

**ON THE BORDER:**

**CHARLES CAUSLEY IN 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BRITISH POETICS**

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Unless otherwise stated, all references to Causley's poems are from the *Collected Poems 1951-2000 rev edn* (London: Picador, 2000)

## On The Border: Charles Causley In 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Poetics

Charles Causley, reflects Rory Waterman in the introduction to the 2014 publication *Belonging and Estrangement in the Poetry of Philip Larkin, R. S. Thomas and Charles Causley*, 'receives only scant mentions in recent books about modern British poetry'.<sup>1</sup> Waterman goes on to admit that one of his motives in placing Causley in his book, alongside the much higher profile Larkin and Thomas, is to 'play a small part in rescuing this fascinating poet from critical oblivion'.<sup>2</sup> Yet in Waterman's assessment, along with Larkin and R. S. Thomas, Causley was amongst 'the most widely admired poets of the late twentieth century, with unusually large contemporary readership'<sup>3</sup> and Ted Hughes estimated that, 'Of all the poetry of the second half of the twentieth century, Charles Causley's could turn out to be the most lasting and the most important'.<sup>4</sup> Why this discrepancy? Despite praise from fellow poets Larkin, Hughes and Betjeman, Causley's *critical* oblivion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can be attributed to his being condemned to simplified and restrictive categories. Subject-wise these are as a 'Cornish' poet, a 'Children's' poet, a 'Christian' poet or a 'World War Two' poet, and in terms of form and style as primarily a writer of ballads and 'traditional' metrical verse.

Ironically his popularity with a wider audience may be due to just these categories, which have ensured his presence in some themed anthologies and in classrooms. The growth of broadcasting, especially radio after World War Two, was an advantage for Causley. His predominantly regular rhymes and metres lend themselves to public reading and the possibility of his ballads being sung. This is a trend which continues. In 2010 Natalie Merchant included Causley's 'Nursery Rhyme of

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<sup>1</sup> Rory Waterman, *Belonging and Estrangement in the Poetry of Philip Larkin, R. S. Thomas and Charles Causley*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Wright, *Charles Causley: A Universal Poet*, (Launceston: Friends of Lawrence House Museum, Charles Causley Society, 2013), p. 27.

Innocence and Experience' in the album *Leave Your Sleep*, a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century British and American children's poems, (the latter not a category Causley accepted), set to music.

It is a critical analysis of his work as a whole which, as Waterman points out, is lacking. The literature produced under the auspices of the Charles Causley Society, such as Malcolm Wright's very short pamphlet, *Charles Causley: A Universal Poet* (2013), and Laurence Green's more extensive biography, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door* (2013), are understandably laudatory and focus on Causley's merits rather than a broader analytical approach. Waterman's 2014 publication on Larkin, Thomas and Causley as above, and Michael Hanke's volume of critical essays *Through the Granite Kingdom* (2011), are the only notable attempts to place Causley within a wider poetic context, and apart from Waterman's comparison of estrangement and belonging in the three poets, focus on specific poems or themes with a limited analysis even in these of Causley's significance in the larger sphere of 20<sup>th</sup> Century British poetics. The individual collections have been reviewed on their specific merits in various issues of *PN Review*<sup>5</sup> and Causley's birthdays and death in 2003 occasioned some evaluative articles and obituaries<sup>6</sup> which tend to remember him with affection and stress his wide popularity, but dwell little on the task of placing him within a critical perspective. The most comprehensive overall critical evaluation is that of Dana Gioia who argues that Causley's neglect by the critics is due to the fact that he writes accessibly in a period which prizes originality and unpredictability, in narrative in an age when this is questioned, addresses a common reader when it is supposed there is none, uses Christianity in an agnostic age and includes children's poetry in his collections.<sup>7</sup> This combination, Gioia concludes in a

