but also by bringing a wider visibility to Nelson, encouraging the geographical spread of culture, and creating a greater sense of belonging. Overall, as a performance piece, and as a closing poem to the collection, barring the final lines, 'You are here' (p.63), the development of this poem was a highlight of the project.

The poems 'Sonnet for Scribendi' (p.9) and 'Bridges' (pp. 10-12) were still in their embryonic and incubatory stages at the time of this performance. However, soon after, the poem 'Sonnet for Scribendi' was written as a dedication to the *RVFS*. The stylistic choice to include a traditional sonnet as an ode to the *RVFS* was partly influenced by Oswald's collection *Woods etc.* which ends with a 'Sonnet' dedicated to 'Spacecraft Voyager 1' (2011, p.56).

Stay Away From the Edge (p.6)

This short narrative poem follows a group of young boys who hop 'orange safety nets' to see the bed of the canal which has been uncovered after the drain of a 'Breach' (p.5). The poem begins with a 'nimble' group 'laughing in the middle of the dig' but ends in 'A tiny tragedy' (p.6).

In the development of this poem, the safety materials sourced from the Canal and River Trust during my residency on the *RFSV* provided a sense of inclusion and local civic responsibility towards the canal. This responsibility found its way into my practice. For example, the title of this poem is taken from the Canal and River Trust’s safety campaign, specifically from the posters. ‘Be SAFE and Stay Away From the Edge’ (Anon C, 2021) works as both an acronym and a slogan for the campaign.



Fig 12: SAFE leaflets and posters (Anon C, 2021)

Following the input of these materials, I aimed to write a poem that dealt with safety around the canal. Again, this is an example of how the influence of real-world settings and materials affected my creative decisions (i.e. the title of the poem and its content). Just as the poem ‘Be like the River’ can be used in line with SSW’s strategic approach, (SSW, 2021), so can ‘Stay Away From the Edge’.

‘Bridges’ (pp.10-12)

The poem follows the journey of a Bay Bickerstaffe boat from its moorings at Reedley Marina to the entrance of Barrowford Locks, passing bridges and occasional landmarks. The ‘early promise’ (Wilkinson, 2022) of the poem was developed at the advice of Dr Ben Wilkinson who suggested using the Japanese style and form of Tanka to explore some imagistic moments in time

along the canal bridges. Using the Tanka form, which is a 31-syllable poem or ‘short song’ divided into a 5/7/5/7/7 syllable pattern (Poets, 2022), I exerted this syllabic and imagistic stress on my writing process to create a precise yet poetic journey through a stretch of the canal.

In its final form, 21 Tanka are strung together to produce this poetic journey. Aside from travelling along the canal, both on foot and by boat, I also used the Open Canal Map (2022) to map the poem. There are over 400 bridges on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal (Clark, 2014; Anon H, 2022). For the scope of the poem, however, only 11 bridges (and two locks) are used. The short poetic journey through the bridges and into the lock (p.12) is enough to signal the omission of the other bridges whilst allowing readers ‘a real experience’ of the journey (Mort, 2013, p206).

‘Bridges’ is a success, not only because it creatively depicts a journey of a canal boat but because the creative choice of using the Tanka narrowed my focus to produce place-specific images. This can be seen with the mention, description, and additional information given to The River Brun and the River Calder, especially in their connection to Burnley:

136 Hawkes House Bridge

Cross the Brun River,
at the Calder confluence
eddying, touching,
merging, splitting and splitting
again: new life, new water.

137 Lob Lane Bridge

Burnley takes its name
and its first waters from here.
A confluence too.
They drank, laughed tall laughs, and built
this town - hands tough as steel sheets.
(Qureshi, 2022, p11)

There was originally a plan to end ‘Bridges’ at Gannow Tunnel in Burnley, however, this sprouted an idea of its own, namely, the poem, ‘Tunnel Vision’ (p.13). The themes of slow

movement, echoes, and death towards the end of the poem (p.13) seemed to demand their own space in *Full Nelson*. Moving away from the Tanka form, I exerted a different syllabic stress on 'Tunnel Vision'. In practice, I tried to make another sonnet, however, there came a point where I felt the poem was complete without the need to reform it further. An additional bonus was that by removing this portion to create 'Tunnel Vision', 'Bridges' was kept to the length of three pages. In fact, I placed similar exertive stress on all of the poems in *Full Nelson* and adapted a form for each that best suited its content and themes.

Additional Notes on the Sequence

Aside from the poem-specific explorations of space and place, the coordinates in the sequence (p.3; p.63) were creative choices made to situate and 'moor' the sequence to a real-world place. Similarly, 'You are here' is the opening and closing line of the sequence (p.3; p.63). Though there is movement in the sequence, there is a constant reminder that 'here' is the place that the reader ('you') is situated. More examples of situating the reader can be seen: 'Ask me where I'm from / and I'll tell you, here' (p.14), *Where? You ask. / Here, where we stay / ever-present* (p.60). Again, the purposeful and tautological repetition of these phrases and ideas brings about a cumulative effect on a reader and draws them into the 'places' mentioned in the sequence.

These examples are not limited and each poem in *Full Nelson* can be seen to carry its own influence, meaning, and nuance. These poems are contextualized in the appendix. In the final stages of production, a series of interesting decisions (Meier et al, 2012, pp.706-715), and negotiations of specific inclusions, omissions, and considerations of placement were made to ensure *Full Nelson's* final sequence formalised this research. The task of creatively providing the best practical solutions to a more precise and considered shape and design of *Full Nelson* was not

only important to the final output but provided invaluable introspection on my poetry-writing practice.

Conclusion

This exegesis has mapped, reviewed, and analysed the processes of ideation, development, actualisation, and finalisation of the project as a whole. As seen, *Full Nelson*, in its use of simple ‘conversational’ language which holds ‘a quiet authority’ and ‘a tenderness’ (Wilkinson, 2022), and its use of measured poetry and precise imagery to conjure places, spaces, and characters, has succinctly and creatively explored the value of Nelson, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the *RVFS*, and my socio-cultural relationship to these places.

In conclusion, I have discovered that the individual values I give to Nelson and the *RVFS* are derived solely from my own experiences and situated perspectives. However, by creating new works centred around these places (i.e. the poems in *Full Nelson*), I can assess and contribute to their value. This additional value can then be disseminated and used to further affect these places, and also affect how other individuals and groups value them. The most explicit example of this can be seen with the workshop and performance of the poem ‘Be Like a River’ (p.62) which allowed me to employ ‘creative and inclusive solutions’ to affect the value of a place by creating a ‘compelling narrative’ (Fogg, 2020; SSW 221). Lastly, the potential to utilise *Full Nelson* as a creative work with bodies such as The Canal and River Trust and the Super Slow Way, and even disseminate it further in terms of its potential for commercialisation and contribution to the town of Nelson and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal is, like the moorlands of ‘Panopticon’, ‘unbound’ (Qureshi, 2022, p.28).

End

Word Count: 4334 (excluding titles, questions, quotations, references, and bibliography)

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Fig 9:

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Fig 10:

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Fig11:

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