Chapter Three : Place, Poetics and the Earth

This chapter considers writers who put primary emphasis on the significance of place as opposed to space, including, in most cases, the earth. Aspects of the writing of the philosopher, Martin Heidegger and the poet, Charles Olson, whose work appeared earlier in the century but whose perspectives on the politics and poetics of place are of basic importance to the chapter, are considered first. Both are concerned with developing or re-discovering a georgics, an attitude of care in relation to the earth and its specificities on the part of humanity. As with trends in ecological thinking, on which the influence of Heidegger is considerable, their approach runs the risk of developing reactionary or nostalgic forms of social thinking. The reason for including Olson at this stage is that the project undertaken in his poetry and related essays can be seen as being as much an exercise in cultural theory as that of Heidegger or other writers discussed. This also applies to the work of Williams and Sinclair, but Olson's work has a strong affinity with that of Heidegger and is an integral aspect of the perspective on place presented in this section.

The other writers considered, both based in Australia, are the cultural philosopher, Arran Gare, and a cultural historian with a strong interest in the poetics of place, Paul Carter. Both present a politics and poetics which attach great value to the significance and specificity of place and places but of a kind which do not veer excessively towards exilic, parochial or essentialistic modes of thinking and are capable of offering a perspective which can function productively at an international level of social relations, not merely at the local level.

3.1. Heidegger: Being in Place

Despite the fact that Benjamin and Heidegger were from the same nation, they came from and were primarily interested in very different kinds of place. Benjamin was a Jewish cosmopolitan intellectual from Berlin, fascinated by the developments of urban modernity and a Marxist, if somewhat mystical, revolutionary in his approach to such developments. Heidegger, on the other hand, began as a Christian neo-conservative, became a supporter of Nazism, and was rooted in the Swabian countryside of his birth, devoting himself to consideration of what an examination of the distant past could contribute to a more authentically lived future. If Benjamin has emerged as a newly fashionable figure in the age of postmodernity, Heidegger has, in some respects, won renewed fame as the philosophical patron saint of ecological thinking, and questions of ecology, the countryside and the earth, will be paramount in this chapter, in contrast to the primarily urban concerns of the first.

The first concept that comes to mind in relation to Heidegger's thinking is Being, more usually in the form of *Dasein,* where the prefix of 'da' or 'there' already suggests an element of placing. Closely related to this are concepts such as 'care' *(Sorge)* and 'nearness' *(Nahe),* suggestive of the custody of being that Heidegger sees as particular to humanity in its peculiarly linguistic relation to the planet. Humanity, like all forms of life, creates its own world or worlds but in a relation of complexly productive 'strife' with the earth which will not easily or simply surrender the essential nature of its being.

Many of Heidegger's later essays and lectures have the feel of a sermon as much as a philosophical meditation and the proximity of the notion of a 'fall' from a state of grace which is characterised as attentiveness to the nature and responsibility of being is usually at their heart. An authentic state of being involves a closeness and attentiveness to the specific essence of the individuality of every part of the natural world, something lost, as Heidegger sees it, in the abstracted 'chatter' of much modern discourse and in a related technology which plunders the potential of the world and in doing so loses its path to an authentically meaningful human existence. Unlike Benjamin, Heidegger does not linger on the detailed observation of surface details but seeks to get beyond the surface 'appearance' of being in order to disclose its 'truth'. The problem with this approach is that he tends to do so by means of a persuasive, mystical rhetoric, gleaning the discourse of the ancient Greeks for words whose original meaning has apparently been lost and coining endless new forms of German to make points about the nature of Being. As with the writers in the previous chapter, word-play is a significant element, even if the tone is not obviously playful. A representative example might be part of a paragraph relating to the famous meditation on the significance of Van Gogh's painting of the peasant's clogs in *The Origin of the Work of Art:*

> From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. Under the soles stretches the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the Earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth,* and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to resting-within-itself. (Heidegger 1978: 159–160)

There is much that might reasonably be regarded as typical of Heidegger in this passage, though this is not to suggest that his prose always provides quite such concrete and poetical evocations of the rural world of the peasant. His evocation here is not simply idyllic pastoral — or not obviously so — riddled as it is with streaks of Kierkegaardian angst. The peasant woman worries and suffers. The picture presented tends towards a depiction of something close to timeless, though again there is no explicit claim in

this direction. Its quality is as much poetical as philosophical in the evocatively impressionistic sketch of life of the country it provides. Only in the final, more technical sentence, which itself contains one of Heidegger's characteristic neologisms, does it revert to a more obviously philosophical register. In the paragraph preceding this we have been told that what the painter presents is just a pair of shoes, with no signs of the earth attached to them, but later in the essay Heidegger dismisses the notion of the portrait presented above being a form of projection: 'If anything is questionable here, it is rather that we experienced too little in the nearness of the work and that we expressed the experience too crudely and too literally.' (161)

