

T.C.  
GAZIANTEP UNIVERSITY  
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**THE REPRESENTATION OF SPACE IN SIMON  
ARMITAGE'S SELECTED POEMS**

**MASTER OF ARTS THESIS**

Mustafa DAĞDELEN

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Enes KAVAK

T.C.  
UNIVERSITY OF GAZİANTEP  
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Name and Surname: Mustafa DAĞDELEN

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The thesis study, prepared under the supervision of Assist. Prof Dr. Enes KAVAK, has been read by us and accepted as a Master's thesis by unanimous vote in terms of its scope and quality.

Jury Committee Members:

Signatures

Assist. Prof Dr. Enes KAVAK (Head of Jury)

\_\_\_\_\_

Assist. Prof. Dr. Kyriaki ASIATIDOU

\_\_\_\_\_

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ounr EKLER

\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that this thesis has been accepted as a Master's thesis by the above-mentioned jury by meeting the necessary conditions.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ela İpek GÜNDÜZ

Head of Department

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Mehmet SOĞUKÖMEROĞULLARI

Manager of Social Sciences Institute

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Name and Surname: Mustafa DAĞDELEN

Student ID: 220538111037

Date of Viva: 15 April 2025

**ABSTRACT****THE REPRESENTATION OF SPACE IN SIMON ARMITAGE'S SELECTED POEMS**

DAĞDELEN, Mustafa

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Space, as a significant concept, has lately attracted considerable critical attention from literary researchers, who aim to supplement their understanding and examination of literary pieces with spatio-temporal perspectives. As Edward Soja explains, a space is as significant as time to analyse a literary work. That is, space contributes to meaning itself with different magnitudes. Soja offers the trialectics of spatiality as firstspace, secondspace and thirdspace, giving the reader the role of an interpreter within the contexts of physical, social and conceptual spaces and their dimensions as well as interconnections with human life and stories. Henry Lefebvre also views space as a dynamic process relying on societal views and circumstances, and Michel Foucault coins the concept of heterotopia to highlight the significance of certain spaces in understanding society-human interactions and connections. Simon Armitage has cultivated poetry through his knowledge of both local and regional geography and using physical and mental sceneries. He has frequently referred to spatial aspects of contemporary life such as urbanisation, marginalisation, alienation, travelling, search and quest, displacement and isolation. Also, interconnections between time and space are featured in his poems, which disclose subjects like imagination, memory, and perspectives of reality. In light of the critical theory shaping literary spatiality, this thesis will attempt to examine Armitage's poetic vision in constructing and connecting his personas and the poetic universe through the use of both space and place.

**Key Words:** Simon Armitage, Poetry, Spatiality, Place

## ÖZET

### SIMON ARMITAGE'IN SEÇİLİ ŞİİRLERİNDE MEKANIN TEMSİLİ

DAĞDELEN, Mustafa

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Dikkate değer bir kavram olarak mekan, son zamanlarda edebi eserlere ilişkin anlayışlarını ve incelemelerini uzamsal-zamansal perspektiflerle desteklemeyi amaçlayan edebi araştırmacıların önemli eleştirel ilgisini çekmiştir. Edward Soja'nın açıkladığı gibi, bir mekan edebi bir eseri analiz etmek için zaman kadar önemlidir. Yani mekan, anlamın kendisine farklı büyüklüklerde katkıda bulunur. Soja, mekansallığın triyalektiğini birinci mekan, ikinci mekan ve üçüncü mekan olarak sunarak okuyucuya fiziksel, sosyal ve kavramsal mekanlar ve bunların boyutları ile insan yaşamı ve hikayeleriyle olan bağlantıları bağlamında bir yorumcu rolü verir. Henry Lefebvre de mekanı toplumsal görüşlere ve koşullara dayanan dinamik bir süreç olarak görür ve Michel Foucault, toplum-insan etkileşimlerini ve bağlantılarını anlamada belirli mekanların önemini vurgulamak için heterotopya kavramını ortaya atar. Simon Armitage, hem yerel yerel hem de bölgesel coğrafya bilgisiyle fiziksel ve zihinsel manzaralar kullanarak şiir yazmıştır. Kentleşme, marjinalleşme, yabancılaşma, seyahat, arayış ve keşif, yerinden edilme ve izole olma gibi çağdaş yaşamın mekansal yönlerine sık sık önemli ölçüde atıfta bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, hayal gücü, hafıza ve gerçeklik perspektifleri gibi konuları açığa çıkaran şiirlerinde zaman ve mekân arasındaki bağlantılar öne çıkıyor. Edebi mekansallığı şekillendiren eleştirel teori ışığında, bu tez Armitage'ın hem mekan hem de yer kullanımıyla kişilerini ve onun şiirsel evreni inşa etme ve birbirine bağlama konusundaki şiirsel vizyonunu incelemeye çalışacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Simon Armitage, Şiir, Mekansallık, Yer

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Simon Armitage and His Poetry

Simon Armitage, the Poet Laureate after Carol Ann Duffy, had a highly enchanting poetic voice and created powerful imagery in his rich and authentic poetry (Gregson, 2011, p. 18). He was greatly influenced by poets such as Ted Hughes and W.H. Auden. Although it is possible to see their influence, his poetry unquestionably bears traces of contemporary sentiment, linking his poetic realms with modern-day concerns, topographies and personalities. His poetic vision directly speaks to the contemporary reader's knowledge of Northern England and various places around his country. For Armitage, words visualise actions and emotions in vivid and astoundingly familiar images, engaging with readers themselves. In Auden's "As I Walked Out One Evening", he uses imagery vividly and draws a paint in the reader's mind: "And the seven stars go squawking / Like geese about the sky" (Auden, 1995) as Ted Hughes does the same effects in our minds in his poem "Daffodils": "On the earth- surge, 'their six-bladed screws / Churning the greeny yellows" (2009). The words like squawking or churning are chosen skillfully for better imagery. In Armitage's poetry, it is possible to see their impact and that of contemporary poetry in imagery. He plays with words to create specific emotions and vibrant images, borrowing them from everyday life, using words such as ambling, shuffling, hobbling, hurrying, sidling, pacing, careering, capering, skipping, traipsing, tramping, trotting, schlepping, slogging or strutting? Or

just walking? (Armitage, 2022, p. 59), in a characteristic way, through which “his poems can make ordinary things seem bizarre” and extraordinary (Gregson, 2011, p. 81).

His focus on the interconnections and shaping powers of time and space are distinctive features of his poetry. One of the main reasons why time and space are critical to him is his stories’ connections with his past, familial circles and places where he grew up and travelled through, such as Marsden, which are often portrayed by a glimpse of subjectivity, a sense of nostalgia/anxiety/fear and series of flashbacks in the life of his personas, which explains the undeniable power of his knowledge of topography, locality and human sentiments. Also, his awareness and sensibility of his native country underline his northerner identity as a national poet because this consciousness “reveals that a crucial part of his sensibility is retro in its adherence to the place where he was born and grew up” (Gregson, 2011, p. 66).

The poet started his academic journey studying geography at Portsmouth Polytechnic (Armitage, 2022, p. 247). It is not surprising for him to include familiar places and spaces in his poetry strikingly and creditably. According to Ian Gregson (2011), “the crucial specificities in his writing – which often focus on identity questions – are achieved through his mapping ability, his awareness of spatial relationships so that his images are pinpointed in relation to each other by linguistic map references” (p. 15). As well as his acumen in topography, sociology and human subjects, his native land, Marsden, contributed to his imagery of urban-rural juxtapositions and harmonies nourished by the city’s geographical diversity. According to Gregson (2011), “his poetry has always been interested in the places where the natural and the urban overlap” (p. 16).

Locality is a key aspect of Armitage’s poetry, so much so that he had some suspicions about the fact that he may not be enjoyed by readers from different countries, such as America; as Gregson (2011) states, his poetic use of local places may not appeal to them (American people) (p. 65). Gregson’s explanation can even be regarded as a criticism of the subjective use of space in poetry. Armitage obviously uses numerous settings and locations aside from his hometown in his poems. Concerning the use of locality, rurality and individualism, he benefits from the Northern language and the geographical features of his homeland. As Childs (2012) emphasises, “Armitage uses the phrases ... playfully, to grab the reader’s attention

through the language twist, but also as a direct, colloquial way catapulting us into the situation” (p. 92). Thus, his poetry evokes individuality and ingenuity in the use of language and specific places. Despite his life in cosmopolitan cities, his poetry takes after Ted Hughes, who chooses a rural landscape that focuses on rich and unique life instances. On the other hand, Armitage’s poems also host crucial urban features, but Thain (2001) suggests that Armitage’s urbanity is one of a guest or a stranger who experiences the city as an outsider. Correspondingly, his works have various narrations that bring different cultures, sceneries, and individuals together, which sometimes interlock or overlap in certain places (Thain, 2001).

## **1.2. Theoretical Background: Space and Place**

The relationship between place and space has frequently been used and analysed interchangeably in philosophy and literature. Arguably, it is not easy to separate them from each other very distinctly. However, “space” is often considered a broader and more exhaustive concept. Places are spaces that people make sense of and attach specific meanings to. They feature various manifestations of their functions, such as privacy, belonging, social hierarchy, geography, etc. In this sense, objects in a specific setting may not create the same emotional response or bring about identical perceptions of different people. Also, some places could be symbolically charged with certain ideas or concepts, such as Trafalgar Square in London, an important location for environmentalists who want to protest. As Creswell (2004) puts it, people strive to build activities or social bonds with places around their views and perspectives.

The meaning and signification of place are much more tangible in various areas of humanities. John Agnew (1987) collects the concepts of “meaningful location” under three terms: Location, locale and sense of place. The term “location” denotes a specific place, such as a park. Locale refers to the physical environment where social interactions occur, which refers to how people create their own lives. By sense of place, Agnew addresses the emotional bonds that individuals create. Therefore, he thinks that places evoke feelings in people. Similarly, Fu Tuan imagines space as something mobile, whereas place is something stable, noting that:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value .... The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of a place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa.

Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (Tuan, 1977, p. 6).

Space allows movement and freedom, yet the place is something we transform into meaningful experiences and references. Relph states, “Space is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed” (1976, p. 8). Our viewpoint or perception is crucial in constructing our views of a certain place. For instance, “While colonialists looked at the sea and saw blank space [whereas] the natives saw place” there (Cresswell, 2004, p. 9). Also, our perception of a specific place alters in case of a change or destruction. For instance, the disappearance of the Crystal Palace due to a terrible fire in history affected people’s perception of the place’s grandeur, symbolising the greatness of the United Kingdom historically. Tuan (1977) explains that while space is more scientific and objective, place is more about value or belonging. “It is obvious that most definitions of place are quite arbitrary” (Tuan, 1974, p. 245).

The relationship between literature and space is an important topic of geocriticism and literary topography studies. This argues that space helps narratives shape meaning and subjects. This relationship between space and literature can be examined with Edward Soja’s term “real-and-imagined space.” Soja states that it is impossible to understand spatiality by focusing only on the physical or imagined spaces (1996). What a reader understands from a literary text depends on his own position along with the places and spaces of a literary text. De Certeau (1984) points out that urban settings redefine our perception of space so that we may interpret a work in different ways each time, along with the changes and transformation of space. From this perspective, space signifies a subjective perception of places. Physical spaces are crucial and generally chosen intentionally by authors to reflect on the characters’ physical setting and inner journeys, such as Heathcliff and Catherine’s private escapes to the moors in *Wuthering Heights*. Such spaces reveal the psychologies or complications of characters as their views and selves are shaped by the places they live.

“Home” is a key concept of place and we attribute a great deal of meaning to it. Regarding the word “home” itself, Earth is basically a home for people inhabiting and engaging with various aspects of life. Countries, cities, neighbourhoods or places can be classified as homes for many beyond physical residences themselves. The reason why we call various places “home” stems from the sense of attachment and rootedness

inferred by the word (Tuan (1991). Gaston Bachelard (1994) says home is the primary frame that shapes our relation with all the spaces outside because whatever we experience, it is the first root and source of our sense of self. However, while our home designs our understanding of the world, we wake up and see that every place is socially and personally constructed. The price and worth of lands or properties depend directly on social perception and individual attachments.

Ray Oldenburg's concept of place is also helpful to observe its resonances in human life. His concept of place is divided into three types: first place, second place, and third place. First place signifies home. It refers to family life and private activities, where individuals allocate a considerable portion of their lives to various activities. In the first place stage, people grasp the sense of safety, comfort and personal expression. It is also characterised by where people experience private relationships. First place is vital for emotional healing, strengthening family ties, and fostering personal reflection. Interactions here tend to be more reflective and less social. Comfort and self-expression play a vital role, particularly in intimate relationships. Personal spaces are important for emotional healing, family connections, and self-reflection. Interactions in these environments are often more introspective and less socially oriented. The second place refers to the workplace. This place involves formal relations, hierarchies and task-oriented actions. Second places give people a sense of purpose and identity connected to their occupations, financial security and social standing. Interactions in these areas typically centre on professional responsibilities and tasks. Social interactions generally pertain to work tasks and duties. Third place means public/social spaces. These places are not related to home or workplace but are connected to social life, where people gather, relax, or enjoy their time outside. Therefore, public places like cafes, bookshops, and restaurants can be third-place examples.

