

Re/walking Re/Wilding: on the tricky natures of nomenclature in *A Transect For Trelowarren*.

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This is a presentation that is the end of the beginning of a thing I've been working on, the thing in question is a project called *A Transect for Trelowarren*, a transect being a line drawn onto a given space in order to analyse, account for, quantify, measure, or uncover something of that line, Trelowarren being a 700 year old estate on the Lizard in Cornwall, an estate interested in rewilding, regenerative agriculture, reed squirrels and experimental transdisciplinary practices. In collaboration with Arts & Culture Exeter and the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute I have been walking a line from the ESI to Trelowarren with a team of scientists who are also undertaking transects of their own on the Estate. We are living in a time of shifting baselines and *A Transect for Trelowarren* has set out to ask if a transect can be for Trelowarren, what might it be doing....

FOR: 1. ...with respect to the character of...

Home & Ecology, not back to, but forwards.

Ecology is composed of eco, derived from the ancient Greek, Oikos, meaning 'home', to which the suffix -ology is attached. And an -ology denotes a subject as a branch of knowledge and branches do all sorts of things, as regular visitors to the Garden, or indeed the countryside will know. They grow, they die, between and beyond those two most pressing of stages, life and death they do all sorts of leafing, living, loving and rotting and falling and breaking and turning.

Ecology is a relatively young science, one that is still pleasingly malleable and urgently of concern to artists, scientists, and those who like to think they've fallen into a very pleasing nook in which they might be able to construct a new form of home. The Oxford Dictionary of Science would have us believe that ecology is the study of the "interrelationships among organisms and between organisms, and between them and all aspects, living and non-living of their environment" and here's where we forget that language is a tool, in that sentence where we use "their" and "them" suggesting that the authors, readers and mis-interpreters of that bastion of civilisation the OED are beyond the realm of the study of ecology, that we, are conductors, rather than participants.

I would argue that if you swallow ecology whole, it gives its hue to everything, that there is an ecology of record labels, or housing markets, or archaeologists, as much as there is an ecology of butterflies, or foxes, that there is no being that is not a form of being with, that there is no way any more of simply studying one thing without considering its contexts and the endless nature of those possibilities over time.

Re/wilding.

Rewilding. Quite literally to Re-wild. Re being traced back to the Latin for back, or again, to go over or re-view. Wilding is trickier, wilding is urban slang for a gang of youths going out and being reckless, or more closer to our intentions here wilding is a plant growing uncultivated in the wild as an escapee, it is a lack of management, or the intentional lack of productive management that is also paradoxically a form of management. In the same way that there is no wilderness anymore, there is no wild, hence the re, an attempt to go back over something to re-view it, to look again, through another prism, from another perspective, for another time. As Aldo Leopold once said, "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds" (Tree, 2019: 308).

Rewilding is a plastic term, capable of flexing from a discussion of the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone Park to the population crash at the Oostvaardersplassen project in the Netherlands which brought into stark relief the problematic nature of rewilding in physically limited landscapes – when those landscapes suffer unexpected weather conditions such as long term drought, the large herbivorous populations will die, the bodies will rot. Is it natural to leave them to do so, or is it natural to step in and help them. At Trelowarren an attempt is being undertaken to reintroduce the Red Squirrel, lovely, yet this also means that ones initial steps involve eradicating the dominant invasive Grey Squirrel from the area as they carry a disease to which the reds are susceptible. Nothing is clean in rewilding, no slate untainted.

Fieldwork.

Somewhere I am dreaming
and Somewhere I love you,

Somewhere I am standing in a field
and Somewhere so are you.

The Peace of Wild Things.

By Wendell Berry.

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

(Berry, 2018)

Tourism, Survey, Habitat & Ecosystem.

impenetrable, tangle, with purpose and windswept, woodland, established and hiding, pockets of shelter, where overgrown birdsong, shielded a wild, random peaceful hodgepodge.

transitional foxgloves under open provisional skies of clearing space and regrowth. An untamed opportunity for diversity with time changing process and uneven potential. An interesting, natural, colorful accessible form of growth.

open cultivated monoculture, a grassland with a distant horizon, both pleasing, distressing and bare. beautiful curves in space with a food growing opportunity, a privilege, a possibility, a change, a slope.

under mixed, steep, shady cool, a shelter of naturalized and dappled understory. mainly peaceful and pleasant and therapeutic, reassuring in history and safe, secret, attractive, calm, silence and uniform tranquility.

a beacon, a church, a vast timeless wideness, this archetypal countryside horizon, a view from this promontory of managed distance and grand traditional monoculture from where I stand on this typical open edge, the disappointing border of a desert.