Heidegger's preoccupation with nearness is something which particularly interests Edward Casey: "Why this extraordinary focus on nearness? Partly because nearness, not being a matter of distance qua interval, is precisely what cannot be measured by space and time taken as objectively parametric in nature.' (Casey 1993:281) In this respect, Heidegger's focus on nearness, here in relation to the truth of being disclosed in the painting of the shoes, resembles the smooth, haptic, tactile space evoked by Deleuze and Guattari. It is that which cannot be simply and consistently measured and organised. It is much more intuitive, complex and creatively demanding — poetic might be one way of describing it — particularly given the degree of elevated significance Heidegger attaches to the notion of poetry in the essay. He goes on to discuss the relationship between work of art, world and earth, notably in relation to the temple set in the landscape, and the intrinsically poetic nature of art in re-revealing the authentic reality of the human relation to the earth — the truth of being, which here and elsewhere in Heidegger's work is closely related to language and thinking, building and dwelling. In *The Question Concerning Technology* (Heidegger 1978:311–341) the rejection of many of the tendencies of modern technology is again framed in terms of a call to 'a more primal truth.':

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. (333)

Place in Heidegger might be characterised as this form of grace, this 'primal' relation to the earth which offers humanity a path to truth from which it has substantially strayed. Edward Casey offers a more detailed consideration of Heidegger's use of terms in relation to place, space and region (Casey 1993: 243–284). Here, the aim is only to make the general point and, in the next section, to develop it in relation to a brief discussion of the poetry of Charles Olson. The earth as place, in Heidegger's thought, is evocatively and poetically brought into confrontation with notions of progress, particularly in terms of technological developments. The progress of modernity is presented as a falling away from a meaningful relationship with the cosmos, usually presented as something, like Van Gogh's shoes, almost unbearably near, that we have to escape from to allow ourselves to disclose its and our nature, but which we can

lose in the same process. It is not clear whether this characterisation of the earth as intimate and primeval, demandingly revealable place, as opposed to emptily organisable and measurable empty space, is ultimately so different those encountered so far. Its emphasis, though, on encounters with the essence of specific aspects of the natural world is far more pronounced than in the previous writers considered.

3.2. Charles Olson: Place and The Maximus Poems

Olson's relation to Heidegger has been extensively discussed in issues of the journal, *Boundary 2*. (Again, Bertens and Anderson provide usefully condensed accounts of this discussion (Bertens 1995: 20–22; Anderson: 1998: 15–17). Olson had a view of poetry that included extending what he considered to be the disastrously limited range of its influence in twentieth century Western culture. He can be argued to have inherited this from Ezra Pound among whose aims in his epic cantos was that of producing a poetry which had as much range and reference, as much political and social influence and relevance, as that of the ancient bards. Bernstein provides a useful comparative analysis of Pound, Williams and Olson, in terms of their aspirations to write poetry with an epic status,while Matthews supplies a helpful intoruction to ancient bardic practice in the cultural context of the British Isles (Bernstein 1980; Matthews 1999). Like Heidegger, Pound sided for a time with the forces of fascism against what he perceived as the corrupting mediocrity of modern, market-driven democracies. His epic vision is one particularly founded in a study of history and aesthetics, and emerging from the aestheticism of later nineteenth century Britain and France — a significant connection with Sinclair. Among other major American poets who produced an epic work of comparable dimensions and ambitions, William Carlos Williams in *Paterson* and Charles Olson in *The Maximus Poems* both situate their long poems in a particular place. It is not my intention here to discuss the possible virtues and shortcomings of *Paterson*. It is Olson who provides, for better or worse, a notion of place with a significance and intensity comparable to that of Heidegger.

Olson begins the first part of *The Maximus Poems* railing, like Pound, against the short-sighted, superficial, commercialistic values of his society, then moves back into a consideration of what the first European settlers of his chosen place, Gloucester, Massachusetts, might have achieved had their eyes been more open to the possibilities of living in a new world which had not been blighted by the narrow reference-frame of exploitative commerce. In the second book, he moves further back in time, connecting the history of man's and the land's movements in a euhemeristic reading of ancient myths. This includes a relating of the significance of myth to twentieth century developments in both process philosophy, through Whitehead, and psychoanalytic notions of the collective unconscious, through Jung. Like Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* where he discusses the loss involved in the dissociation of *physis* from *logos,* Olson produces a similar discourse on the undesirability of

separating *muthos* from *logos*. Thucydides is seen as illustrative of this trend, as opposed to Herodotus, for whom history, like life, is a process of dangerous but necessary questioning. This questioning exploration of the relation of the human psyche to the cosmos is an attitude comparable to that commended by Heidegger at the end of *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Rather as with Pound in *The Cantos,* Olson's attempt to re-found a paradise on earth does not meet with total success; the third volume of *The Maximus Poems* is haunted by feelings of despair and isolation. *The Maximus Poems* is, though, perhaps the nearest equivalent in verse to Heidegger's attempt to provide a philosophy grounded in a relationship with the earth.