The significant point of third place is that people from different backgrounds come together and share their lives with others, which strengthens social bonds and understanding of people. In this stage, people learn how to tolerate and be more welcoming. This is the place where we grow up (Oldenburg, 1999). To illustrate, the protagonist of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is deprived of first place (home), which highlights a psychological shortcoming. Later, thanks to successfully binding to third place, it becomes possible to observe healing and growth in his personal life (Maran, 2023). Oldenburg (1999) claims that the third place is where people

communicate and interact without constraints. Therefore, the lack of accomplishment and recognition in third place creates significant problems that cannot be solved in the construction and growth of self.

As a reaction to the Marxist point of view on spatiality, in the interview with Gareth Evans and Tara McPherson, Edward Soja says that the Marxist tradition prioritises time over space, but he thinks that they are similarly functional in social life (Soja, 1991). It might be because we change over time, and our identity and sense of self are also formed and altered perceptibly. Another misconception of Marxism about establishing space is confining it to the matter of class. Nevertheless, spatiality significantly impacts other social entities in terms of gender, race, and postcolonial junctures. Notions of meaning and worth of places are all about power relations and their social/individual constructions in a social setting, whose significance and acknowledgement can be unsettled and unstable as the centre of power and human perception of it might alter remarkably in time. As Harvey (1996) claims, determining capital, structuring the economy in relation to spatial relations or marketing, and merchanting depend on places in a competitive world. "Place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct" (Harvey, 1996, p. 261). It can be said that if something is within human power and socially constructed, it becomes easier to alter and adjust it. On the contrary, place can go beyond human construct and conceptualisation. The place or space decides how people live and build their social lives or stimulate society (Malpas, 1999).

Even though Cresswell respects the ideas of Malpas and Sack in terms of the role of place in social construction, he disagrees with them as suggesting that even before humanity, there were spaces in the world, but it is humanity that creates, conceptualises and attaches meaning to place in the world (2004). Our understanding of a place depends on how it was used and our interrelation with it in the temporal space. Therefore, as time passes, the perception or sense of a place constantly changes. To illustrate, there are castles where kings and queens lived and exerted power over people throughout history. These places are museums for visitors in the modern world and were once used as dungeons for prisoners or settings for political exchanges or religious /ceremonial congregations. Cresswell (2004) suggests that "the point is that human agency is not so easily structured and structures themselves are made through the repetition of practices by agents" (p. 36). As another example, a school

dramatically impacts our lives as a place. It influences our perception of self or sociality with our friends in the classroom. Not only does it contribute to our way of focusing, but it also operates our learning capacity, either positively or negatively. Pred explains that places are constantly evolving and shaped by ongoing processes and activities rather than being complete and final (Pred, 1984).

It would be essential to examine the notion of space to establish it as a theoretically distinct concept. In this case, it seems inevitable to mention Edward Soja's "trialectics of spatiality" inspired by French theorist Henry Lefebvre. According to Soja (1989), there are three types of spaces: firstspace, secondspace and thirdspace. Firstspace refers to space's physical and material aspects as used and experienced in everyday life. It includes the routes, patterns, and networks of movement and interaction that make up the practical, lived environment. Spatial practice is about how space functions and is perceived through social and economic activities. Secondspace pertains to planners, architects, and technocrats' conceptualised, planned, and often abstract spaces. This is the space of maps, plans, designs, and ideologies institutions and authorities impose. Conceived space reflects the dominant and controlling vision of space, shaping how it should be organised and used. Thirdspace captures the symbolic, emotional, and cultural meanings attributed to space by individuals and communities. Lived space is the realm of human experiences, memories, and imaginations. It encompasses how people inhabit and understand their environments, often resisting or reinterpreting the conceived space (Soja, 1989, p. 121-126.).

Space influences our social relations. Massey proposes that, particularly in our globalised world, social spaces are complex and can be intertwined through various political practices centred around key nodal points (2004). Spatial dynamics influence politics, ethics, and social relations. Howarth posits that "space serves not just as a physical setting but also as a social construct" (Howarth, 2006). Being inspired by Derrida's ideas, space is a repetitive entity, so it constantly differs and defers because our relationships are influenced by space. Also, spaces such as cities, homes, and nations in which we live are heterogeneous rather than homogenous, and these spaces are politically affected (Howarth, 2006). Therefore, Michel Foucault's idea of "heterotopia" is crucial for grasping how spaces change, as it reveals that they are not fixed. Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" refers to real physical or mental/imaginative spaces that act as other spaces alongside existing spaces" (Foucault, 1967). Foucault

created six principles to explain this. Firstly, heterotopic spaces refer to environments where the conventional norms of behaviour are temporarily suspended. This concept can be categorised into two distinct types: heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. Heterotopias of crisis are esteemed, sacred, or restricted spaces designated for individuals experiencing a relationship with their society in a crisis. By that, he refers to adolescents, pregnant women, and the elderly. Heterotopias of deviation are spaces where behaviours that diverge from societal norms may be practised, such as psychiatric hospitals, prisons, and residential care homes. The second principle of heterotopic space asserts that such spaces possess a specific and defined function, mirroring the society in which they are situated (Foucault, 1967). Foucault gives a very concrete example of the Western cemetery. For example, a cemetery excludes the living society because it harbours death and absence and preserves a memory of that society because it carries the memory of the dead. Heterotopic spaces can simultaneously juxtapose multiple real locations and their respective contexts. A garden is an exemplary illustration of this concept, wherein flora from diverse regions across the globe coexist in proximity to one another. Heterotopias represent interconnected segments of time and operate effectively when individuals can diverge from their conventional temporal experiences. Time can accumulate in spaces such as libraries and museums, which may be ephemeral, akin to a temporary fairground on the outskirts of a town (Foucault, 1967). Heterotopic environments consistently possess a system of access and closure, rendering them not entirely available to the public. Entry necessitates some form of permission, whether by purchasing a ticket, a social gesture, or a specific ritual. Heterotopias serve a particular function to other existing spaces (Foucault, 1967). They can be identified as spaces of illusion, exemplified by Foucault's reference to brothels or as spaces of compensation, such as the English colonies of the 19th century in the New World. Foucault presents us with "the boat" as an exemplary instance of a heterotopia; it is a mobile fragment of space not anchored to any specific location aside from its relationship with the sea (1967).

When space and place are the main topics, the diversion and conceptualisation of urbanity and rurality entail special emphasis. They are fundamentally separated from each other in aspects such as convention, administration, imagination and intellect (Cloke and Johnston, 2005). These terms have been arguably binaries with individual attributes and divergences in their own aspects. For instance, urban life has

been praised, particularly after the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. It was seen as a way to escape from rurality and reach opportunities in cities. It is also possible to see this change in literary works, especially in the novels of renowned authors such as Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. For instance, Pip, the protagonist of Dickens' novel "Great Expectations," can reach ultimate self-discovery and personal growth thanks to urban life by recognising his own value (Alzahlan, 2024). On the other hand, ruralism is the key to signifying human desire to sublimate the experience of subjectivity and nature phenomenon in stark reaction to rapid industrialisation, bourgeois hegemony and cultural materialism transforming English society in the Victorian era. Space is a social structure that separates people through urban planning, zoning laws and territorial boundaries. Also, uneven distribution of resources, social facilities, privileges and even risks in a place play an important role in shaping a society. Typically, urban areas are built in favour of people, whereas rural areas have become more virgin and underdeveloped. Urbanity and rurality are being intermingled nowadays.

Edward Soja attempted to elucidate the impact of modernisation on urbanity. He carried out his analysis of how capitalism shapes the urban world in Los Angeles. Because of such differences in development, the nation-building process happens slowly or swiftly, depending on where it is. Soja (1991) argues that marginalised communities must cultivate spatial consciousness to comprehend and challenge oppression. However, the sharp division between urban and rural life is questionable for many critics; as Kūle (2008) suggests, the starting and ending points of rurality and urbanity are quite obscure in modern times. This distinction, if needs be, is created by politics as a device working as a statistical indicator (Tjallingi, 2000). Correspondingly, these two important concepts must endure each other well because there is a nonstop transition between them (Bryant et al., 1982). Locational differences between them have been disappearing in terms of people's experiences. Although there are huge differences or distinctions between urban life and rural life, in the modern human's mind, a city is always a centre, whereas a rural area is a periphery (Kūle, 2008). "In the same sense, stereotypes about urban and rural areas are complex and involve assumptions about the physical environment, the degree of development, accessibility, resources, the nature and range of economic activities, costs, autonomy, governance, innovations, quality of life, social interactions, values, and opportunities"

(Brown & Cromartie, 2004). Marginalisation is an inevitable outcome of urbanity in modern societies, especially the homeless ones. Nevertheless, as Cresswell (2004) explains, being homeless is a problem of urbanity, while rurality does not offer spaces for homeless people to come together and become visible. David Harvey (1996) argues that economic competition causes people to be distanced from one another, resulting from the restructuring of social and spatial relations driven by the mobility of production, capital, trade, and marketing.

While talking about space, it becomes impossible to overlook the importance of time in literary works. Even though some critics separate them when analysing a literary work, there is a common belief that they should be kept together to better analyse and understand a work. Bakhtin's chronotype is a term that combines time and space in our understanding of literary works (1981). For some critics, time is over space, or space is over time in terms of significance. However, Bakhtin's concept of chronotope supports the inseparability and equality of time and space while a literary text is analysed. The idea is that chronotope differs from the classical and static sense of time and space; instead, it plays an active role in shaping characters and plots. They develop according to the time and space they exist because every literary work is set in a particular time and space. It influences the development of the narrative and the way characters behave.

Time appears as a crucial and complex component that influences the topics and stories of Armitage's poetry. His navigation of the past, present, and future through many temporal dimensions clarifies this significance. His poetry frequently explores the past in detail, using historical settings and his own experiences to evoke a sense of (dis)continuity and retro/introspection. As previously mentioned, Armitage regularly draws on aspects of his personal life and history to give his poetry depth. He adeptly observes and analyses the present, encapsulating affairs, social dynamics, and cultural transformations with a keen sense of curiosity and understanding. His work speaks to contemporary audiences because of his capacity to be present.

In terms of multiplicity in meaning and being open to different ideas, poetry is arguably the most powerful way to express who we are and how surrounding spaces shape us. Space, in general, and place, in particular, offer a key window into the complexities of poetic settings and personas' unique connection with them.

### 1.3. The Rationale for the Thesis and Chapter Summaries

This thesis focuses on how Armitage constructs space and place in his selected poems. Although there are numerous topographies and aspects of this theme in Armitage's poetry, the topic will be analysed under the main subheadings "Urban Decay and Marginal Subjects", "Displacement and Isolation", "Journey and Exploration", "The Intersections of Space and Time: Chronotope" as dominant and prevailing themes in Chapter II.

In the sections "Urban Decay and Marginal Subjects" and "Displacement and Isolation", the selected poems reveal problems and complications pertaining to urban life, particularly about marginal identities, homelessness and human frustration. Urban spaces in his poetry showcase inequalities that leave human subjects disconnected, ignored, and alienated. Remarkably, the frustration of unfulfilled expectations and aspirations about the future is a thematical concern. The questions and suspicions about the dignity of human beings have been highlighted in discontentedness, and loss has been a force penetrating every layer of society in the selected poems. The poet portrays urban life, in which promises of progress are overshadowed by frustration, inequality, and societal decline. These works challenge the societal priorities that perpetuate divisions and show the paradoxes of urbanity and human subjects. As Szpakowska-Loranc puts it, human beings have aimed to make the world a better and more beautiful place to adapt to modern life (2022). However, adapting to something new is difficult as we have outstanding bonds with our past. It is not always predictable that human beings can overcome difficulties in new environments as such changes might face social context challenges and receive them (Adelfio et al., 2021). The expectations and dreams of urban ideals frustrated modern people inasmuch as none of these progress or changes made the world a better place to live. In this section, the poems "Give" and "The Clown Punk" particularly depict segregation and marginalisation. The poems are mainly about the divergences of people in a society bound to live together.

In the "Journey and Exploration" section, Armitage's poetry prominently explores these themes literally and metaphorically, highlighting personal growth, human experience, and spatial transformation. In the poem "It Ain't What You Do It is What It Does To You", the narrator tells us or complains about the experiences and journeys he has missed by using places like America, the Taj Mahal, and Black Moss

as representative areas of desire and sentiment reflection by giving us the sense of remorse as well. In this respect, it becomes possible to see the impact of a real place and an imagined place in people's psychology. Similarly, "The Tyre" illustrates both a literal and symbolic journey of a tyre, reflecting the human experience of control, liberation, and the feeling of getting lost through time and life. Oldenburg's third place concept helps us understand how spaces are vital for people's social interactions. In "Mother, Any Distance," a personal and emotional journey is told, highlighting the narrator's change from relying on his mother to living his freedom. Here, Oldenburg's concept of first place (home) is an important aspect of human development, personally and emotionally. Another poem, "Zoom!" successfully delineates how writing is a magical tool and an extended metaphor for life's infinite exploration and journey. It begins in a house and extends into the expansive universe. It displays how language and imagination make us feel powerful enough to overcome physical limitations and venture into the limitless possibilities beyond.