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Levy, 'The Poetry of Charles Causley', *PN Review* 6, Vol 5 No 2, (Jan-March 1979). Christopher McCully, 'Three Ships: Charles Causley Collected Poems 1951-1975', *PN Review* 33, Vol 10 No 3, (Jan-Feb 1984). Christopher McCully, 'The Idea of Poetry: Charles Causley Secret Destinations', *PN Review* 49, Vol 12 No 5, (May-June 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Brown, 'Cornish Pastimes', *The Independent*, (29 August 1992).  
'Charles Causley', *The Economist*, (22 November 2003).  
Susan Hill, 'Joking Apart', *The Guardian*, (15 November 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Dana Gioia, 'The Independence of Charles Causley', in *Causley At 70*, ed. by Harry Chambers, (Calstock: Peterloo Poets, 1987), p. 28.

succinct evaluation, leads to him being ignored by the critics as a 'homespun regionalist writing in discredited genres for an audience that has been declared extinct'.<sup>8</sup>

The most prominent later 20<sup>th</sup> Century anthologies in which Causley is represented are catalogued in the Appendix. An analysis of the respective editors' rationales for each anthology explains Causley's inclusion in these and by implication exclusion in others. Where he does feature, the emphasis in the introductions to these anthologies praises the articulation and communication of experience variously described as 'first hand', 'alive', 'genuine' and 'compulsive'. Much is also made of 'direct' communication without 'vague and inconclusive obscurity' and of 'craftsmanship' accompanied by 'common diction'.<sup>9</sup> All these labels require more clarification but some more precise estimate of Causley's characteristics of order, restraint and directness can be deduced from a sample of the introductions to publications such as *The Poetry of War*. In this Ian Hamilton includes two of Causley's poems in an anthology which is claimed to include poets who can 'confront the disintegrating world in personal terms...'<sup>10</sup> Brian Gardner's *The Terrible Rain* includes a Causley poem under the umbrella of poems which are not the product of 'pre-war cliques' and which do not speak 'exclusively in the poet's mind'<sup>11</sup> and Dennis Enright's *Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980* chooses Causley as a representative of those authors who express internal and external events which enact and interpret disorder whilst containing it.<sup>12</sup>

The implication is that Causley is not primarily known for experimenting or for employing any new forms, styles, or use of metre. He is not included in anthologies such as Michael Schmidt's *The Harvill Book of Twentieth Century Poetry in English* published in 1999, featuring poems which

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *New Poems 1954: A P.E.N. Anthology*, ed. by Rex Warner, Christopher Hassell and Laurie Lee, (London: Michael Joseph, 1954), p. 15. *New Poems 1955*, ed. by Patric Dickinson, John Hall and Erica Marx, (London: Michael Joseph, 1955), p. 8. *New Poems 1962: A P.E.N. Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, ed. by Patricia Beer, Ted Hughes and Vernon Scannell, (London: Hutchinson, 1962), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Hamilton, *The Poetry of War 1939-45*, (London: Alan Ross, 1965), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *The Terrible Rain: The War Poets 1939-1945: An Anthology*, ed. by Brian Gardner, (London: Methuen, 1987), p. xviii. p. xxiv.

<sup>12</sup> *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse*, ed. by Dennis Enright, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. xxvii.

characterise modernity by making something new in poetics.<sup>13</sup> However, almost at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford include him in *The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland Since 1945*, an anthology defining the poetic context of that era as ‘post Oxford, post Christian, post-war and post structuralist’, and in which ‘mysterious and intuitive’ language lives within a ‘catholicity of taste’.<sup>14</sup> Causley is also included in what is the latest 20<sup>th</sup> Century anthology to date, compiled by Michael Hulse and Simon Rae. This speaks ambitiously of a ‘new canon’ of which the ‘centre’ is language used with vitality, the heart of lived experience and a vigorous engagement with public and private life.<sup>15</sup> Thus despite lack of academic critical attention, there are those who ascribe Causley a place in the chronicles of 20<sup>th</sup> Century poetry, though whether the concept of a new canon, even in Hulse and Rae’s definition of the co-presence of different poetries existing side by side in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, will have any reality in practice in an era of literary plurality, has yet to be substantiated.