Olson's approach is as much political as poetic. It deals in some detail with the local political and administrative history of Gloucester as well as the projection of human and cosmic meaning onto its geography. Like Heidegger, Olson proposes a version of the poetic closely connected to notions of the significance of human relations with the earth, an alternative to more traditionally Christian approaches to existence and to the more materialistic, psychically barren alternatives offered by capitalism. Unlike, Heidegger or Pound, whose flirtations with fascism he had the opportunity to observe, Olson does not appear to offer alternatives which are so obviously problematic in political terms. Neither is his cultural poetic founded in a version of socialism, though, as Perry Anderson has noted, he shows a considerable interest in the successes of Mao-Tse-Tung in his early poetry (Anderson 1998 : 8–9).

Olson's work presents a marked focus on place and the ancient past combined with an active political vision. These are characteristics present in much American and British twentieth century verse. In the case of the British Isles, with which we are primarily concerned here, figures such as David Jones, Hugh MacDiarmid and Basil Bunting might be seen as representative in this respect, though also more recent poets like Allen Fisher, J. H. Prynne, or Iain Sinclair. Much of Raymond Williams's work might be seen as comparable with that development and his last novel bears an interesting resemblance to Olson's *The Maximus Poems* even if it provides for a different, more recognisably socialist form of politics. In all cases, another shared element is a strong degree of explicit opposition to what are seen as dominant cultural elements, whether the opposition is primarily to elements of capitalism, imperialism, or both. At the same time, a problem with Olson's poetry, replicated, to some degree by many of the writers named here is its relative lack of accessibility to a non-specialised reader and an exilic attitude towards contemporary social developments. These are problematic elements which the remaining four writers to be considered here, Gare, Carter Williams and Sinclair, attempt to negotiate in one way or another, while sharing many of the preoccupations and attitudes of Olson's approach to place.

3.3. Arran Gare: theory, politics and the earth

Arran Gare's views on the dangers posed by developments in European thought, culture and society have been expressed in two major publications. The first of these,

Nihilism Incorporated (1993), provided a critique of Western thinking of the last two millenia in terms of tendencies within it that encouraged attitudes of arrogance and indifference towards non-human forms of existence and the earth in general. Gare's second publication, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis* (1995), is of particular relevance to the present discussion since here he focuses on ways in which elements of cultural theory might contribute to a more environmentally responsible politics at all levels, from the local to the global. The perspective provided is treated as complementary to that outlined by Paul Carter and discussed in the next section.

Like Harvey, Gare begins with an analysis of the condition of postmodernity. Harvey tends to place a primary emphasis on political and economic questions in relation to the organization of time and space. Gare, by contrast, stresses the danger of environmental catastrophe and the importance of forms of culture and thinking in leading us to, or saving us from, that catastrophe. In his opening chapter, he emphasizes the significance of forms of disorientation in Western culture, the relative loss of centrality at a global level and changes to class structure which have resulted in the rise of a new, international bourgeoisie and an accompanying 'postmodern' culture. Like Harvey, Gare bemoans the lack of sufficiently coherent narratives, around which senses of self and society might be organised. He also expresses hostility towards what he depicts as the rise of a decentred, superficial and cynical culture of short-term sensation. At the end of this analysis, however, he sounds a more Nietszchean note, suggesting that:

> (...) there is more to postmodern culture than the pseudo-radicalism and political ineffectuality of a section of the lower-middle-class. Through its refusal or inability to adopt earlier cultural forms, the practices of the new service sub-class have exposed as social constructs the basic framework of assumptions on which Western civilization has been based. We now live in one of those rare instances in which it has become possible to fully understand the nature and limitations of the whole of European civilization. (35)

This is an interesting perspective in that it seems to combine elements of a primarily Marxist analysis, with a precise focus on questions of the composition and interests of social classes, with the more apocalyptic and Nietzschean notion, not of class revolution but of a fundamental questioning of basic values. This element in his thinking draws him closer to the more radically anarchic and differential approach of Deleuze and Guattari, for whose ideas he evinces a substantial degree of approval. At the same time, in his opening analysis, he makes it quite clear that the loss of coherent, orientating narratives is not something to celebrate; a position closer to Harvey.