In the final section, "The Intersections of Space and Time: Chronotope", Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope will reveal the interplay of time and space, emphasising specific temporal-spatial connections. This section of the thesis will examine Armitage's poems "Harmonium" and "Floral Tribute" through the lens of the chronotope, arguing that each literary work shows unique time-space frameworks that are central to our grasp of the narration and the depiction of subjectivity.

On the whole, this thesis sets out to analyse how Armitage's poetic universe can be better understood by examining spaces and places where his personas construct themselves and their sense of spatial existence. While analysing the poems under the scope of space, concepts like Edward Soja's "trialectics of spatiality" and Oldenburg's conception of the place appear to be instrumental. To supplement these two theories of spatiality, Foucault's heterotopias will explain the dynamic process of social spaces and human subjects. Finally, to compensate for the missing link between the conception of literary lives, existences and experiences, Bakhtin's "chronotope" will reveal a constant and convoluted interaction and association of the time-space in the final section of the thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### PLACE AS SPACE OF BEING IN SIMON ARMITAGE'S POETRY

#### 2.1. Urban Decay and the Marginal Subjects

Simon Armitage often reflects on the situation and problems of the society in which he lives. His poems “The Clown Punk”, “Give”, and “A Vision” are great examples that deal with the urban problems of today’s people and the world they live in. As Cresswell (2004) explains, being homeless is a problem of urbanity, while rurality does not offer spaces for homeless people to come together and become visible. This problem is mainly addressed in “Give” and “The Clown Punk”. “A Vision” deals with human expectations and frustrations from a modern world perspective. Therefore, the distance between the self and the ideal is remarkably pronounced in these poems.

Armitage’s poem “A Vision” was published in his *Paper Aeroplane: Selected Poems 1989-2014* in 2014. The first four stanzas – until the middle of the fourth stanza - mainly depict an ideal dream of the urban through descriptions of the environment in the lines:

“The future was a beautiful place, once.  
Remember the full-blown balsa-wood town  
on public display in the Civic Hall.  
The ring-bound sketches, artist’s impressions,  
blueprints of smoked glass and tubular steel,

board-game suburbs, modes of transportation  
 like fairground rides or executive toys.  
 Cities like dreams, cantilevered by light.  
 And people like us at the bottle-bank  
 next to the cycle-path, or dog-walking  
 over tended strips of fuzzy-felt grass,  
 or model drivers, motoring home in" (Armitage, 2014, p. 145).

As Szpakowska-Loranc states, we humans strive to improve our world and enhance its beauty to fit modern life (2022). Nonetheless, adjusting to new experiences can be challenging due to our strong connections with the past. It is not always certain that individuals can navigate difficulties in unfamiliar settings, as these changes may bring about obstacles related to social context and acceptance (Adelfio et al., 2021). Accordingly, arguably the most striking line of the whole poem could be the first: "The future was a beautiful place, once" (Armitage, 2014) because the conjugation of the verb is in the past, which demonstrates that the future we were thinking as a good place has already arrived. The poem continues with portrayals of hope that failed. The expectations and dreams of urban ideals frustrated modern people inasmuch as none of these progress or changes made the world a better place to live. The concept of urban life becomes a frustration and a source of decay in today's world in these poems. Intriguingly, Armitage's narrator presents a beautiful future, while the building's blueprints showcase smoked glass and tubular steel. These elements create an industrial ambience rather than a sense of beauty. Balsa wood models modernise the constructions and living spaces, and the alliteration enhances the impression and pervasiveness of the models in the poet's image. Paradoxically, the fragility of balsa wood juxtaposes the steel's rigidity. These idealistic, futuristic images continue in the second and third stanzas. All those delineations are similar to Edward Soja's concept of secondspace, which is related to conceptualised, planned, and often abstract spaces of human technology and institutions. These refer to the conceptualised and frequently abstract realms created by human knowledge. It embodies the space of maps, plans, designs, and ideologies dictated by knowledge created and imposed by institutions and authorities of human civilisation.

In the poem, there appears to be an implication that the future in which we have been living is the result of malicious schemes and unpredicted actions, as Armitage writes in the fourth stanza of his poem "electric car, or after the late show - / strolling

the boulevard. They were the plans, / all underwritten in the neat left-hand / of architects – a true, legible script.” (Armitage, 2014, p. 145). All those plans for modern life have failed because they have all been part of a design as if they were all written with a metaphoric left hand. The final part of the four<sup>th</sup> stanza is also striking as Armitage implies that all those developments or changes were planned. Even though people had hopes for the future earlier, those who planned it knew what would happen. However, the narrator appears to be aware of this disturbing and evocative design of our future when he arrives at a landfill site in the last stanza:

“I pulled that future out of the north wind  
at the landfill site, stamped with today’s date,  
riding the air with other such futures,  
all un-lived in and now fully extinct” (Armitage, 2014, p. 145).

These lines underpin the view that the future we hoped to have is now at the landfill site. The narrator claims that all those visions and expectations turn into futility. Moreover, what is worse, they are now extinct, which reflects how desperate we are about our own time because nothing has improved our quality of life (Hurova & Shkurov, 2023) and the meaning of existence in modern society.

The poems “Give” and “The Clown Punk” depict segregation and marginalisation in modern life. The narrator of “Give” is a homeless beggar, while the narrator of “The Clown Punk” is a child in the car describing a homeless person with tattoos, cleaning the windshield of the narrator’s family car. These two poems narrate two passing scenes of society to each other from a contrastive and reflective perspective.

In “Give”, from his *The Dead Sea Poems*, he portrays urban areas as a stunning hell for the homeless. The poet offers the reader a glimpse into the beggar’s mind:

“Of all the public places, dear  
to make a scene, I’ve chosen here.  
Of all the doorways in the world  
to choose to sleep, I’ve chosen yours.  
I’m on the street, under the stars.” (Armitage, 1995, p. 14)

These lines directly connect the beggar’s cry for attention with the reader’s sense of empathy. At the end of the first line, the word “dear” indicates a pitiful desire to

connect with the listener. The speaker invites the reader into a collective reasoning and interactional space. The poet uses a pun in the title, “Give”, implying the beggar’s desire to find help from the onlookers, but he also sets a scene for the attention of the viewer by breaking the fourth wall of his performance with the audience in the form of an act of give and take. The use of stars in metaphorical double meaning as objects of freedom, solitude, and destitution. They would typically create a poetic scene, a space which has long been associated with freedom, imagination and the infinitum of the universe. However, the beggar’s speech blends a sense of autonomy and helplessness at the side-lines of the public spaces. The third stanza visualises the desperate narrator’s performative acts in the form of valuable coins and other precious metals used for financial exchanges. He says, “For coppers I can dance or sing / For silver – swallow swords, eat fire. / For gold escape from locks and chains” (Armitage, 1995, p. 14). Such actions might be observed in the circus, a space for spectacle and enchantment, where humanitarian values are problematised and monetised using the power of visual spectacle and the curiosity of humans about the limits and physical boundaries. The more valuable the coin is, the more his life can be put in danger, degrading human status and worth in urban life. Modern cities separate people from each other through economic status and according to Abyzov, people’s social and financial status determine the type, feasibility and aesthetic performance of the buildings where they live (Abyzov, 2017). As Soja (1991) suggests, uneven development can be observed in different places, but such inequalities also occur among people and neighbourhoods in the same city. In this respect, even though they share the same city, the way they live is fairly different, which brings about isolation and alienation from others in the crowd. As David Harvey (1996) suggests, “People are separated from each other for economic competition in the world by restructuring social-spatial relations through the mobility of production, capital, merchanting and marketing”. The beggar’s street circus stresses the commercialisation of human life and feelings in the modern city, where worth equals an object’s face value and marketability of identities and acts.

In the subsequent stanza, through a religious allusion from the Bible (Harrington, 1991), the narrator refers to three wise men by using frankincense and myrrh: “It is not as if I’m holding out / for frankincense or myrrh, just change.” (Armitage, 1995, p. 14). A key aspect of any religion is to share with people in need and empathise with

their conditions of existence. Through the sarcastic tone of the narrator, the poet implies that people have lost their virtue due to material desires and affairs, especially in urban life. The last word of the stanza is quite suggestive because it is a pun there, and “change” can be thought to refer simply to a coin. But why not an imperative? Armitage’s poetic wordplay may mean he might want people to change more rather than the narrator’s request. Montgomery (2011) notes that in urban areas, a fall is observed in residents in terms of morality by neglecting common values through socio-economic changes. In order to emphasise the disparity of the homeless character in “Give”, the last two lines conclude with sarcasm and a cultural reference to offering tea as a charitable and benevolent behaviour even though it is not something about generosity typically “ You give me tea. That’s big of you. / I’m on my knees. I beg of you.” (Armitage, 1995, p. 14). We can see the desperation and appreciation of the narrator at the same time. We see this loss through the alliteration of the “b” sound in the words “big” and “beg”. However, the position of being on the knees implies praying as a religious act of salvation and a loss of pride as a cultural act, which is negatively associated with the needy, sick and marginalised in society.

From the narrator’s perspective, streets are like heterotopias of crisis for beggars since they experience the sense of time and space differently from us. In essence, heterotopias are places and sites of distortion and obscurity between the familiar and the alien. They are part of the ordinary city scene but incongruent with the ordinary flow of life. These spaces bring contradictory and tense relationships between reality and imagination, new and old, acceptable and ignored, and inclusion and exclusion. Armitage turns the streets into imaginative heterotopias, challenging our sense of normalcy and reality. Beggars are the nomads of modern city life, where they visit humans as their temporary stops, marking streets as places of potent sites for encounter, reflection and transformation. Also, it is not easy for the homeless to be accepted by the society in which they live because they belong neither to the first place nor third place, as Oldenburg conceptualised. Being deprived of the first place in one’s life denotes a lack of family love, close relationships and a sense of trust. This is a pervasive human state in literature. For instance, Ishiguro’s protagonist, in his *The Remains of the Day*, can cope with the deficiency of first place thanks to having a successful achievement of third place (Maran, 2023).

Nevertheless, in Armitage's "Give", the narrator fails to belong to such places: he is deprived of home (first place), work (second place) and social life (third place). The beggars usually live in this part of the street and beg there, which juxtaposes their state as both natives and outsiders of life in the streets. "The Clown Punk", in this respect, portrays a presumably homeless who lives cleaning cars in the streets. The poem thus highlights the divergences of people forced to live together in a society. This is evident at the poem's beginning with the title, juxtaposing two suggestive words: the clown and punk. The first stanza sets the scene for this clownish beggar in the street:

"Driving home through the shonky side of town,  
three times out of ten you'll see the town clown,  
like a basket of washing that got up  
and walked, towing a dog on a rope. But" (Armitage, 2014, p. 155)

In these lines, the car appears to reflect the social division between the narrator and the beggar. The car positions the passenger differently, creating a physical barrier between the interior and exterior spaces. Driving represents a sense of passage, observation and disconnection. The part where the clown punk lives shows a grim picture of life. Armitage uses the word "shonky" instead of unreliable or elusive, which indicates that clown punk belongs to a philistine and tricky social scene where human beings are alienated from others, and the language is insufficient to describe this state of being. Where a person lives is very decisive in how his life conditions are shaped. Sapir notes that the characteristic of the physical environment in which a person lives demonstrates the extent of his/her language or vice versa (Sapir, 1912). Lenzi and Perucca (2023) also suggest that such inequalities result from income injustice and bring about societal polarisation and side-lined populations. The description of the clown punk by the narrator is derogatory but suggestive, turning him into an abject being of the unknowable amidst the city's potentially violent and impoverished scenes. The way the narrator reveals him through a simile explains how disturbing and farcical it is to see him: "like a basket of washing". The poem continues:

"don't laugh: every pixel of that man's skin  
is shot through with indelible ink;  
as he steps out at the traffic lights,  
think what he'll look in thirty years time" (Armitage, 2014, p. 155)

His mysterious identity demonstrates the clown punk's incongruity with surrounding life and the abject body tattooed all over his body. The enjambment with "don't laugh" shows once more an oxymoron between the solemnity of life and the absurdity of clown punk's physicality in these streets. His body is likened to an organic space constantly moving and ageing, a site for human experiences that is "shot" all over the place. Urban life thus appears to traumatise the human subject, who can not adapt well to its relentless reign. "Traffic lights" reveal the temporal consciousness of bystanders in such scenes, where drivers and passengers have to wait for lights to continue their daily lives. It is impossible to separate time and space in this respect, as time contributes a lot to our understanding of the impact of space on human life. Edward Soja (1991) suggests these two entities are key to a literary text, and time cannot be sufficient. "Thirty years" metaphorically refers to time's ravaging power on physical life and the clown's body, a metaphor for experiences and muted but visual traumas inscribed in the human consciousness. The third stanza underlines this power of visual imagery:

"the deflated face and shrunken scalp  
still daubed with the sad tattoos of high punk.  
You kids in the back seat who wince and scream  
when he slathers his daft mush on the windscreen" (Armitage, 2014, p. 155)

Here, the body of the clown punk is described as a collapsed chronotope, in which his youth has passed, and his body will turn into a cadaverous with possibly more metaphorical wounds and marks of corporeal and metaphysical suffering inflicted by time. The way the narrator delineates the clown punk does not allow us to feel pity for him. Metaphors such as "his daft mush" show that he is obviously frightening for the children, and they react in curiosity and terror. This is continued in the last couplet of "The Clown Punk", which starts with a poetic apostrophe, "remember the clown punk with his dyed brain, / then picture windscreen wipers, and let it rain" (Armitage, 2014, p. 155). In the first line, the use of "dyed brain" is a reference to his probably bald head full of tattoos. However, "the dyed" is also used as a pun to say "died brain", which tells that his existence in society is futile, which means this encounter between the narrator and the clown punk reflects the significance of encounters in life. Armitage's poetry displays such deliberate meetings as experiences of recognition, acceptance and our divergences. These two lines also once

more reflect the physical distance and cultural discrepancy between the people in the car and outside, the clown punk. The people disengage with the clown's existence, forgetting him quickly, as the narrator says, "and let it rain." As Webster suggests, the existence of many people depends on the perception of people living in the same society (Webster, 1934). Such people are displaced and forsaken sites of our existential lacking and angst, reinforcing our desire to attach meaning to people and events and ultimately to forget them all together by carrying on with our lives.