Use, purpose, extinction and rebellion.

...I think I was expecting more people at this stage, more awkward hellos in a café near Pimlico station at 8am. There was a sense of uncertainty throughout the group of strangers with whom I now shared an Affinity, there were a mixture of tourists and protestors, commuters and police. Riot vans rolled in and out and it was hard to keep track of people moving large fragments of a metal sculpture. We edged closer to the bridge side of the roundabout, skulking, and then it just sort of happened, we clambered over a barrier and into the road, it just sort of happened. A samba band arrived, the drumming leading more people into the road and onto the bridge, the south side having done the same there was now nothing but us, a mixed group of people with different levels of commitment to the cause, stood in the road, a samba band playing, some people over there getting arrested already, the metal sculpture being tustled with by police and its makers, and somehow the bridge was closed. A passing rumour of an Enterprise hire van that either didn't make it or didn't

exist, a 45 minute delay rumour emerged and vanished in smoke as we led songs on the bridge and gaffer taped a banner to some bamboo...

you owe it to the world to do what you do best is all. In the light of all this extinction, all this rebellion, all this climate, all this crisis, I am struggling to reconfigure exactly what that is...

Walking and interpretation.

Walking has been used throughout my practice as a starting point, as opposed to the main focus of the work. A Transect for Trelowarren is a proposal for a work that explores the interpretation of experiments into baselines and linguistic consideration, an experiment that takes place in both the 'after' of walking, and the 'during', of walking. I also wish to highlight that the 'after' is merely another place in which 'during' happens, a place where we can invite each other to realize that we all view the world through a certain prism or certain prisms, the significance of this is that if we are unable to notice that our prism is merely that, then we run the risk of it becoming a prison, for a prism is only a prism if you know it as such, otherwise it becomes a prison.

A Transect for Trelowarren lies not in the realm of walks as works but in its capacity to represent an experience of different perspectives, in its capacity to question, and to highlight, that representation of a walk is all that can happen here, to pay attention to that which Anne D. Wallace once suggested vanishes, "because [walking] is too common to notice" (Wallace, 1994: 3). A walk is simply the most everyday experience one can find as a biped, or as Clark so neatly puts it, "walking is the human way of getting about" (Clark, 2001: 15). For that reason it is the primer of my practice, the beginning, not the end. Hamish Fulton once stated that "a walk must be experienced, it cannot be imagined"(Fulton, 2002: 21) and here I would contend then, that the walk is not the work in the case of Walking Home. The work must therefore come after the series of walks, out from it and into the space of transdisciplinary practice.

FOR. 2. ...in respect of and beneficial to...

Baselines.

There is a lot of talk of baselines these days in environmental departments and people, standing in fields, counting things. They talk of shifting baselines and the problem of never being able to have a starting point, something to lean on, history is sticky and deep and keeps going, the future stretches out forever.

In Victorian London you could go to a certain street on any given day for weeks on end during peak season and see van after van filled with the minor corpses of Skylarks, hundreds of thousands of Skylarks, unimaginable quantities of skylarks for human consumption in Lark tarts or some other cockney delicacy. The true horror of this figure though, is that what the Victorians did with their mouths and their bellies is as nothing compared to what modern forms of agriculture have done to the breeding populations of Skylarks. They are no longer for sale.

Trelowarren has log books and record books dating back hundreds of years, accounts of how many birds have been brought in after the glorious twelfth of any given year. They don't do it anymore. They can't.

Memory.

Heewong Chang, author of autoethnography as method states that "memory is not always a friend [that...] memory selects, shapes, limits and distorts the past" (Chang, 2008: 22); before introducing a series of writing exercises that are designed to function as catalysts for further elaboration. I would like to hold as a counterweight to Chang's thought, Augé's position on memory and forgetting taken from *Oblivion* where he states "memories are crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shore are created by the sea" (Augé, 2004: 20). Forgetting is then, an intrinsic part of remembering, of memory. The baseline surveys of this Transect are an attempt to capture memory as cold data, mixed with a generous helping of survey methods from human geography and itinerant and esoteric walks made along a straight line drawn on a map from the Environment and Sustainability Institute to the Trelowarren estate, that straight line becoming twisted by its encounters with reality, the twists in the path and the bends in the river.

Wilderness & History.