What Gare proposes is in fact a new grand narrative to replace the old one(s). He attempts to lay the foundation for this not only by claims about the special nature of the era in which we live but by proposing what is essentially a synthesis of Marxist and post-structuralist critiques of dominant Western social and cultural values. This

is perhaps not such an extraordinary achievement as Gare tends to make it sound in the picture he paints of 'Hegelian and Nietszchean traditions of thought as different branches of the Vicovian tradition.', where Vico is seen as the original arch-opponent of early modernism and materialism in a tradition of which Descartes is the dominant founding figure (Gare 1995 : 37). Most of the Marxists whose work has been considered here, such as Benjamin, Lefebvre and Harvey, show a considerable degree of sympathy towards notions of differentiation, and de Certeau and Deleuze and Guattari are far from unsympathetic to Marxism. More interesting is Gare's determination to include such a broad range of thinkers in the post-Vicovian synthesis he proposes, including those from the philosophical end of the world of science. One needs to add to this the determination to present the Earth, in the form of the environment and the Earth's endangered future, rather than any preferred social order, as the ultimate ground for his approach. This could be dismissed as a melodramatic form of apocalypticism but it allows Gare both a broad base for building a new cultural narrative and a clear and positive goal for any related politics — not a new social order, but the preservation of the world. The ambitiousness of such a project is comparable to that of Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* but the emphasis is on scope and clarity rather than detail and on a potentially more practicable approach, as opposed to Deleuze and Guattari's predominantly formalistic theorising . A large number of major twentieth century thinkers are brought together under Gare's post-Vicovian umbrella. These include Heidegger, Derrida, Lacan, Barthes, Ricoeur, Lyotard, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari in the section of his book devoted to a survey of the positive aspects of post-structuralism (51–72).

For our purposes here, the most significant figures are the first and last in this list. They make further appearances as reasonably positive figures in the next stages of Gare's argument, those comparing and combining post-structuralist and Marxist approaches to the environment and developing a 'new metaphysics' based on process philosophy. Heidegger is presented as the twentieth century thinker most capable of revealing the inadequate character of modern, technological thinking and its tendency to domination. Deleuze is presented as elaborating ' a Nietzschean philosophy of nature' and his interest in Bergson is seen as indicative of his understanding of the significance of a philosophy of process (70). At the same time, neither philosopher is seen as beyond reproach. Heidegger is criticised for his inability to envisage the natural sciences as not necessarily 'irrevocably oriented towards the domination of the world' (114). Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation of ' (...) 'good' desires as simply those which negate the desires which augment the power of the state.' is seen as inadequate: 'The promotion of such desires in the United States over the last thirty years appears to have produced a fatter, less intelligent, more suicidal and more murderous population.' (98). The reactionary tendencies of Heidegger and superficial, anarchic elements of Deleuze and Guattari are compensated for, in Gare's approach, by balancing them with a greater emphasis on aspects of thinking seen as more capable of providing the foundations for a new, flexible grand narrative. Marxism is introduced in connection with a discussion of developments in environmen-

talist thinking. The crucial element here is seen as the failure of post-structuralist and other, related forms of thinking to convert critique into positive action. Gare is not insensitive to the fact that the most obvious implementations of Marxist thinking in the Soviet Union and elsewhere are far from being success stories. He concludes by calling for a healing of' the rift within the Vicovian tradition between the Hegelians and the Nietzscheans' (107). This may not appear to be a very practical environmental measure but it does provide the next step in an argument for practical political action that could be, and in Gare's view, must be, taken at a series of levels, from the local to the global.

The intermediate stage in this argument is provided by a discussion of perspectives from process philosophy, initially developed by Bergson and Whitehead then taken further by figures such as Ilya Prigogine and David Bohm, who emphasise the significance of semi-autonomous processes in the creation, maintenance and development of life. This is finally connected to perspectives on narrative and history provided by figures from the world of the humanities, such as Braudel and Ricoeur (Gare 1995: 135–7). Again, what would seem to be promoted here are forms of 'partial mapping' which provide a sufficient degree of orientation for individuals and cultures without becoming oppressively totalising in character. The final stage of Gare's argument suggests the development of a new political world order based on a modified, 'multi-levelled' form of nationalism, where nations and other levels of social organization are seen as partly but not wholly independent eco-systems which can interact with one another in ways which allow for a sufficient degree of identification with home areas and the ability to administer and accept justice in their relations with one another. Gare suggests that if the emphasis on processes of semi-autonomous self-creation on the part of different entities can become part of a new world-view:

> Nationalism can then be redefined as the commitment by a regional community, through the stories by which it defines itself, to justice within the region, where justice is understood as the appropriate recognition and acknowledgment of all beings — individuals, communities, animals and eco-systems, in thought and action. (152)

Nation here is defined in terms of a relation both to region and to the earth, in the sense of all beings regarded as part of that region. Clearly, the promotion of any form of neo-nationalism, as the term itself suggests, is fraught with negative associations and related objections, which Gare attempts to deal with, appealing to less aggressive and successful, socially equitable forms of nationalism, as represented by countries like Sweden and Switzerland (149–151). His notion of nation is at least partly porous in that he sketches a vision of communities co-operating as part of a 'new cosmology' which