## 2.2. Displacement and Isolation

Displacement and isolation are topics that problematise human experience and existential crises in Armitage's poems "A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and a Slide", "The Mariner's Compass", and "Lockdown". In the poems, displacement and isolation are significant in the contexts of "space" and human subjects.

"Lockdown" was published on the Guardian website on 21 March 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a Poet Laureate, Armitage could not remain unresponsive to the impact of a massive pandemic on the whole world. The poem links past and present as closely related parts of human reality during the government and institutions' imposed lockdown on people. It positions the imprisoned human soul within a historical discourse of other pandemics, particularly touching upon the feelings of affection between people in their struggle for reunion through alternative and creative ways. Their corresponding messages signify human resilience at demanding times and the power of love beyond physical boundaries. The poem describes this retelling in a historiographic attempt to recontextualise the current pandemic's timeless reverberations through the following lines:

"And I couldn't escape the waking dream  
of infected fleas  
in the warp and weft of soggy cloth  
by the tailor's hearth  
in ye olde Eyam.  
Then couldn't un-see  
the Boundary Stone,  
that cock-eyed dice with its six dark holes,  
thimbles brimming with vinegar wine  
purging the plagued coins.

Which brought to mind the sorry story  
of Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre,  
star-crossed lovers on either side  
of the quarantine line  
whose wordless courtship spanned the river  
*till she came no longer ...*" (Armitage, 2020)

This poem consists of 17 couplets and references from two important historical events: the heart-breaking story of Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre and the story of Yaksha from a lyric poem called "Meghaduta" in Sanskrit. The poem features two stories: the first part is about Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre during the plague in Eyam, Derbyshire village. As we read both poems, we dive into his mastery of imagery. The narrator gives a detailed description of how the pandemic was spread to the village in "Lockdown": "in the warp and weft of soggy cloth / by tailor's hearth / in ye old Eyam." (Armitage, 2020). The plague was spread due to the interaction of people in the village with other people using a "soggy" cloth. However, the village's symbol, Eyam, is "the Boundary Stone", as Armitage explains, which is an essential object for people to protect themselves from the plague. The stone is a good example of how interaction without physical contact could be necessary for humans when dealing with external conflicts and natural forces. Their need for interaction can improve their innovations, exceed physical boundaries' parameters, and allow human creativity.

Despite all conscious efforts for human interaction in the village, the outcome is unpredictable and beyond human control. The love between Emmott and Rowland ends up in the death of Emmott as she does not come to the river to meet his lover, Rowland, as the narrator says: "Which brought to mind the sorry story / of Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre / star-crossed lovers on either side / of the quarantine line / whose wordless courtship spanned the river / *till she came no longer.*" (Armitage, 2020). The poet alludes to the tale of Emmott Syddall-Rowland Torre, the lovers who are parted as a result of the general quarantine by the borderlines of Eyam. This tale arouses a sense of romantic tragedy about two characters' love, which is tragically destined to further isolation and longing at the crossroads of life, such as disasters, wars and other sufferings. The poem's persona emphasises the isolating power and ruthless reality of the plague in human life, which ends with separating the two lovers.

The Boundary Stone most likely alludes to a tangible emblem of Eyam's isolation. Like the six dice pips, the stone's "six dark holes" refer to fate and destiny. This image suggests that the COVID-19 lockdown is uncontrollable, much like a dice. Inferring that the pictures of illness, death, and quarantine are eerie and enduring, the speaker cannot "un-see" it. In this respect, the plague becomes an extended metaphor for separation and loss. The eternal separation of the lovers represents physical isolation. Therefore, this poem represents hope and loss as two forces oscillating in the darkest times of human life.

In the second part of Armitage's "Lockdown", the narrator sleeps again and sees another dream. This is another allusion to a different poem *Meghaduta*, by Kalidasa in Sanskrit this time. "Yaksha", who ignored his duties, was sent to exile by the god of wealth. The narrator sees the adventures of Yaksha in his dream vibrantly: "bamboo forests and snow-hatted peaks, /waterfalls, creeks, / the hieroglyphs of wide-winged cranes/ and the glistening lotus flower after rain" (Armitage, 2020). The places in which Yaksha was discovered and passed are given in a descriptive way. The speaker switches between dreamlike visions and the historical truth of the plague containing a mythical element. Once upon a time, the "passing cloud" was a means of communication between Yaksha and his wife during his exile. Yaksha, a soul in Buddhist/Hindu mythology, embodies the speaker's desire for communication and human interaction beyond life's physical and emotional barriers. The poem thus implies that love transcends the confines of memories, beliefs, and plans, becoming a source for creative imagination in literature and religions.

Yaksha wanted to send a message to his wife since he missed her a lot. He thought the best way was to send it through a cloud following him as a kind of personification, "a cloud that followed an earthly map / of camel trails and cattle tracks" (Armitage, 2020). He manages it by describing the cloud everywhere he sees. In the end, the city where his wife lives is seen, and the message is delivered. The reason why Armitage used such an allusion might be the fact that he wants to show that these periods of time can be a kind of adventure for human beings to discover themselves as Yaksha discovered lots of places given with vivid images including personification: snow-hatted peaks and onomatopoeia: glistening lotus.

The poet's multi-layered narrative on the relevance between emotional and historical isolation is revealed in "Lockdown". The persona interweaves the

mythological and symbolic, revealing the interconnections between the current lockdown and historical epidemics. In conclusion, the poem challenges the reader to consider the shared human experience of quarantine and forced isolation and how love and connection persevere through adversity by personal loss with a more general experience of confinement. A “cloud” carrying the Yaksha’s message follows a map of “camel trails and cattle tracks,” a voyage that appears as a methodical, gradual procedure signifying universality. The “earthly map” raises images of a long journey or pilgrimage. A “cloud” carrying the Yaksha’s message follows a map of “camel trails and cattle tracks,” a voyage that appears as a methodical and universal process as if it denotes a notion of pilgrimage or extended voyage. The “necklaces” of streams, “fan-tailed peacocks,” “painted elephants,” and other intricately detailed images allude to the lively life that lives outside the lockdown’s boundaries while also reflecting the attractiveness of the outside world.

The isolation between Yaksha and his wife is essential to the allusion between COVID-19 and the mythological story of the two lovers’ separation. Armitage connects this story of Yaksha with our time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though it is a long isolation or displacement from the outside world, he expects the end to be great as he hopes to regain what he loses. Similarly, many people could find something better in themselves during the lockdown and benefit from the time that was spared for them rather than seeing it as futile and meaningless. Rotter challenges the conventional view of waiting as stagnant, suggesting that individuals often find meaning and agency in their prolonged waiting experiences, such as in contexts like asylum-seeking (Rotter, 2015). During lockdowns, people are confined to their own spaces, which makes the situation quite unpleasant and difficult to deal with both physically and personally, inasmuch as they struggle more to get used to the stasis and monotony of their lives. At the same time, they are isolated from the place where they feel safe and content.

Armitage’s poem “A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and Slide” presents a pitiful portrayal of the displaced subject in the form of a Christ relic, which was published in his *The Dead Sea Poems* in 1995. The poem mainly describes a scene in which the narrator finds a sculpture of Christ. It explains how priceless it could have been to find him under normal circumstances, but this time, the statue is like garbage and has no importance at all, even though it had a great value in advance. In the poem,

the narrator finds Christ's statue presumably in a dumpsite. He explains the situation and how miserable it is with the word "slab":

"I found him like a fossil in the rock,  
in the slab, waiting to be broken out."  
Others I've chiselled have burst from the blocks  
like genies from lamps, and one creature sprang" (Armitage, 1995, p. 18)

We find a sorry portrayal of the displaced subject. This description might even be a reaction to society in a way that people have lost their values and significant symbols. Armitage uses the symbol of Christ as a tool to expand the isolation of modern humanity in that modern people's isolation in society turns detrimental to their disposition and subdues human connection and the value of relics and tribute for the culture central to unifying people around ideas and objects. The poem continues: The council bought him, stuck him in the park, / as out of place as a dog in a church." After completion, the sculpture was possibly established in a public park by the local council, a governing body. The poet suggests that the figure is incompatible and out of place in its location. In the same sense, a dog would be in a church. The contrast is the tension between the sacred and the secular—the image of Christ, typically a figure of reverence, is placed in a public space where people might not necessarily understand or respect its religious significance.

The second stanza of "A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and Slide" starts with the same aspect until the first caesura, after which we see a change in the tone and the point of view of the narrator quite dramatically in an even more negative way. There is a run-on line between the first and the second stanza, which Armitage does deliberately to attract the attention of his readers: "like a jack from a box. But not this one: / I took back the stone like flesh from a bone / while he dozed, sleeping it off on his cross." (Armitage, 1995, p. 18). It would typically be great to reach such a great statue like a jackbox, but this time, it is not, for it is in a terrible circumstance as described. The last stanza writes:

"The council bought him, stuck him in the park,  
as out of place as a dog in a church.  
The simple people came, told him secrets,  
dressed him with flowers and polished his face,  
put sweets in his mouth and gave him a name.

That's when I saw the thing these hands had made." (Armitage, 1995, p. 18).

The first two lines are quite striking in terms of space. Parks do not have a religious position or a sacred association unless built for this purpose. A contrast with the idea of "respect" is also observable in these lines. By placing a sacred object in a communal environment, Armitage reveals the disconnection between the fact that parks can be a secular place and the sacred position of Christ. The harsh simile between Christ and a dog strikingly reflects how the perception and respect of people have changed towards their values, which proves how isolated we have become from our own values as Alsalloum & Brown suggest, for instance, the displacement of communities can result in a loss of cultural assets and values, complicating efforts for reconciliation and rebuilding (2019). This loss affects the displaced individuals and alters the perceptions of those who remain, as the values associated with community and belonging are disrupted. Accordingly, people have looked for meaning or guidance throughout the centuries.

"The Mariner's Compass" was published in 2014 in his book *Paper Aeroplane: Selected Poems 1989-2014*. The poem is about a mariner who suffers from isolation and displacement due to his occupation but wishes to find some joy and meaning in this kind of life. Armitage's sarcastic tone here is quite apparent and deliberate. The poem describes this as follows:

"Living alone, I'm sailing the world  
single-handed in a rented house.  
Last week I rounded the Cape of Good Hope,  
came through in one piece;  
this morning, flying fish  
lying dead in the porch with the post.  
I peg out duvet covers and sheets  
to save fuel when the wind blows,  
tune the engine so it purrs all night  
like a fridge, run upstairs  
with the old-fashioned thought  
of plotting a course by the stars.  
Friends wave from the cliffs,  
talk nervously about the coast-guard station.  
Under the rules, close contact  
with another soul means disqualification." (Armitage, 2014, p. 93)

In the poem, the narrator does not feel like he belongs to the world where he lives, referring to it as “a rented house” to explain the space shaping his self and identity. He takes pains to emphasise his success as what he achieved is very difficult, as indicated in the metaphor “I rounded the Cape of Good Hope”, in which the ship goes through an intricate part of its journey safely. This refers to a well-known hazardous journey for sailors, through which the speaker indicates having experienced tough times, figuratively signifying the obstacles and mental burden of such a journey. The sense of achievement of making an imagined space into a real one gives pleasure to the narrator, but this state of existence also disturbs him because he does not feel like he belongs in that place. The persona likens his solitary and secluded life to a mariner’s life, who travels around the world single-handedly. The word “single-handed” accentuates the sense of isolation, which juxtaposes the metaphor “sailing the world”, which, in turn, signifies a constant state of passage and the vast sea space. He calls his metaphorical ship a rented house to state life’s transience or the futility of material ownership, which can signify the speaker’s temporary state, feeling unsettled in his mind and physical world. Since the ship on the sea is not the actual home of the mariner, the sense of safety and comfort are distant memories for him. Such transitions occur in people’s lives as they change places, and places change their sense of meaning. According to Lefebvre (1991), space is generated as a dynamic process shaped by social relations and circumstances. When someone does not feel comfortable where they live, calling it “a rented house”, it becomes impossible to create a social and emotional bond. Therefore, the persona appears to state this uneasiness by metaphorically referring to the space in which he is confined during his long life journey.