Using primarily the 2000 *Collected Poems* to trace chronological and thematic development through the body of Causley’s work, and produce some basic assessment of the development of this, is an uncharted course. However, the title of his 1975 poem ‘On the Border’ (*Collected*, p. 245), is a guide to making some sense of this journey. Causley is all the more complex because he sits on the border between various boundaries. He is literally ‘on the border’, physically between Cornwall and England, chronologically between war and peace, emotionally between attachment to his solitary Cornish life and the restrictions it imposed, in his teaching career only ever on the fringes of academia, and spiritually between faith and doubt. From these tensions emerged 50 years of poetry itself moving across borders of the traditional and modern between 1951 and his final *Collected Poems* in 2000.

### **On The Border: Cornishness and Beyond**

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<sup>13</sup> *The Harvill Book of Twentieth Century Poetry in English*, ed. by Michael Schmidt, (London: Harvill, 1999), p. xxvii.

<sup>14</sup> *The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland Since 1945*, ed. by Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford, (London: Viking, 1998), pp. xxx, xxix.

<sup>15</sup> *The 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Poetry*, ed. by Michael Hulse and Simon Rae, (Random House: Ebury, 2011), p. 2.

Geographically and psychologically Cornwall has both a positive sense of distinctiveness and yet a potentially negative sense of isolation from the rest of England. Thus it is no surprise that the introduction to the *Collected Poems 1951-2000* begins with the statement that, 'Apart from six wartime years in the Royal Navy, Charles Causley lived all his life in Launceston, Cornwall, where he worked as a teacher for many years'.<sup>16</sup>

Causley is unfailingly described as a 'Cornish Poet', a label originating in the geographical location of much of his work, but without any attempt to define what such 'Cornishness' might imply in terms of his use of the vernacular or poetic form. Even geographically such a description is suspect, Cornwall is not monochrome culturally and Causley was located in one specific town in the north of the county, near the River Tamar and the border with Devon. As he remarked, 'The Tamar gnaws Cornwall from England'.<sup>17</sup> Causley insisted that he did not want to be perceived as a 'professional' Cornishman and spoke scathingly of the 'arty west Cornwall set' located around St Ives,<sup>18</sup> whom he saw as deliberately inventing an inauthentic identity of 'Cornishness'.

Causley's nearest contemporary poet, Jack Clemo, lived on the other side of the physical barrier of Bodmin Moor, and the other most prominent Cornishman of any literary repute during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was the eccentric historian, A. L. Rowse. Rowse had worked his way to Oxford and had an academic career there, despite his own very poor background. Causley spent 30 years educating children from such backgrounds, in an environment far removed from the life of an academic, combining his poetry with full time employment as a teacher in the primary school in Launceston where he himself had been a pupil. His job limited the flexibility of his time and he also took seriously his personal commitments as a family carer for his mother. He had roots neither in the urban provincial, the middle class or the academic. Iain Sinclair's scathing condemnation of New Generation poetry 'invented by the marketing men', and with 'seemingly

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Causley, *Collected Poems 1951-2000*, (London: Picador, 2003), Frontespiece.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Causley 'In the Angle of the Waters', *The Listener: Vol 98 No 2587*, (1977), p. 368.

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 35.

fictitious occupations and previous histories dreamt up by a Poetry Society copywriter<sup>19</sup> was not relevant to Causley at any point in his life as a poet.