> (...) makes it possible to formulate a multi-levelled nationalism, to acknowledge the significance and partial autonomy of the community, of one's local region, while seeing this as participating in a national community, which it-

> self has a partial autonomy, which is in turn participating in a world community which is more than the sum of all the particular communities which compose it. (153)

This might seem a somewhat idealistic proposition coming from a writer critical of the 'idealism' that he sees as characterising much post-structuralist thought (99–100). It is, though, a coherent political vision. One might wonder at how porous the boundaries of each nation may or may not be, although the fact that they are envisioned as part of a multi-levelled system influenced by a metaphysics based on a philosophy of process presumably allows for movement between those levels. As with Edward Casey in his history of the significance of place in philosophy, Gare sees the promise of a better world in philosophical perspectives that can provide the basis for a sensitive but flexible approach to the specificities of place. His antipathy towards the service class and its related interests is even more pronounced than that of Harvey and one which he more explicitly relates to questions of knowledge and power:

> The rise of the new class has been associated with the rise in status of economics, business studies and information science to the dominant intellectual positions within universities and government bureaucracies — and the devaluing of anything that does not serve as an instrument of the international economy.

What is conspicuously lacking in this configuration of beliefs is any direction, any point to it at all. For the new bourgeoisie there is nothing but power for the sake of power, control for the sake of control, and conspicuous consumption on a massive scale. (11)

This a more general attack than Harvey's, not merely aimed at the pretensions of postmodernist thought but at the institutions which support the kinds of nihilism Gare portrays at the beginning of his argument. The problem is how to get from the nightmare scenario of the present, outlined in the opening parts of his study, to the desirable but remote future portrayed in its concluding stages. To say this is not to dismiss the forms of orientation he presents as over-idealistic but to put the emphasis on looking for precise ways of moving from one state to the other. In this respect, many of the perspectives presented in other sections here may be of value, as Gare himself indicates in relation to aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking. If one accepts the ways in which Gare contrives his synthesis of Marxist, differential and ecological positions and the notion of a politics and poetics based on the notion of semi-autonomous creative systems, partly but totally in communication with one another (and clearly such a position is taken in the present discussion), then the onus is on finding the means of further supporting that approach. The three perspectives represented in the remainder of my argument, those of Paul Carter, Raymond Williams and Iain Sinclair, might be seen as of particular relevance in this respect in terms of their connecting of a detailed regard for a specific area, a part of the earth, to a broader poetics and politics which seeks to challenge the kind of nihilism portrayed by Gare in relation to late twentieth century Western culture.

3.4. Paul Carter and 'The Lie of the Land'.

The Lie of the Land (1996) begins with a short introductory essay entitled 'Friday's Other Foot'. The opening briefly describes the rapid clearing of part of the land to make way for the building of a housing estate. A new culture is built on what has been flattened to provide the appropriate space:

> (...) inside, photographs in rows, views through curtains, wall-to-wall carpets are the modest argot out of which a new vocabulary of place is being improvised...the lucky new residents are proud to have a place they can call their own. (1)

Benjamin's 'second nature' and Deleuze and Guattari's hostility towards interiority come to mind here, as does Heidegger's distrust of a building on and taking from the earth that is inattentive to the responsibilities involved in such an undertaking. The word 'place' appears twice but in both cases it would appear to be used with a considerable degree of disapproving irony. This is developed into a thetic proposition a page later where a distinction between 'ground' and 'place' is developed: 'We live in places off the ground; and, it is our thesis, we idolize the picturesqueness of places because we sense our ungroundedness, the fragility of our claim on the soil.' (2). As with Heidegger, place for Carter, cannot simply be a matter of construction; it must have a tangible connection with the earth. Consequently, he argues, in a way which complements Gare's approach, not merely for a sufficiently democratic politics but also 'an environmentally grounded poetics' (5).

That politics, in the broadest and deepest sense, are nonetheless an important corollary to Carter's concern with poetics is indicated by his subsequent concern with questions of communication — not only between humans and the earth but between each other. The problem of adequate communication is a theme more sympathetically treated by writers such as Habermas and Williams. It is one which Carter approaches through his interest in the European colonization of the land now known as Australia and the unfortunate nature of encounters between Europeans and natives which took place in the process of that colonisation — hence the reference to Friday in the essay's title and the focus on Robinson Crusoe, Defoe's almost archetypal figure of colonial adventure, in its main body.