In the second stanza, Armitage reacts to the people's perception of such a life. However, from the narrator’s perspective, Armitage shows how life could be dull and stereotypical when focused on daily routines: “I peg out duvet covers and sheets / to save fuel when the wind blows,” (Armitage, 2014, p. 93). Also, the poet writes about specific spaces very interestingly, such as “porch”, to explain where boundaries occur between the internal and external world. The oxymoron “flying fish” makes us think about the difficulty mariners face in adapting to sea life. He has to develop his survival skills to survive in such a condition.

In the third stanza, the narrator's experiences remind him of his house with the onomatopoeia of "purring" sounds like a fridge in his kitchen. This sea life becomes like a heterotopia of crisis for the mariner as the ship is a metaphor against the standard conditions of life. Also, running upstairs to look at the stars may refer to seeking a new perspective on his circumstances, introducing nature as a source of direction and inspiration for humans for centuries. These lines can be interpreted in two different ways: the mariner cannot find his way easily and navigates by looking up at the sky as he can see nothing but stars, or the stars demonstrate a new way of thinking about his own life. Either way, the narrator sets out to find his chosen path in life through difficult and lonely times.

In the last part of "The Mariner's Compass", the narrator sighs, "Under the rules, close contact / with another soul means disqualification" (Armitage, 2014, p. 93). The conditions of maritime life, such as isolation and displacement, have troubling outcomes for the person who is similarly barred from social life. The poem "Lockdown" narrates the human desire for close interaction during the pandemic. Using "coast-guard station" strengthens the sense of boundaries he has to follow, and his willingness to engage with the outside world appears unrealistic. The poem's tone in these lines reinforces the deterioration of the social subject exposed to significant isolation (Wang et al., 2023). In the poem, the contact of a mariner with other people, including his friends, is somewhat limited. He states, "Friends wave from the cliffs, / talk nervously from the coastguard station" (Armitage, 2014, p. 93). Therefore, his sense of isolation and displacement grows in a realm of physical solitude and mental strive to see the limits of his endurance in a journey through the wilderness of nature and his very soul.

Displacement and isolation are two important sub-themes of "space", especially when they are examined in connection with human life. The general tendency of Armitage's selected poems is to feature an adverse implication of these on human life. The poet also shows that both concepts are vital themes in portraying human subjects seeking meaning and interaction in modern life. His poetry, in this sense, offers a reimagining of the constancy of human desire for communication, empathy and physical connection with the surrounding environment and society. "Lockdown," "A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and Slide", and The Mariner's Compass reveal how their poetic world finds a paradoxical struggle in life and narrates

stories of human acceptance and rejection as well as attachment and isolation in the contemporary world.

### 2.3. Journey and Exploration

In Armitage's poetry, journey and exploration have a significant role. The poet personally reflects on his observation of the environment in his poetry. As mentioned in the Introduction, Armitage studied geography, and his ability to portray and reflect upon the environment is evident in his art. Beydemir suggests that the poet's ability to "zoom in" on the mundane aspects of life allows readers to engage with the subtleties of their surroundings, transforming the ordinary into a site of exploration and reflection (Beydemir, 2023). Thanks to this gift, Armitage can delineate everyday objects or places with great detail and transform them into imaginative journeys into life and its various settings. Hühn notes that Armitage's poetic skills enhance the readers' sense of journey and exploration (Hühn, 2023). In Armitage's poetry, we often see the progression of thought and transformation of places into exploration spaces through journeys.

David Seamon (1979) claims that body mobility is the key to discovering or exploring a place. For example, when designing a room, we look at it from different perspectives to find the best way to design it, which requires even a short exploration of the room. On the other hand, Allan Pred argues that place is something fixed and visible and possible to measure, so he calls this perception "little more frozen scenes for human activity" (Pred, 1984, p. 279). However, like Seamon, Pred believes that a place has a process and never finishes; instead, it "becomes" (Pred, 1984). Place is, he also adds, "what takes place ceaselessly, what contributes to history in a specific context through the creation and utilisation of a physical setting" (Pred, 1984, p. 279). We can assume that place is always transformative, but this transformation is often part of a literal or metaphorical journey and exploration.

If we think of an author's or poet's mind as crossing the limits and scouting, observing new explorations in their work becomes quite possible. Therefore, it includes literal and metaphorical travels, questing for identity, and internal understanding and meaning. Clancy suggests that poetry itself, as a vehicle for autoethnographic exploration, is an excellent tool for expressing people's experiences

and emotions (Clancy, 2017). Poetry can reveal and handle specific individual and societal issues as well. There can be some literal or metaphorical migration from problems in a poem, and the narrator or the protagonist, as Bejines explains, can come up with self-realization, relief and solutions to problems through a journey and exploration (Bejines, 2023). Accordingly, this idea is similar to Zussman's exploration of freedom, which includes physical and moral journeys that reflect the power of such experiences by examining poets' identities, social roles and human condition (Zussman, 2021).

An interesting point about the journey concept in Armitage's poetry is that characters generally return home after a journey, as Childs claims as if home is a place where journeys must be completed (2012). Armitage's "It Ain't What You Do It's What It Does To You" was published in 2021 in a paperback edition of *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*. The poem's title is an allusion to a song by Ella Fitzgerald, released in 1939. The poem is like a projector that displays the narrator's memories and narrates the powerful impact of events and activities on his sense of self. The poet uses various enjambments to maintain a quick flow in the poem. Similar poetic tone and flow can also be seen in Armitage's "The Tyre," which appears in *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*. Similar to "It Ain't What You Do It's What It Does To You," this poem also portrays a metaphorical journey, but this time, we can observe a tyre's tour in the form of experience, the transformational impact of life in the fluid human existence, and cycles of recurrent memories that shape who we are in the modern world. "It Ain't What You Do It's What It Does To You" starts with:

"I have not bummed across America  
with only a dollar to spare, one pair  
of busted Levi's and a bowie knife.  
I have lived with thieves in Manchester" (Armitage, 2021, p. 42).

The first stanza successfully calls readers' attention through vivid descriptions and the poem's main idea. The narrator feels sad about what he has been doing in his life as he claims he has spent his life with thieves. America is the new world for Westerners, where people hope to journey from rags to rich fairy tales or reach better conditions anyhow (Jones, 2009). Armitage reveals that the narrator desires to be there even though his position may not be different from that of an ordinary person in America, stereotyping an outcast in "Levi's" and with "a bowie knife". America has

become an idealised place, a utopic space for journeys and new experiences. Space thus transforms the human self into a dynamic process influenced by the context (Lefebvre, 1991), transforming and restoring identities and social associations into the dynamic spatial understanding of who we are and how we define our role in the cultural context.

The second stanza continues the narrator's desire to have this journey through another part of the world:

“I have not padded through the Taj Mahal,  
barefoot, listening to the space between  
each footfall picking up and putting down  
its print against the marble floor. But I” (Armitage, 2021, p. 42).

The narrator tells us his yearning to discover new places is a great pleasure and contribution to one's life. He reveals how sad he is about missing this experience in his life. Again, the stanza has enjambments, which helps the poem flow, but this time, it is possible to see the impact of the alliteration of the “p” sound on what the narrator feels: gloom and remorse. Moreover, in today's world, millions of people travel and visit landmarks of countries. Visiting places, especially masterpieces and cultural sites, gives people great pleasure and experience. Undoubtedly, the Taj Mahal is one of the significant landmarks, which is perceived as both a religious and historical site, as well as consistently being a source of joy and pleasant experiences (Sinha, Harkness & Harkness, 2009). Not being able to walk through such a famous and emblematic place upsets the adventurous narrator because he cannot experience it. Here, the narrator would like to have his ideal heterotopia to evoke experiences in his life. The third stanza carries this longing to the spaces of experience in the following lines:

“skimmed flat stones across Black Moss on a day  
so still I could hear each set of ripples  
as they crossed. I felt each stone's momentum  
spend itself against the water; then sink.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 42).

This stanza is set in Black Moss Reservoirs in the UK. The narrator appears to be Armitage himself, as this place is very close to Huddersfield, where he grew up. He makes a comparison between experiencing the Taj Mahal and Black Moss. Whereas the description of the former is quite vivid, the monotony and disappointment of the

latter are quite striking. The caesura in the third line provides a stopping point and reflects how difficult it is for the narrator to talk about his monotonous and static memories of places in his mind. Even though the narrator is disturbed by the memories he experienced in certain places, he cannot stop them. Smith and Vela (2001) suggest that memory becomes repetitive through the effect of the environment and becomes challenging to get rid of when a particular environment is exposed to dependent and lingering memory. These memories also sink and wither, disappearing metaphorically into blurred images like the stones in the water of Black Moss. The poem uses locations like America, the Taj Mahal or experiences such as “skimming flat stones across Black Moss” as lived and un-lived possibilities of different sensations and lives, representing missed opportunities, richness of life and cultures and long-forgone memories of the past for human subjects. On the other hand, the spaces where characters are reflects their psychology. For instance, Armitage uses Black Moss to emphasise the sense of absence and remorse, whereas the Taj Mahal or America represent ideal places for presence and experience. In the fourth stanza, remorse for what he could not do constitutes the central idea.

“I have not toyed with a parachute chord  
while perched on the lip of a light aircraft;  
but I held the wobbly head of a boy  
at the day centre, and stroked his fat hands.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 42).

The description of skydiving is obvious here, and the narrator would like to test his limits and experience this sense of freedom instead of dealing with ordinary people in his place. Once again, the importance of Oldenburg’s third place is represented by the people around us, and the environment depends on third place. Therefore, our personal growth is directly related to the external world.

In the fifth stanza, Armitage shows the readers how the narrator feels about what he could not have done in his life.

“And I guess that the tightness in the throat  
and the tiny cascading sensation  
somewhere inside us are both part of that  
sense of something else. That feeling, I mean.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 42)

All those dreams are given as “the tightness in the throat”. Armitage uses the throat as a metaphor to reinforce the meaning and impression of remorse and anxiety. Accordingly, this feeling is materialised in a sigh and tightness in the throat, as the narrator would have never felt these sensations in his life. Also, the throat is directly related to a person’s breathing and speech ability to articulate his thoughts and emotions (Adelman, Estes & Cossu, 2018). This feeling is revealed not only as a mental but a physical symptom. As in the third stanza, Armitage uses caesura in the poem's final line: “That feeling, I mean”, referring to the strange feeling about how the narrator cannot articulate the inexpressible pain.

“The Tyre” is a very striking poem that can be handled in two different aspects: the literal journey of the tyre itself and the metaphorical journey of humans in their lives through the object of tyre. In this sense, the fourth stanza is all about the remorse from which the narrator suffers in his journey deep into his imagination. The narrator does not know where the tyre came from, which makes us curious because it makes an enigmatic beginning:

Just how it came to rest where it rested,  
 miles out, miles from the last farmhouse, even,  
 was a fair question. Dropped by hurricane  
 or aeroplane perhaps for some reason,  
 put down as a cairn or marker, then lost.  
 Tractor-size, six or seven feet across,  
 it was sloughed, unconscious, warm to the touch,  
 its gashed, rhinoceros, sea-lion skin  
 nursing a gallon of rain in its gut.  
 Lashed to the planet with grasses and roots,  
 it had to be cut. Stood up it was drunk  
 or slugged, wanted nothing more than to slump,  
 to spiral back to its circle of sleep,  
 dream another year in its nest of peat.  
 We bullied it over the moor, drove it,  
 pushed from the back or turned it from the side,  
 unspooling a thread in the shape and form  
 of its tread, in its length, and in its line,  
 rolled its weight through broken walls, felt the shock  
 when it met with stones, guided its sleepwalk  
 down to meadows, fields, onto level ground.

There and then we were one connected thing,  
 five of us, all hands steering a tall ship  
 or one hand fingering a coin or ring. (Armitage, 2021, p. 21).

When the narrator captures this tyre and probably his friends, referred to as the “five of us”, they torment it since they feel that they are the owners of this tyre. This tyre is personified in the human journey through life, in which we lose our value as the objects of our lives, and other people start to control our lives. Thus, they torment and disrespect the tyre: “We bullied it over the moor, drove it, / pushed from the back or turned it from the side” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21). No matter how far individuals run away from this torture, unfortunately, it turns into a cycle of torment. The first stanza can be analysed from Edward Soja’s “trialectics of spatiality”. The Moor can be considered the firstplace, a remote and real place where the narrator and his friends live. The Moor influences people’s social life; therefore, it becomes like a “locale”, conceptualised as a meaningful location (John Agnew) because a locale is a material setting for social life (1987). However, here, we can see the absence of social life in The Moor. There are also speculations about the past of the tyre, which refers to Soja’s secondspace, which is about speculated spaces. Finally, children play and bully the tyre inside that moor, turning it into a third place.