Causley's biographical circumstances yield important revelations regarding the background of his contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> Century poetry in Britain. A poor, rural working class background did not give him experience of urban expansion after World War Two, community fragmentation or industrialisation. A local primary and secondary school and a teacher training college did not give him access to any kind of Oxbridge or red brick university culture or an automatic circle of middle class contacts. The isolated nature of the Cornish town in which he spent most of his life meant that neither London nor Oxbridge was for him any kind of natural 'centre' for literary activities or influence. Causley himself commented,

Until our lodger won an abridged version of Robert Tressall's 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists' as third prize in a Labour whist drive when I was a boy, it never occurred to me that it was possible for a working class writer — let alone one also from the sub world of criminals, tramps and layabouts — actually to get a book published.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Thomas Hardy, as described by Donald Davie, Causley did not move in a bourgeois culture or give up on his 'duty to be radical'<sup>21</sup> in the sense of disturbing the root of what lies behind the everyday. He is able to 'render the experience of those on the margin'<sup>22</sup> because his childhood and his adult life and occupation teaching children from just such a margin kept him grounded in it. Causley originated in the poor working class and spent his life in that same context. He had to survive without the advantages of higher education or access to a network of influence in publishing. Eventually breaking through this working class barrier himself, his roots remained in its traditions and concerns. He avoided using the obvious Arthurian legends, packaged for tourist consumption in nearby Tintagel. John Hurst assumes this avoiding the

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<sup>19</sup> *Conductors of Chaos: Poetry Anthology*, ed. by Iain Sinclair, (London: Picador, 1996), p. xvi.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Causley, 'Bad Years', *The Listener*, Vol 97 No 2507, (1977), p. 597.

<sup>21</sup> Clive Wilmer, *With the Grain: Essays on Thomas Hardy and Modern British Poetry*, ed. by Donald Davie, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1998), p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> *British Poetry from the 1950s to the 1990s: Politics and Art*, ed. by Gary Day and Brian Docherty, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 9.

Arthurian to be because Causley shared with Jack Clemo and the nineteenth century Cornish poet John Harris, the opinion that 'the Arthurian myth is essentially remote from the life of the mainstream Cornish working class',<sup>23</sup> although this does not appear to prevent him using legends of saints, folktales and historical events in his work. That these come out of a spontaneous and authentic religious and folk memory rather than the more obviously manufactured literary Arthurian sagas, may explain his choice to work with them.

Edna Longley points to the dangers of an isolated and restricted imaginative perspective, which could apply to Causley's static physical and social situation, when she argues that a poet's imagined world often depends on 'places where modernity arrived slowly'.<sup>24</sup> Causley was aware of the dangers of nostalgia in any imagined world as 'the desire to re-experience earlier emotions of harmony'<sup>25</sup> in poetic form as well as in content. 'Nostalgia' says Elizabeth Helsinger, 'can hide injuries'.<sup>26</sup> Hurst makes the point that both Causley and A. L. Rowse,

recognize the significance of the revival of the Cornish language, Causley quoting with approval Baring-Gould's identification of 'the cultural wound suffered by the Cornish in abandoning their native tongue'. Neither, however, appears to wish to have engaged actively in that revival though recognizing the importance of having enough linguistic awareness for scholarly purposes.<sup>27</sup>

In a century when the vernacular became an accepted feature of poetry from a variety of cultures, there are examples of Causley using the Cornish dialect, mostly in autobiographical contexts, for example, 'I was fetched to school' ('First Day', *Collected* p. 350), 'If he's mazed as a brush' ('Dick Lander', *Collected*, p. 344). The Cornish dialect lends itself to irregular variations of tense, with a particular use of the past tense, which do not readily express alienation, despite

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<sup>23</sup> John Hurst, 'Causley and Cornwall', in *Through the Granite Kingdom: Critical Essays on Charles Causley*, ed. by Michael Hanke, (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2011), p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> *The Bloodaxe Book of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry*, ed. by Edna Longley, (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2004), p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Middleton 'Who am I to speak? The Politics of Subjectivity in Recent British Poetry', in *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible*, ed. by Robert Hampson and Peter Barry, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain 1815-1850*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., Hurst, p. 35.