If the idea of wilderness was cultivated by transcendental philosophers on the great plains of America with Ansel Adams as the resident documentary photographer then history would suggest it no longer exists, that there is no longer any farther out west for the frontiersmen to push to. In a world where the forest fires of distant parts of Siberia are highlighted not by the worlds press but by curious members of the public watching them on Google Earth, or a world where there are now large gangs roaming the Siberian summer harvesting mammoth ivory from defrosting permafrost, or a world where 97% of all freshwater samples have been found to be polluted, like the alpine glaciers of Switzerland, with microplastics, and a world where secret US military bases are exposed to the world because the soldiers running there all upload their fitness regimes to Strava, an online app that enables you to track and share your run times with a global community, then perhaps we have truly entered a world where there is no longer any terra incognita on the map, where mystery and myths are maybe not dying, but undergoing a new form of transformation. In this brave new world then perhaps Nicolas Bourriaud is right, all geography has become a form of Psychogeography, a form of seriously playful interpretation.

C.C. Vyvyan, Lady of Trelowarren circa the turn of the last century, 1900 or so, was an early uptaker of drifting, deriving, and experimental walking, setting out as she did to traverse all 29 tributary streams of the Helford River many of which form part of the Trelowarren Estate and take one into still today, some of the last remnants of ancient woodland that meet the tidal shoreline of Great Britain.

FOR. 3. ...in the direction of this goal or intention...

Towards transecting.

Transecting is a gerund. Yes, a gerund. A precocious and pretentious latinized phrase I happened upon through the process of my PhD whilst working with a Professor of Performance Writing who cut his teeth in a different paradigm of education. The process of a noun, transect, becoming enacted, an action, a verb. The practice of transecting being the performative enactment of a transect over a significant geographic and or temporal distance, a transect being a noun that denotes a line or a belt of land along which a survey is made of the flora, fauna, or other features of a given location.

To undertake transecting you'll need a map, a permanent marker, somewhere you care about, a good pair of boots and a generous amount of time. You might need other things too, like faith, and hope, cheese and bread, a tent and a camera, a notebook and a pen.

Transecting is an act of interpretation a muddling of the intuitive approach of a dog in a field and a scientist in a laboratory. For interpretation is a word that could so often have the suffix misappended to it during its undertaking, by which I mean we spend far too much of our time presenting our uncertainties as certainties as to have fallen into a state of disrepair. Language is a tool, used so often it has become blunt in our mouths, casually appropriated, abused and misused, that we have indeed forgotten it is a tool at all.

Managed wilding.

Managed Wilding is a sensible concession, something Trelowarren are looking to step into. There is no going back, no *RE-*, no *return*, for everything is delicately interconnected and we are all subject to the outcomes of the past for which we hold very little responsibility. Our responsibility lies in the need to acknowledge these things that we are capable of knowing, that in a world where we here in this room right now all have in our pockets or bags, devices capable of telling us anything we wish to know, we have to admit the privilege, and admit, that once we have acknowledged it as such that it becomes not a privilege as such, but a fucking burden and a responsibility. So take that cross off your back and pluck out your whittling knife that you've bought because you go walking and people who go on walks need knives, and carve that cross into a fucking ladder, and pass it down. Walking is all well and good, it is the first step towards a form of humility, a form of ecological subjectivity where our selves are not separable from their environs but they are capable of acknowledging that problem, our stickiness, our lives amidst the hyperobjects.

I have been brought up, been taught by context that art is only understood in post-production, only contextualized and disseminated long after that initial moment of creative flair. How then, can I, so locked in this realm of the immediate and distant, be expected to compose neat responses to something as brutal and distended as climate chaos, mass extinction and ecological rupture.

Deep adaptation.

Deep Adaptation is a paper written by Professor Jem Bendell, the fundamental outcome of which is that some form of societal collapse is now inevitable, it is our responsibility to find ways of holding onto the uncertainty of that form that is important. The paper also introduces the notion that the current academic notion of specialisms and specialists are perhaps less useful than they once were. They are perhaps prisms that have become prisms and if there is one thing that I have learned from trying to work with a multi-disciplinary institute at a Russell Group University it is that regardless of how much one aims for transdisciplinarity from within an institution it is incredibly hard to escape the prism wherein the power of science is the notion that the world can be held at arms length and that by treating it in this way we can learn something categorical about it.

Deep Adaptation offers four questions posed through four perspectives, Resilience, Relinquishment, Restoration and Reconciliation. In turn: What can you save that you value from your walk of life? What is it that you are able, willing or need to give up? What is it that you want to bring back that society has perhaps discarded or missed in its recent busyness? With what do you need to practice some form of reconciliation – financial, colonial, ecological?