In the next stanza, readers can see how insignificant the tyre has become in people's daily routines. As per above, the tyre may be interpreted as an object that people do not care about its value in the ordinary course of daily activities and happenings. Armitage demonstrates the way the tyre is lost through urban hustle and bustle: “life carved open, gardens in half, parted, / a man on a motorbike taken down, / a phone-box upended, children erased” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21). These lines reveal that the narrator and his friends lose the tyre and are curious about where it is. Nevertheless, it is not possible to find it anywhere. They imagine that the tyre is somewhere hiding without making any sign reflecting his own place: “the tyre itself embedded in a house / or lying in a gutter, playing dead” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21). Metaphorically, like a tyre, our existence moves continuously and accumulates experiences, feelings and memories, which have significance for us but cannot be understood entirely by others. Life here becomes a monstrous mechanism devouring multiple moments and desires, which continues without paying attention to the human desire for knowing and understanding. The poet’s desire to penetrate these diverse

experiences and inner realms of physical existence turns into an impossible desire for “becoming” and experiencing ever-changing moments, which surpass the physical boundaries of human existence and the harsh reality of incessantly- passing time in the temporal universe of being.

In the last two stanzas of “The Tyre”, we can see a similar kind of sadness just like in “It Ain’t What You Do It’s What It Does To You”. The poem continues:

But down in the village the tyre was gone,  
 and not just gone but unseen and unheard of,  
 not curled like a cat in the graveyard, not  
 cornered in the playground like a reptile,  
 or found and kept like a giant fossil.  
 Not there or anywhere. No trace. Thin air.  
 Being more in tune with the feel of things  
 than science and facts, we knew that the tyre  
 had travelled too fast for its size and mass,  
 and broken through some barrier of speed,  
 outrun the act of being driven, steered,  
 and at that moment gone beyond itself  
 towards some other sphere, and disappeared.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21).

The poem's tone indicates a feeling of remorse, which can be linked to the vanishing of the tyre. The narrator shows this feeling because he lost something he possessed and could not join the tyre in its journey: “Not there or anywhere. No trace. Thin air.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21). However, towards the end of the poem, the narrator implies that the tyre continues its journey, but he has no idea about what it is doing exactly: “outrun the act of being driven, steered, / and at that moment gone beyond itself / towards some other sphere, and disappeared.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 21). The interesting feeling in these two poems is that the narrators feel sad due to their failure to have experience and the adventure of the journey. Although “It Ain’t What You Do It’s What It Does To You” and “The Tyre” focus on different aspects of journey and exploration as metaphors for human curiosity as well as a thirst for new experiences in life and his ultimate disappointment about the unattainability of these wishes as a harsh reality of the physical and spatial impossibility of life of excitement generated by experiences. The poem here features a firstspace for the human subject. The village

can also be perceived as firstplace, referring to the home. The tyre turns into a restless soul which can not endure the monotony and stasis of home (in the village).

Furthermore, the tyre disappears inexplicably and the poem subverts the capacity of spatial reality into a metaphorical journey where spatial logic is broken. An imaginative form of space (a thirdspace) blurs the persona's grasp of reality and the Tyre's denotative power as a source of inspiration. In Armitage's poetry, localisation and spatial narration of the familiar and imaginative places are intermingled with a postmodern vision of surpassing the physical boundaries of life into a fictional journey of personification and imaginative reality, reinforcing our spatial conception of life.

Armitage's "Mother, Any Distance" has been published in *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*. This poem is mainly about the relationship between the narrator and his mother. The persona explains how important his mother is to him while he is about to move to a new place in the following lines:

"Mother, any distance greater than a single span  
requires a second pair of hands.  
You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,  
the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors.  
You at the zero end, me with the spool of tape, recording  
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base, then leaving  
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling  
years between us. Anchor. Kite.  
I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb  
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something  
has to give;  
two floors below, your fingertips still pinch  
the last one-hundredth of an inch . . . I reach  
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky  
to fall or fly." (Armitage, 2021, p. 46).

The first two lines of the first stanza, "Mother, any distance greater than a single span / requires a second pair of hands." (Armitage, 2021, p. 46), exactly reveal his physical and mental connection to his mother. His mother's place in his life is so important that even the distance being "a single span" is unbearable for the reader because he needs his mother's hands. Although the persona is old and mature enough to be able to survive in a different house on his own, his mom's help is pretty visible

through Armitage's descriptions: "You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors, / the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors" (Armitage, 2021, p. 46). Furthermore, due to these spaces, he probably will not be able to come together with her mom as often as he wishes; therefore, the first stanza finishes in a gloomier tone. On the other hand, these measurements may even refer to spaces and areas to be discovered after moving, as the narrator will be freer. The poem has many references to attempting a journey because the narrator is obviously moving to a new place and is keen to discover new places and his new life. According to Childs, "Many of Armitage's poems are structured around journey" (2012, p. 99), and "Mother, Any Distance" is like the beginning of a journey away from "home," which is a place that reflects comfort and safety for a person. The persona moves from dependence to independence by moving to his own house. Moreover, this freedom will be provided by the journey that the narrator is about to begin. The narrator feels safe and comfortable in his first place, which serves as a space where the person spends a substantial portion of his time. Intimate relationships also mark this space and are crucial for emotional recovery, reinforcing family bonds, and encouraging self-reflection. Interactions here are typically more introspective rather than social. Comfort and self-expression hold importance, especially within close relationships. Personal spaces are essential for emotional healing, familial connections, and contemplation. Here, Armitage lets out images of his new house, potentially referring to peaceful days with her mom through their own home descriptions. Correspondingly, an emotional landscape through "the acres of the walls" and "the prairies of the floors" refers to significant distances, reflecting his separation from his place and his mom.

In the second stanza of "Mother, Any Distance", the strong relationship between the narrator and his mother is revealed again more profoundly. The first line of the second stanza features the oxymoron "zero end", which demonstrates that the beginning and the end of the narrator's life is his mom: He says, "You at the zero end, me with the spool of tape, recording/length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base". The narrator gives the link between himself and his mother through a tape and its spool image by emphasizing that his mom is the centre of his life, and this spool of tape metaphor may refer to the umbilical cord through which the mom gives life to her baby as Cortizo suggests the relation and interaction between the baby and mother have a reciprocal effect after birth (2019). Thanks to this metaphor, the narrator proves

this link within a physical connection. Thus, no matter how far the narrator goes away, he cannot be separated from his mom, both mentally and physically. The rest of the second stanza also displays a similar metaphor “then leaving / up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling/ years between us. Anchor. Kite.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 46). Armitage uses the mom here as the anchor of a kite while the narrator is the kite itself, which mystifies the role of the mom for the narrator as the centre of his life. Even though he plans to be in a different place, his freedom depends on his mom’s will and control. Moreover, as the kite, he is kept and protected by his mom as the anchor, no matter how far he reaches in the sky.

In the third, the last, stanza, just like the previous stanzas, the narrator finds traces and control of his mom in his new house: “two floors below, your fingertips still pinch / the last one – hundredth of an inch... I reach” (Armitage, 2021, p. 46). At the end of the poem, Armitage uses the word “hatch”, which refers to the cover of the opening of a roof at the end of the stanza: “... I reach / towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky / to fall or fly” (Armitage, 2021, p. 46). The narrator opens that hatch and finally reaches freedom. However, here, “hatch” is also an interesting word, referring to breaking the egg to be able to come out. This means the narrator is like a little bird that can fly or fall, as stated in the poem's end. However, whatever he does, it will be his own decision as a free person because all his actions will be his own discovery of the world.

On the other hand, in the last stanza, the journey and sense of exploration are associated with a sense of displacement after his cosy house by referring to empty bedrooms and empty spaces at home, ending by reaching the endless sky. Thain (2001) states that Armitage’s poetry has the function of exploring the world from the outside. This exploration is a predicament for the narrator’s personal growth and sense of freedom, even though it is complex and inevitable, according to Greene, Tehranifar, Hernandez-Cordero, and Fullilove (2011). The inevitable need for a journey to the third place for the narrator is underlined. He has to give this journey a try to attain his personal growth. However, this is on a thin line and may fail easily due to his extreme dependency.

The poem, “Zoom!” is in *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems*. Just like in “Mother, Any Distance”, it promotes the significance of journey and exploration in life.

“It begins as a house, an end terrace  
 in this case  
     but it will not stop there. Soon it is  
 an avenue  
     which cambers arrogantly past the Mechanics' Institute,  
 turns left  
     at the main road without even looking  
 and quickly it is  
     a town with all four major clearing banks,  
 a daily paper  
     and a football team pushing for promotion.

    On it goes, oblivious of the Planning Acts,  
 the green belts,  
     and before we know it it is out of our hands:  
 city, nation,  
     hemisphere, universe, hammering out in all directions  
 until suddenly,  
     mercifully, it is drawn aside through the eye  
 of a black hole  
     and bulleted into a neighbouring galaxy, emerging  
 smaller and smoother  
     than a billiard ball but weighing more than Saturn.

    People stop me in the street, badger me  
 in the check-out queue  
     and ask "What is this, this that is so small  
 and so very smooth  
     but whose mass is greater than the ringed planet?"  
 It's just words  
     I assure them. But they will not have it." (Armitage, 2021, p. 45).

This time, Armitage displays it through the existence of an unknown “it” until the poem's end, yet we learn that “it” signifies writing itself. The poem is mainly about the journey and exploration of the world as a metaphorical reference to the power of writing. “Zoom!” has three stanzas; the first one starts with the places the narrator sees. He describes them as if staying somewhere up or looking through a binocular because the change of places is observed quite swiftly “at the main road without even looking

/ and quickly it is / a town with all four major clearing banks, / a daily paper / and a football team pushing for promotion.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 45). It is understood that “it” penetrates every layer of life; obviously, as Vincent suggests, writing improves one’s self-identity and vision in life, especially poetry (Vincent, 2020).

Armitage, like in “Mother, Any Distance”, describes the movement and journey in the first stanza. He vividly prepares readers for this journey, facilitating a more genuine and authentic experience. In the following stanza of “Zoom!”, the narrator describes “it” as something belonging to the whole of humanity by saying “and before we know it, it is out of our hands;” (Armitage, 2021, p. 45). “It” thus refers to the massive spatial existence of our galaxy: “hemisphere, universe, hammering out in all directions” (Armitage, 2021, p. 45).

Accordingly, the experience and exploration in writing are limitless; we can go further and deeper than physical travel. Towards the end of the stanza, we can clearly see the power of writing for our world by making a comparison between a billiard ball and Saturn: “smaller and smoother / than a billiard ball but weighing more than Saturn.” (Armitage, 2021 p. 45). In the last stanza, Armitage describes people doing nothing or taking no action. They have no difference from each other because they all live the same kind of futile and dull life (People stop me in the street, badger me / in the check-out queue” (Armitage, 2021, p. 45), yet they ask the narrator about the “mass” which refers to writing as a link between physical reality and mental conceptualisation. It is now visible in people’s eyes. However, the narrator claims that such people cannot have or feel the power of writing: “I assure them. But they will not have it.” (Armitage, 2021, p. 45). Correspondingly, staying stock – still or doing simply nothing is a sickness of today’s people that Armitage would like to emphasise. Being able to experience this journey becomes simply impossible when you are such a person wasting time. People need to take action to live through the fulfilment of a journey in the form of an exploration by writing. The problem is like living or dying without experiencing, and we can see a similar approach towards exploration and journey in “Mother, Any Distance” as well. The fulfilment through exploration is all about taking action, as we can see in “Mother, Any Distance” “to fall or fly” (Armitage, 2021, p. 42). In “Zoom!” Houses, terraces, and supermarkets are all examples of firstspace in Soja’s “trialectics of spatiality”. The universe is not perceived as an abstraction but as a rational progression in an unstoppable expansion,

which converts it into a secondspace. Secondspace is important to understand people's circumstances and how busy and careless they can become towards anything in their world. Holding to the second place gives individuals a sense of purpose and identity. Interactions in this context mainly focus on professional roles and responsibilities. Social exchanges are usually related to job tasks and duties. Armitage is quite striking in depicting the transition of places in the poem by zooming in and out. The black hole turns into an evasive and fluid concept where the meaning changes into a figurative crossroad, which spatially is both the centre and end of the symbolic universe.

#### **2.4. The Intersections of Space and Time: Chronotope**

In analysing a literary text, Edward Soja reacts against the idea that time is over space, which impairs the proper analysis of a text as one leg of a compass (space) is neglected. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope compensates for this inseparable and equal relationship between time and space. Unlike the traditional, static interpretations of time and space, the chronotope actively shapes characters and narratives. Characters evolve concerning their specific temporal and spatial contexts, as every literary work exists within definable/indefinable time and space arrangements. This context significantly impacts the narrative's progression/regression, character development and subjectivity of experiences depicted in literature. Accordingly, in this part of the thesis, two poems of Armitage, "Harmonium" and "Floral Tribute", will be analysed in the light of Bakhtin's concept of chronotope.