An interesting aspect of Carter's approach here is the way in which he treats these problems not only by reference to the figure of Crusoe but also through attention to the relation of meaning and movement, a primary concern in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. This is undertaken through a focus on the significance of walking which runs through various parts of the book and in this opening essay appears in terms of Crusoe's paranoid fear of the single footprint he observes:

> The footprint, we might say, is already enclosed within the clearing of the colonial gaze. As a signature, as a sign of absence, as something standing in for something else, it is not understood in relation to the lie of the land, as a dialogue of left and right, marking the ground, as a historical passage. It is denied its other foot, its sense of direction, and it is this prior bracketing of the environment, symbolized

> by the absence of the other footprint, that precipitates the extraordinary fantasies that afflict Crusoe. There is, in other words, a direct connection between the clearing of the land and the erasure of its natural histories, and the identification of knowledge with semiosis, the science of signs. (11)

This is a lengthy citation not only because it is a key passage in Carter's essay but also because it resonates with a series of connections to many of the writers discussed here. As with Lefebvre, Deleuze and Guattari, hostility is evinced towards a dehistoricising approach to the construction of social space as well as to semiotics seen as a form of enclosure in itself, and like colonialism, as something perhaps meriting treatment as a pathological form of behaviour rather than as an achievement. In ways comparable to Gare's approach, what replaces Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the relation between movement and desire, is a sufficiently orientated and careful, more Heideggerean, relation to the earth as ground.

Carter's approach is not, however, straightforwardly aggressive and escape-orientated. In contrast to the writers considered in the second chapter, he advocates a politics of diplomacy rather than one of guerilla warfare:

> What would have happened if Robinson Crusoe had found another footprint? Then he would have found another and another, and a pattern would have emerged, a track... He might have grasped that the ground he stood on vibrated to the passage of other feet, and constituted an open network of social communication. (12)

This is very close to the open sociality advocated by Deleuze and Guattari, as well as to a politics of lines rather than discrete points, a walking which involves the figure of the 'tour' rather than that of the 'map', in de Certeau's terms. The modality of a remote future perfect supports the connection between a distant past and a possible future. Crusoe's 'stiff transactions' with Friday are contrasted with the 'flexible exchange between equals' presented in a quotation from Montaigne, an important figure in the book, who reappears at a later stage (12).

The main body of *The Lie of the Land* consists of four much longer essays dealing, this time, with actual rather than fictional figures and with various aspects of culture and approaches to the land. T.G. von Strehlow, the primary subject of the first main part of the book, was concerned with providing an adequate translation of the poetics, culture and language of the Aranda people, with whom he affiliated himself. This takes its most evident form in his *Songs of Central Australia*. Carter looks at both von Strehlow's failings and his achievements. In line with his comments on place in the opening essay, he notes von Strehlow's tendency to speak rather too quickly on behalf of and to idealise, nostalgically, a culture to which he could never actually belong to the extent that he desired. This is an important point in that much of the cultural criticism presented here runs the risk both of nostalgia and of potentially dubious representation in terms of writers' appeals to cultures of which they are not actually a part. The achievement of von Strehlow is presented in terms of his sensitivity to the potential importance of the agglutinative nature of Aranda linguistic

formation and usage. This leads to further discussion of poetics and representation and a distinction Carter makes between 'methexis' and the more familiar 'mimesis'. This distinction, between methektic 'trace' and mimetic 'representational image' is close to Heideggerean notions of nearness and tracks and is consistent with Carter's earlier distrust of an image-making process which first cuts itself off from the ground. The 'reverent miming' of methexis follows the contours of the place to which it relates rather than producing a self-contained reproduction of it and is best represented by Carter's recourse to a quotation from R.G. Coilingwood's *The Principles of Art*. Collingwood, discussing aspects of Celtic art, considers the best way to 'reproduce the emotional effect of a dance' and notes that only 'a mind debauched by naturalism' would try to take photographs of individual dancers, whereas 'The sensible thing would be to leave out the dancers altogether and draw the pattern [of the dance] by itself. (Carter 1996:50)

As with Deleuze and Guattari, the emphasis here is on creating and developing lines rather than filling out discrete points. The people and culture on whom von Strehlow based his life's work are an actual nomadic people, even if the lines they follow have been substantially erased by the re-surfacing culture of modern European colonialism. The connection between Aranda and Celtic art, one made by von Strehlow himself, is taken further by Carter. He notes the 'reverent miming' that G..M. Hopkins undertakes in relation to the Welsh and Anglo-Saxon bards and the development of this approach by Pound, of whom he notes that: ' (...) his language was a macaronic in-folding of poetic traditions with a view to creating an epic where all times and places were simultaneously present.' (94). He also notes how David Jones and Hugh McDiarmid espouse quantitative metrics and the form of the epic to both disclose and preserve, as opposed to enclose and displace, the history of locality and culture. He again notes the dangers of this approach in terms of a disposition towards a narrow, fixed notion of ground as territory and of a self-exilic tendency towards an embracing of the values and culture of the past which leaves no room or hope for development in the present and future: 'To ground a tradition in the past might be to un-ground it in the local present; groundedness might be a form of groundlessness.' (97).