Memories of home in wilding Trelowarren.

There has been a revolution in Land Management, maybe always, everywhere people have thought there were revolutions, everyone thinks they live in remarkable times, the end times, the great cataclysm, the great divide. Maybe everyone does. Ecologies are complex, they are not binary problems, there are multiplicities here, layers of forethought, labyrinths of disregard, layers of language and stratigraphic memories.

Without animals we have no soil, wilding has to happen from the ground up, those habitats we see the least are the most significant and the underlands we never see at

all. 20 species of native dung beetle, who knew. Under the soil, in the soil, in native lowland heath which is one of the target climax habitats that Trelowarren is aiming to regenerate, to recover, to revive, so why not to rewild. Ugly neologism as it is, the horror, the horror.

There are tawny's en masse, lingering on the edges, protecting the heart of the estate, keeping it for themselves, a bullishness. The Little Owls have all left, gone. No coming back. The Barn Owls exist in partnership with the noise and the decay of machinery, they live in barns, deep in hiding somewhere else. You cannot know. I cannot tell you. The ghost swoop across the lanes at night, the quick dropping. The flushing out.

Cuckoos have returned though, through the open heathland corridor from Goonhilly Downs, they have come, a few pairs amidst the heath and the willow warblers. And the Nightjars.

Nightjars are not just groundnesting, they are ground living, they are quickly flushed from a nest, they are eager to flee, they are delicate, they are important, they look like leaves, mashed into the ground by too many feet, they look like lichen, enjoying itself, happy in the clean air, they sound like goats, dying in the night. The silence of timbers, the slow rot of invertebrate life living in the dead wood. Making new soil.

(a landscape) (a place) (a version of the world) (a concept) (a given) (an interpretation) (an event) (a location) (a site) (a testing space) (a space) (a project)

all these things you could call it and more.

Karen stands in the road, eyes hidden behind reflective sunglasses tracing the route the drone is taking across the sky. James is perched as though on her shoulder, hawking the button on the phone in manual control mode, capturing images of the land from above, good images, bad images, good data, bad data, we'll be in some of them, these bad images, we become contaminants, we are not meant to be here, an impossibility.

A man crosses a field with a springer spaniel, pibald, he wants to know who we are and what we are doing, on behalf of Josh, who is Josh I enquire. Ferrer's son. I find it intriguing on two fronts, that Josh does not know of us already, and that Ben as the woodsman is called, is busy harvesting, or otherwise gathering dead wood from amongst the woodland to feed to the estates biomass fuel system. This sounds particularly off-point for an estate that is looking into wilding/re-wilding/managed wilding, the different terminologies and the various conflicts amongst their users remind me of the anthropocene, and any other neologism that is let out of the box, how it scampers off like a wild thing, to do unknown things to our language and our landscape, these intertwined timeless things that have been moulded over centuries to get us to this point, to bring us to this time and to this very sentence where words and work collide in the wild.

We talk about Robert Macfarlane and Merlin Sheldrake, talking about the dark underbelly of Science in Epping forest, whilst clambering over a hedge into the wood wide web of a forestry commission plantation, dotted here and there with broadleaf oaks and beech trees that enable something of an understory to take place, badger sets amidst the ivy, bramble and nettle on the field edge. We climb a wall and send the drone back into the sky to peruse the woodland behind us now, sloping back. A buzzard circles the drone with mild interest, it veers away, the drone dutifully continues on the course it is given.

The buzzard does what it wants.

Good data, bad data, language is conditional, it is always good for someone and bad for someone, something can have intrinsic horror, intrinsic beauty, intrinsic usefulness, purpose, sensibility, disposition, my initial role here is as a prison guard of prisms, keeping tabs on who is looking through what at who and what and when and how. Giving scientists permissions to question not only their own discipline, but mine, others, everyones elses.

I stand in the bushes and wait for their conversation to walk past me, I have become interested in listening to their conversations fade into the background and disappear completely. Two gentlemen, of a certain age and distinct statuses, roam a landscape

and talk about what is best for it, what might be best for it, what was it, what is it,
the orchid just blooms, regardless,
the cuckoos just rob nests, regardless,
the nightjars, squeal like goats in the night, regardless,
the mycelium spreads beneath us, regardless,
time becomes deeper, regardless,
the brown trout in the river, recover from environmental pollution, regardless,
the beech trees, brought over in the 1500's, keep growing, regardless,
the laurels, the non native, concrete dead understory, will be kept here, regardless,
landscape becomes wild, best, when regarded less.

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