Armitage's poetry constructs "time" from multiple perspectives concerning the human condition, comparing many personal and shared experiences. It is possible to see various sub-topics related to time in his poetry. Moreover, in Armitage's poetry, his poetic vision enables readers to witness and experience dynamism because he can wisely depict various aspects of time-space and space-time. Hühn explains how a poem is conveyed and influences meaning significantly, especially its sequence and narration (Hühn, 2023). Armitage often uses such methods to find personal connections, such as Armitage's personal experiences and the links between the readers and their lives. In his poetry, nostalgia links spatial and temporal marks as part of a more complete sense of reality and a window to poetic authenticity in memory.

Memory and nostalgia are critical elements and themes to reinforce the meaning, re/deconstruct past experiences and consolidate them in the fictional and literary world of imagination and artistic creativity, delineating his personal experiences quite successfully in various constructions of present time and spatial existence. He encourages his readers to question their dealings with past and present, revealing personal dilemmas, social matters and their psychological echos. Gavins and Stockwell suggest that using memory in poetry makes it more emotional, allowing readers to understand poems on a deeper level (Gavins & Stockwell, 2012). Armitage builds connections between himself and his readers through his poetry in spatio-temporal imagination. Therefore, this part of the thesis will look at Armitage's poems "Harmonium" and "Floral Tribute" through Bakhtin's concept of chronotype.

Armitage's poem "Harmonium" was published in *Magnetic Field: The Marsden Poems* in 2020. The poem consolidates the relationship between the narrator and his father through a metaphor: the musical instrument. On the surface, the poem appears to be a story of the musical instrument Harmonium, but it is specifically personified to signify the narrator's father. "Harmonium", just like "Floral Tribute", is constructed on the constructive and hopeful remembrance of the past and the power of memories, including the effective contribution of place to the meaning.

"The Farrand Chapelette was gathering dust  
in the shadowy porch of Marsden Church.  
And was due to be bundled off to the skip.  
Or was mine, for a song, if I wanted it.

Sunlight, through stained glass, which day to day  
could beatify saints and raise the dead,  
had aged the harmonium's softwood case  
and yellowed the fingernails of its keys.  
And one of its notes had lost its tongue,  
and holes were worn in both the treadles  
where the organist's feet, in grey, woollen socks  
and leather-soled shoes, had pedalled and pedalled.

But its hummed harmonics still struck a chord:  
for a hundred years that organ had stood  
by the choristers' stalls, where father and son,  
each in their time, had opened their throats

and gilded finches – like high notes – had streamed out.

Through his own blue cloud of tobacco smog,  
 with smoker's fingers and dotted thumbs,  
 he comes to help me cart it away.  
 And we carry it flat, laid on its back.  
 And he, being him, can't help but say  
 that the next box I'll shoulder through this nave  
 will bear the freight of his own dead weight.  
 And I, being me, then mouth in reply  
 some shallow or sorry phrase or word  
 too starved of breath to make itself heard." (Armitage, 2021, p. 79).

The first stanza is opened with a reference to an old harmonium by explaining how old it is in Marsden Church through the lines "The Farrand Chapelette was gathering dust / in the shadowy porch of Marsden Church" (Armitage, 2021, p. 79). The setting is Marsden, where the poet grew up. Armitage shows us how effectively he uses his own personal experiences to reveal a memory as a poetic and literary element, connecting the fictional to imaginative as well as the past to present, creating a sense of subjective reality and a sense of self. Fivush explains that this form of narrative assists readers in comprehending and connecting with the identity of the author better through personal experiences (Fivush, 2022).

The poem's second stanza reveals how the instrument wears off and gathers dust very descriptively. In fact, it refers to how old it is now even though it had much brighter days in the lines: "Sunlight through stained glass which on bright days / might beatify saints or raise the dead/ ... / and yellowed the fingernails of its keys," (Armitage, 2021, p. 79). In order to reinforce this power, the poet uses the inside of the church as a setting, strengthening the intimacy between the father and son. This church becomes the narrator's heterotopia because it evokes their feeling towards their memories.

The following stanza praises the instrument and brushes off the author's real intention by referring to a father-son relationship "where father then son had opened their throats" (Armitage, 2021, p. 79). It also refers to generational continuity in terms of activities, time, and space. The chorister's stall is where all those memories will take place, reflecting a custom. Harmonium can be perceived as a bridge here between

generations because it symbolises the father of the narrator, and the narrator will be a father one day and will be carried like his father's coffin. Also, the church becomes like a "sense of place" according to John Agnew's concept of meaningful location because there is an emotional attachment to the church through the memory of the narrator about the harmonium "Sunlight, through stained glass, which day to day / could beatify saints and raise the dead" (Armitage, 2021, p. 79).

The last stanza touches mostly upon the relationship between the narrator and his father. It is indicated that this harmonium is being carried away from the church, which implies that he is carrying his father's coffin: "that the next box I'll shoulder through this nave" (Armitage, 2021, p. 79). In the lines "and him being him he has to say / ... / And me being me I mouth in reply" (Armitage, 2021, p. 79). the narrator stresses that he will replace his father and his time will come to pass away like his father one day through the lines "he, being him" and "I, being me". The whole poem eulogizes the connection by admiring the harmonium with cheerful and touching memories between the father and son. The emotional burden of loss and desire to retrieve the moments of lived past are concretised into the form of an object. Harmonium becomes an image in which time discontinues and transforms into a tangible and indestructible object, carrying the power of signification and building connections between people and the physical world. Also, we can understand that the narrator is carrying his father's coffin in the church thanks to the poet's use of the word "nave". As the concept of chronotope suggests, space is as important as time when analysing a literary text (Bakhtin, 1981) because it refers to death, inheritance, and sadness.

On the other hand, the tone in the last stanza changes along with the tense conjugation. The narrator finds out the reality of life by carrying his own father's coffin very soon. Although the end of the poem is quite sad and low in terms of tone, the narrator cherishes the memory of his father and acknowledges the transience of human life and the joy of temporal but private experiences and moments as a cure to the existential crisis consolidating the sense of the temporality of human existence and loss of a loved person in life.

"Floral Tribute" is staging a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, celebrating her service to the country and portraying a tender and aesthetic image of her as a unique, dutiful and inspiring figure whose decease leaves people in a mournful melancholy with her

memories and lively personality. “Floral Tribute” has two stanzas, both of which are an acrostic of “ELIZABETH”. The poem describes plays of light and darkness in a temporal realm, in which Elizabeth is remembered dearly, and her loss has brought about a sense of inspiring melancholy and an act of remembrance as an acknowledgement of associating emotions and nature’s unmatched aesthetics.

“Evening will come, however determined the late afternoon,  
 Limes and oaks in their last green flush, pearled in September mist.  
 I have conjured a lily to light these hours, a token of thanks,  
 Zones and auras of soft glare framing the brilliant globes.  
 A promise made and kept for life – that was your gift  
 Because of which, here is a gift in return, glovewort to some,  
 Each shining bonnet guarded by stern lance-like leaves.  
 The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,  
 Hands that can rest, now, relieved of a century’s weight.  
 Evening has come. Rain on the black lochs and dark Munros.  
 Lily of the Valley, a namesake almost, a favourite flower  
 Interlaced with your famous bouquets, the restrained  
 Zeal and forceful grace of its lanterns, each inflorescence  
 A silent bell disguising a singular voice. A blurred new day  
 Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and  
 Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots,  
 This lily that thrives between spire and tree, whose brightness  
 Holds and glows beyond the life and border of its bloom.” (Armitage, 2022).

The first stanza prepares the reader for the second stanza because while the first is about what the unique and well-loved Queen did for her country when she was alive, the second is about her passing away and the irreplaceable memory through images of saluting nature. The poet hints that The Queen dies suddenly one day, an “Evening”, as a metaphor for death and the undesirable and inevitable end for the English public. We understand how strong The Queen is; however, her death brings a prevailing sorrow and pain caused by great memories of Elizabeth. In this part, September turns into a season of sorrow and mourning, which is reinforced by a spatial change in: “A blurred new day Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots” (2022). In the remaining section of the first stanza, we witness a great reminiscence she left for people and how appreciative and enthusiastic the poet is about the Queen in the lines: “A promise made and kept

for life – that was your gift – / Because of which, here is a gift in return, glovewort to some, / ... /The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,” (Armitage, 2022). The narrator shows that the whole country is thankful and gives her flowers for her death, “glovewort”, as it suggests the goodness of someone depends on how people react after their death (Vale-Taylor, 2009). Although this stanza is a kind of preparation for the reader for the queen's death, the setting is peaceful by using “limes and oaks”. Lily is used three times in the poem. It creates an interesting setting, like a ceremony, because it is known that the queen had a bunch of lilies in her hand when she got married. Therefore, it is symbolic to celebrate her service to her country.

In the second stanza, we understand that the queen has passed away: “Evening has come”. The evening can be seen as the threshold of the day, after which humans assume the day ends. This line is a good example of a chronotope of threshold signifying an end to the past as a temporal paradigm and directs the reader to the transformation of her body as a spatial site of mourning and remembrance at present. The line “Rain on the black lochs and dark Munros” (Armitage, 2022) refers to Munros in Scotland, which reminds us that the queen died in Balmoral Castle in Scotland, where she spent considerable time in seclusion and which also signifies the monarch's role as a unifying figure between England and Scotland, past and present as well as private and public.

When well-respected people such as monarchs die, it is critical to construct a memory behind them to be remembered and revered. “Floral Tribute” by Armitage, in this respect, draws a portrayal of “Lily of the Valley, a namesake almost, a favourite flower” (Armitage, 2022). It is known that Elizabeth II loved lilies dearly, and the poem draws a parallelism between the flower and her self-constructed qualities in a spatial link to nature in the form of the valley, signifying uniqueness and purity in the vast nature, concretised in the memory of her for those who admired and championed her in the recent history of the country.

Armitage also constructs a private-public reunion in spatial terms through the lines “The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands...”. The “you” connects public and private memory, establishing a chronotope of the encounter. Here, the queen’s personality and public role merge in the country's memory. Past encounters present, and the private meets the public, creating a spatio-temporal narrative. The country thus transforms a synecdoche (slender hand) into a public memorial space, in

which the Queen's legacy is eternalised and the encounter is transformative for the nation. Her "slender hand" thus create an image of female frailty and a loving queen's affectionate touch on the souls of her people. Such a chronotope of the encounter between the private and public as well as the past and present, calls for people to have a sense of union and collective memory, where masses of people turn the collective mourning into a singular identity.

This requiem presents lilies as symbols of grief and temporal transience, which may signify a prevailing wish for everyone to remember those who passed away and get remembered by those who are living after they die. Richardson and Parmer suggest that when a loss influences people publicly, its greatness creates a public narrative (Richardson & Parmer, 2023). In this respect, the poem touches upon the queen's memory and legacy, which are two most-desired and carefully constructed phenomena around the personality and identity of a trusted and loved monarch, especially highlighting that her memory and legacy exceed the spatio-temporal boundaries of topographical spaces creating a narrative of human triumph over the size and power of nature. Her image is constructed vividly and favourably, as Fechner suggests, especially when memory leaves a positive trace; it becomes something living rather than something static if personal experiences (Fechner, 2023), so since the death of the queen leaves a deep mark on the whole society, whose memory creates a period of intense sorrow and grief depicted in the form of an image of lilies on the coffin and metaphor of a sole and tender lily found to be on the valley of death and loss. This symbol and its surrounding image signify a lasting power of legacy constructed on a powerful obituary to a silent but lamentable passage of the Queen from the physical to a symbolic space. Therefore, her personal charm and respected role will exceed the contaminant boundaries between life and death, turning into a consolidating narrative of a unique and dutiful life and enchanting personality in a sign of respect in the Poet Laureate's final service to her as a private figure in the public space (the country).

## CONCLUSION

As the current Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage has a key role in promoting and developing contemporary English poetry today. Being a scholar living in different parts of the country gives him more spatial and topographical awareness about his own country. In terms of space, his poetry is rich and in-depth as he writes memorably about his hometown and where he lived. It is not surprising to see his personal experiences in his poems. He profoundly shares his knowledge about his country and people. The richness in Armitage's poetic contemplation of life and people builds a bridge between the world of poetry and ordinary life.

Spatial awareness and connections are essential to Armitage's poetry. His selected poems provide a framework for examining several related issues, including journey, urban decay, marginalisation, displacement and isolation. His poems offer a multi-layered view of the modern world through the intricate weaving of these themes. As a poet living today, Armitage depicts emotional and psychological aspects of modern life and their impact on humans. His deft use of poetic strategies gives us visceral, nearly tactile experiences and moments of life. Therefore, by reaching such diversity in topics, Armitage exceeds the personal limits of poetry, making him both distinctive and universal.

Armitage creates and scatters images and details around human experiences in local and personal places, such as Marsden. It is a psychological aspect that allows readers to feel closer to spaces when something individual is shared. Armitage

becomes a bridge between personal and societal in his poetry. He blends the collective with local elements, reinforcing the sense of connection and relatability.