A culture and poetics based on a 'peripateia of the locality' (114) emerges from the first part of Carter's book and is subsequently developed in later sections. The second part takes us to the world of Giorgione's Venice and his painting *La tempesta*. Attention is devoted to the practice of a reversed perspective where the lines of the picture do not focus on a single point but 'splay out'; a 'curvilinear' space is distinguished from a linear one, the former again disclosing as opposed to enclosing the place it represents. The importance of movement is again stressed; the 'flow' of Giorgione's painting is likened to a non-static notion of the self as presented by his contemporary, Montaigne: 'The consciousness of a Montaigne did not revolve around a stable self; the self, a comet rather than a ponderous world, wobbled under the influence of the knowledge of others, and was at all times largely in shadow.'(126) The last words of this claim refer to the importance Carter attaches to the technique

of chiaroscuro, seen as indicative of the way in which painters such as Giorgione or Leonardo draw in the significance of other senses to produce sufficient attentiveness to the notion of a curvilinear space where the contiguity of related forms is rendered proximate by a metonymical rather than a metaphorical process of perception and production. This is then related to the notion of methexis but also to the technique of 'macchiare', a blot technique where the painter builds up smudges of colour in a fashion comparable to the mosaicist. (165). In doing so he attempts to act out the way in which our perception of the world depends upon an interpretation of combinations produced in our physical environment which are always perceived from the perspective from which we see them. This is a specific illustration of a poetics closely related to the kinds of process-based, context-sensitive metaphysics we saw Gare, Deleuze and Guattari attempting to provide earlier on. It is a poetics which can negotiate relations between the developing inside and outside of the space within which it operates by developing a series of inward and outward foldings, in the production of endless but coherently oriented difference, rather than producing boundaries and flattening pavements to build a monolithic self-enclosed space of actual or potential paranoia and monomania, a tendency actualised in Stalinism and increasingly evident in the limited redevelopments and commercialised monoculture of what David Harvey terms 'market Stalinism' (Harvey 1996: 437). Interestingly, Carter suggests that the techniques he describes require the conception of an open space within a closed one. (175). The focus on a limited region enables the production of a resonant consistency, a field, which can then be explored and dramatised. By seeing how one's own ground constantly shifts one can become more sensitive to the way in which this process applies to any other; space becomes heterogeneous, complex and local. The sensitivity to the complexity of one's own 'local' contours can then be applied to an awareness of that of others.

In the final two parts of his book Carter develops this line of argument in relation to the work of a nineteenth century surveyor and then moves in his last essay towards the outlining of an integrated cultural poetics. The surveyor in question is William Light, the founder of Adelaide, for whom Carter provides an alternative 'light' history to counter the ponderously monumental official one which sees the instrument of empire attempting to do some good in an alien land before succumbing to the barbarisms of its unflattened landscape. Carter's Light is one who is highly sensitive to the weather, to atmospheric change, and who eventually and by no means unhappily merges into the landscape in which he dies.

The final chapter of Carter's book seeks, in ways which might be compared to those employed by Charles Olson, to 'break down the opposition between history and poetry' (295). This is attempted through a complex, kinaesthetic relation to the ground, as opposed to the clearing of it supported even in Heidegger's philosophy. We again move towards a poetics tolerant of a much greater degree of chaos, in the fashion of developments in process philosophy outlined by Gare and of Deleuze and Guattari's whole approach. At the same time, a definite distinction is made between the acceptance of a shifting environment in a constant process of becoming, and the reorganizing

movements of capital and colonisation whose relation to the environment, human and otherwise, is presented as one of brutal exploitation. Here, Carter is perhaps closer to Heidegger, Olson and Gare than to Deleuze and Guattari, though his depictions of the various figures he deals with indicate a willingness to accept that processes of colonial development and capital accumulation have to be negotiated rather than simply dismissed as unpalatable. In this final chapter Carter produces a combination of elements which include aspects of the work of J.H. Prynne, of Australian aboriginal culture, particularly spear throwing, and of the poetics of Cavalcanti. A dominant figure here, both rhetorical and practical, is that of ballistics, the path taken by an arrow or a bullet, or a word, to reach its target. As in the work of Deleuze and Guattari considered, no clear distinction between the real and the imaginary or between words and actions is considered acceptable. Carter begins the chapter with a discussion of the significance of walking in Prynne's verse and in fact distances both Prynne's and his own notions of nomadism from those of Deleuze and Guattari. However, his treatment of Cavalcanti's poetics as 'a ballistic theory of love' and his description of the poet's use of vocabulary, a sparse, austere, 'verbal algebra' come very close to the war-machine comprised by Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of a minoritarian writing, which constantly negotiates a shifting force-field rather than clearing and settling in an occupied, static space (Carter: 325). There may be distinctions between the two approaches but there are also substantial convergences whose potential also needs to be attended to. Carter's evocation of a complexly inclusive, 'curvilinear' poetic gathers, in a sense reminiscent of Heidegger's use of that term, the various elements offered by the locality in which it situates itself. It is then related to the notion of a more genuine learning from one culture by another, a diplomacy of 'reverent miming' which is dialogical rather than subordinate and not merely a temporary truce after waves of destructive aggression. In their way, Carter's poetics of place are as idealistic and eirenic as Gare's politics, but as with Gare they are founded in notions of dialogue, not merely with the earth but between different people.