Armitage's "The Clown Punk", "Give", and "A Vision" are poems that deal with urban decay and marginalisation. They show how modern society fights with marginalised people and how we have lost our faith in humanity or connection with others in public spaces. These poems are like mirrors through which we relate to marginalisation and prejudices pervasive in modern societies. Thus, Armitage helps his reader understand such separation in society and its impact on individuals more deeply. Besides, our perception of such a situation requires us to be aware of the need for societal change. This potential transformation cultivates our situatedness and collective thinking in the larger structure of modern society. This indicates the fact that our self is inevitably tangled with spatial and cultural elements surrounding us.

On the other hand, Armitage shows us how problematic our relations become due to isolation and displacement in his poems "Lockdown", "A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and a Slide", and "The Mariner's Compass". Armitage describes contradictory aspects that raise tension between splendour and decay in modern society. In these poems, Armitage examines external conditions and private/urban juxtapositions. What is problematic here is that we all carry certain prejudices and manners that direct our lives.

It is possible to see how spaces become places by attributing meaning to them. John Agnew's concept of "meaningful location" can be seen very explicitly in Armitage's poems like "It Ain't What You Do It is What It Does to You," "The Tyre," and "Harmonium." Armitage uses real places, which are "locations," social places that can be defined as "locales," and the sense of place, which attributes emotion to a particular place.

Oldenburg's three concepts of place can also be seen: first, place refers to home, and the importance of home is undeniable in Armitage's poems. Second place refers to the public/professional environments in which life is structured around tasks, roles and identities. Third place refers to social life, a spatial concept that merges the self with the public. These can be seen in poems such as "Give", "The Mariner's Compass", "It Ain't What You Do It's What It Does to You", "The Tyre", "Mother, Any Distance", and "Zoom!". In these poems, real places juxtapose multiple spaces,

encompassing an important portion of Armitage's selected poetry, featuring spaces to evoke belonging, departure, journeys and explorations.

“Floral Tribute” and “Harmonium” can be regarded as poems reflecting memory's constructive sides. In these poems, a sense of respect and veneration can be observed in the form of tribute connecting the past and present as well as private and public. These poems dignify the personas mentioned in the poem; one is the queen, and the other is the narrator's father, whose contributions to life and their long-lasting memories are honoured. Armitage's examination of time-space encounters has lots of aspects, but in terms of human experiences, it is possible to observe a spatio-temporal merge in the themes of nostalgia and memory. Thus, time is examined under the scope of its relation to space, primarily referring to the concept of chronotope by Michel Bakhtin, which reveals that “chronotopes of threshold and encounter” are particularly well-constructed in the above-mentioned poems.

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## APPENDIX

### **The Clown Punk**

Driving home through the shonky side of town,  
three times out of ten you'll see the town clown,  
like a basket of washing that got up  
and walked, towing a dog on a rope. But

don't laugh: every pixel of that man's skin  
is shot through with indelible ink;

as he steps out at the traffic lights,

think what he'll look like in thirty years' time -

the deflated face and shrunken scalp

still daubed with the sad tattoos of high punk.

You kids in the back seat who wince and scream

when he slathers his daft mush on the windscreen,

remember the clown punk with his dyed brain,

then picture windscreen wipers, and let it rain.

## A Vision

The future was a beautiful place, once.  
Remember the full-blown balsa-wood town  
on public display in the Civic Hall.  
The ring-bound sketches, artists' impressions,  
  
blueprints of smoked glass and tubular steel,  
board-game suburbs, modes of transportation  
like fairground rides or executive toys.  
Cities like dreams, cantilevered by light.

And people like us at the bottle-bank  
next to the cycle-path, or dog-walking  
over tended strips of fuzzy-felt grass,  
or model drivers, motoring home in

electric cars, or after the late show -  
strolling the boulevard. They were the plans,  
all underwritten in the neat left-hand  
of architects – a true, legible script.

I pulled that future out of the north wind  
at the landfill site, stamped with today's date,  
riding the air with other such futures,  
all un-lived in and now fully extinct.

**Give**

Of all the public places, dear  
to make a scene, I've chosen here.

Of all the doorways in the world  
to choose to sleep, I've chosen yours.  
I'm on the street, under the stars.

For coppers I can dance or sing.  
For silver-swallow swords, eat fire.  
For gold-escape from locks and chains.

It's not as if I'm holding out  
for frankincense or myrrh, just change.

You give me tea. That's big of you.

I'm on my knees. I beg of you.

**It Ain't What You Do It's What It Does to You**

I have not bummed across America  
with only a dollar to spare, one pair  
of busted Levi's and a bowie knife.  
I have lived with thieves in Manchester.  
I have not padded through the Taj Mahal,  
barefoot, listening to the space between  
each footfall picking up and putting down  
its print against the marble floor. But I  
skimmed flat stones across Black Moss on a day  
so still I could hear each set of ripples  
as they crossed. I felt each stone's momentum  
spend itself against the water; then sink.  
I have not toyed with a parachute chord  
while perched on the lip of a light aircraft;  
but I held the wobbly head of a boy  
at the day centre, and stroked his fat hands.  
And I guess that the tightness in the throat  
and the tiny cascading sensation  
somewhere inside us are both part of that  
sense of something else. That feeling, I mean.

**Mother Any Distance**

Mother, any distance greater than a single span  
requires a second pair of hands.

You come to help me measure windows, pelmets, doors,  
the acres of the walls, the prairies of the floors.

You at the zero end, me with the spool of tape, recording  
length, reporting metres, centimetres back to base,  
then leaving  
up the stairs, the line still feeding out, unreeling  
years between us. Anchor. Kite.

I space-walk through the empty bedrooms, climb  
the ladder to the loft, to breaking point, where something  
has to give;  
two floors below, your fingertips still pinch  
the last one-hundredth of an inch . . . I reach  
towards a hatch that opens on an endless sky  
to fall or fly.

**Zoom!**

It begins as a house, an end terrace  
in this case  
but it will not stop there. Soon it is  
an avenue  
which cambers arrogantly past the Mechanics' Institute,  
turns left  
at the main road without even looking  
and quickly it is  
a town with all four major clearing banks,  
a daily paper  
and a football team pushing for promotion.  
On it goes, oblivious of the Planning Acts,  
the green belts,  
and before we know it it is out of our hands:  
city, nation,  
hemisphere, universe, hammering out in all directions  
until suddenly,  
mercifully, it is drawn aside through the eye  
of a black hole  
and bulleted into a neighbouring galaxy, emerging  
smaller and smoother  
than a billiard ball but weighing more than Saturn.

People stop me in the street, badger me

in the check-out queue

and ask "What is this, this that is so small

and so very smooth

but whose mass is greater than the ringed planet?"

It's just words

I assure them. But they will not have it.



### **The Mariner's Compass**

Living alone, I'm sailing the world  
single-handed in a rented house.

Last week I rounded the Cape of Good Hope,  
came through in one piece;

this morning, flying fish

lying dead in the porch with the post.

I peg out duvet covers and sheets  
to save fuel when the wind blows,

tune the engine so it purrs all night

like a fridge, run upstairs

with the old-fashioned thought

of plotting a course by the stars.

Friends wave from the cliffs,

talk nervously about the coast-guard station.

Under the rules, close contact

with another soul means disqualification

## The Tyre

Just how it came to rest where it rested,  
miles out, miles from the last farmhouse even,  
was a fair question. Dropped by hurricane  
or aeroplane perhaps for some reason,  
put down as a cairn or marker, then lost.  
Tractor-size, six or seven feet across,  
it was sloughed, unconscious, warm to the touch,  
its gashed, rhinoceros, sea-lion skin  
nursing a gallon of rain in its gut.  
Lashed to the planet with grasses and roots,  
it had to be cut. Stood up it was drunk  
or slugged, wanted nothing more than to slump,  
to spiral back to its circle of sleep,  
dream another year in its nest of peat.  
We bullied it over the moor, drove it,  
pushed from the back or turned it from the side,  
unspooling a thread in the shape and form  
of its tread, in its length, and in its line,  
rolled its weight through broken walls, felt the shock  
when it met with stones, guided its sleepwalk  
down to meadows, fields, onto level ground.  
There and then we were one connected thing,  
five of us, all hands steering a tall ship  
or one hand fingering a coin or ring.

Once on the road it picked up pace, free-wheeled,  
then moved up through the gears, and wouldn't give  
to shoulder-charges, kicks; resisted force  
until to tangle with it would have been  
to test bone against engine or machine,  
to be dragged in, broken, thrown out again  
minus a limb. So we let the thing go,  
leaning into the bends and corners,  
balanced and centred, riding the camber,  
carried away with its own momentum.

We pictured an incident up ahead:  
life carved open, gardens in half, parted,  
a man on a motorbike taken down,  
a phone-box upended, children erased,  
police and an ambulance in attendance,  
scuff-marks and the smell of broken rubber,  
the tyre itself embedded in a house  
or lying in a gutter, playing dead.

But down in the village the tyre was gone,  
and not just gone but unseen and unheard of,  
not curled like a cat in the graveyard, not  
cornered in the playground like a reptile,  
or found and kept like a giant fossil.  
Not there or anywhere. No trace. Thin air.

Being more in tune with the feel of things  
than science and facts, we knew that the tyre  
had travelled too fast for its size and mass,  
and broken through some barrier of speed,  
outrun the act of being driven, steered,  
and at that moment gone beyond itself  
towards some other sphere, and disappeared.



**Lockdown**

And I couldn't escape the waking dream  
of infected fleas

in the warp and weft of soggy cloth  
by the tailor's hearth

in ye olde Eyam.

Then couldn't un-see

the Boundary Stone,

that cock-eyed dice with its six dark holes,

thimbles brimming with vinegar wine  
purging the plagued coins.

Which brought to mind the sorry story  
of Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre,

star-crossed lovers on either side  
of the quarantine line

whose wordless courtship spanned the river  
till she came no longer ...

But slept again,  
and dreamt this time

of the exiled yaksha sending word  
to his lost wife on a passing cloud,

a cloud that followed an earthly map  
of camel trails and cattle tracks,

streams like necklaces,  
fan-tailed peacocks, painted elephants,

embroidered bedspreads  
of meadows and hedges,

bamboo forests and snow-hatted peaks,  
waterfalls, creeks,

the hieroglyphs of wide-winged cranes  
and the glistening lotus flower after rain,

the air  
hypnotically see-through, rare,

the journey a ponderous one at times, long and slow  
but necessarily so.

### **A Sculpture of Christ with Swings and a Slide**

I found him like a fossil in the rock;

in the slab waiting to be broken out.

Others I've chiselled have burst from the blocks

like genies from lamps, and one creature sprang

like a jack from a box. But not this one:

I took back the stone like flesh from a bone

while he dozed, sleeping it off on his cross.

The council bought him, stuck him in the park,

as out of place as a dog in a church.

The simple people came, told him secrets,

dressed him with flowers and polished his face,

put sweets in his mouth and gave him a name.

That's when I saw the thing these hands had made.

### **Floral Tribute**

Evening will come, however determined the late afternoon,  
Limes and oaks in their last green flush, pearled in  
September mist.

I have conjured a lily to light these hours, a token of thanks,  
Zones and auras of soft glare framing the brilliant globes.

A promise made and kept for life – that was your gift –

Because of which, here is a gift in return, glovewort to some,  
Each shining bonnet guarded by stern lance-like leaves.

The country loaded its whole self into your slender hands,  
Hands that can rest, now, relieved of a century's weight.

Evening has come. Rain on the black lochs and dark  
Munros.

Lily of the Valley, a namesake almost, a favourite flower

Interlaced with your famous bouquets, the restrained

Zeal and forceful grace of its lanterns, each inflorescence

A silent bell disguising a singular voice. A blurred new day

Breaks uncrowned on remote peaks and public parks, and

Everything turns on these luminous petals and deep roots,

This lily that thrives between spire and tree, whose  
brightness

Holds and glows beyond the life and border of its bloom.

### Harmonium

The Farrand Chapelette was gathering dust  
in the shadowy porch of Marsden Church.  
And was due to be bundled off to the skip.  
Or was mine, for a song, if I wanted it.

Sunlight, through stained glass, which day to day  
could beatify saints and raise the dead,  
had aged the harmonium's softwood case  
and yellowed the fingernails of its keys.

And one of its notes had lost its tongue,  
and holes were worn in both the treadles  
where the organist's feet, in grey, woollen socks  
and leather-soled shoes, had pedalled and pedalled.

But its hummed harmonics still struck a chord:  
for a hundred years that organ had stood  
by the choristers' stalls, where father and son,  
each in their time, had opened their throats  
and gilded finches – like high notes – had streamed out.

Through his own blue cloud of tobacco smog,  
with smoker's fingers and dotted thumbs,  
he comes to help me cart it away.  
And we carry it flat, laid on its back.  
And he, being him, can't help but say  
that the next box I'll shoulder through this nave  
will bear the freight of his own dead weight.  
And I, being me, then mouth in reply  
some shallow or sorry phrase or word  
too starved of breath to make itself heard.