The first part of this discussion attempted to outline and inter-relate a series of approaches in cultural theory to questions of space and place. In the first of three broad headings, the focus was predominantly on Marxist approaches which attempted to provide a sufficiently penetrating characterisation and critique of the nature of the space produced by social relations controlled to an unhealthy degree by the needs of accumulative capital. In this respect, Benjamin's observations on cities move towards an intimation of a socio-spatial critique of this kind, while also providing numerous ways of thinking the more positive possibilities of urban development. Lefebvre's more abstract attempt to get at the 'truth of space' also produces a myriad of different characterisations of types of space but focuses more precisely on the spatial element of the way in which social and cultural developments are dominated by the requirements of dominant social orders. The search for a deeper level of analysis than that provided by discourses which are seen as superficial and collaborative with the requirements of capital might be seen as indicative of a predominantly historical materialist approach, one which is equally present in the work of David Harvey. In

Harvey's work, though, an insistence on the base of hard economic realities and historical continuities as opposed to a rhetoric of ephemerality and endless difference is presented with greater polemical acerbity. At the same time, both Lefebvre and Harvey are open to the integration of a politics of difference within that of a sufficiently coherent and critical narrative of developing social emancipation. Lefebvre moves towards this in the final stages of his book and Harvey's later essay attempts to wrestle with the problem of producing a cultural politics of place which does not fall prey to the forms of fragmentation imposed by a dominant culture in ways indicated by both Lefebvre's and his own analyses.

While both writers make some telling points they are in danger, at times, of producing an overly dogmatic notion of what the truth, or truths, of any particular space might be. Here, some of the approaches they criticise might be helpful, particularly if we are aware of the problems with them that are exposed by writers like Harvey. In this respect de Certeau and Deleuze and Guattari would seem to be writers who promote forms of cultural theory which are usefully sensitive to notions of space and place. As with Lefebvre and Harvey, in some ways more so, they accord a primary or more positive significance to space rather than place. This can be regarded as partly a matter of individual lexical choice (thus Edward Casey sees Deleuze and Guattari's notions of space as essentially part of the philosophical reinstatement of place, despite their choice of terms) but perhaps also suggests a determination to avoid notions of fixedness, one specifically articulated in the case of de Certeau but also clearly present in Deleuze's constant philosophical characterisation of life as a process of change, difference and movement.

It is this tendency to a nostalgic or reactionary recourse to an older, better world which most obviously endangers the perspectives of those writers considered in the third chapter. Heidegger's evocative philosophy of regaining a more immediate and authentic sense of being and place is clearly one of the most powerful theoretical bases for a more ecological approach to questions of social and cultural organization but is also vulnerable to charges of dangerous conservatism. Olson's poetry, while providing a particularly substantial and place-focused alternative to the mass culture of an over- commercialised United States, tends to partly lapse into a stance of exilic mysticism.

The two Australian approaches while perhaps not as monumentally impressive as those of Olson and Heidegger, suggest a politics and poetics of place which, while very much concerned with the lost virtues of past cultures and the significance of human relations with the earth, is more amenable to dealing with the immediate problems posed by negative aspects of the dominant culture in terms of dialogue and adaptation rather than outright antagonism or proud disdain. In this sense they share something with the writers discussed in the second chapter. Carter's poetics of the ground are perhaps still in some danger of reproducing a form of social conservatism. His emphasis on the significance of mobility goes some way to countering the charge of reproducing a poetics of social rather than geographical place, but needs to be treated with caution, like much of the twentieth century poetry he holds up for our

approval. Gare's politics provide a more obviously catholic synthesis of the egalitarian, the differential and the ecological, though his advocacy of the nation as the most effective form of resistance to global capitalism, while usefully modified by a relational regionalism, still suggests a potential problem in terms of possible returns to essentialised homelands. All of these approaches provide a significantly valuable contribution to a poetics and politics of space and place which is opposed to currently dominant trends. In this context, one should not look for a single perfect synthesis of their perspectives but rather focus on combinations of their elements, recognising that there are other perspectives with which they are also capable of combining.