Andrew Duncan's assertion that tense can trigger such alienation.<sup>28</sup> Causley's use of such dialect is not intended to give an impression of an oppressed illiterate voice but to portray the natural speech of his community. In the 1951 poem 'Song of the Dying Gunner AA1' (*Collected*, p. 6), he uses vernacular naval expressions sparingly in his war poetry, for example 'Aggie Weston', 'the barracks at Guz', 'tiddley suit'. Where Causley uses these they are not a deliberate attempt at obscurity but a re-iteration of the common language which contributes to the sense of the significance of the ordinary.

However, even though he could see the opportunities for the commercial exploitation of ways of life in Cornwall, he does not seem to have espoused the political agenda of Cornish nationalism. There is no healing sense of Cornish nationhood as in Seamus Heaney's Irishness<sup>29</sup> or protest as in David Jones's sense of a political order removed from its local origins.<sup>30</sup> Causley is not attempting to 'divert attention from present day political circumstances' and it could be argued that he is escaping into a 'regression which undermines any power to act in the present'.<sup>31</sup> Younger poets who wanted a struggle for 'political autonomy, linguistic recreation and cultural self-definition'<sup>32</sup> might criticise Causley for not foregrounding the grievance of the oppression of Cornish culture and society. Richard Pevear comments of Causley's poetry,

But it is hard to say that a Cornish tradition stands behind it in the sense that one can speak of a Gaelic tradition in the Highlands. Causley does not speak directly about Cornish culture or cultivate the politics of Cornish separatism, as MacDiarmid has done in Scotland.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Duncan, *The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British Poetry*, (Great Wilbraham: Salt, 2003), p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> Raphael Ingelbien, *Misreading England: Poetry and Nationhood Since the Second World War*, (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2002), p. 182.

<sup>30</sup> Vincent Sherry in *David Jones* (online). Poetry Foundation, updated 2015. Available from: <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-jones>> (accessed 18 June 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Middleton, p. 119.

<sup>32</sup> David Hayes, 'We have our own history', *P.N. Review* 121, Vol 24 No 5, (May-June 1998), p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Pevear, *The Hudson Review*, Vol XXIX No 2, (Summer 1976), pp. 314,315.

In this context, Causley remained on the border between utilising a realistic articulation of his personal environment as a literary resource, and promoting action to support its unique survival and independence. Geoffrey Summerfield's comment that 'Charles Causley speaks from a sense of being rooted in Cornwall and also speaks, as it were, from the past of Cornwall, its misty days of sorrow, tragedy and magic', is accurate about the rootedness but implies in the concept of 'misty days of sorrow' and 'magic',<sup>34</sup> a triteness that is not typical of Causley's poetry of place centred on Cornwall.

### **On The Border: Home and Alienation**

Schmidt argues that exile from the community, which in Causley's case was the defining experience of war, is important for the development of a poet<sup>35</sup> and Basil Bunting felt the necessity to leave home in order to see it afresh.<sup>36</sup> As John Barrell remarks, even in cases where the confinement of a locality may be accepted reluctantly, a poet may realise that their identity depends on staying where they are.<sup>37</sup> Causley himself comments,

I mean, up to 1940, I wouldn't have dreamed of writing poems about the curious characters who haunted the little market town where I lived. I thought the subject of poetry was away and somewhere else and I had to go there to find it. Nobody told me that poetry is underneath your nose — it's happening there all the time. It took me a long time to find out that — too long.<sup>38</sup>

Existing alongside the emotional attachments of family, church and locality from his childhood was a pervading sense of the fear and instability of alienation. Like Hardy's, Causley's art does

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<sup>34</sup> *Worlds: Seven Modern Poets*, ed. by Geoffrey Summerfield, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Schmidt, *Reading Modern Poetry*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry*, ed. by Ian Hamilton and Jeremy Noel-Tod, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Clive Wilmer, 'Charles Causley in Conversation', *PN Review* 79: Vol 17 No 5, (May-June 1991), p. 2.

inhabit the 'real world'<sup>39</sup> with an instinct for stability but a feeling of profound unease. Causley articulated the sinister forces which lurk under the respectable surface of the life of his home town behind the closed curtains. In the 1992 poem 'Stang Hunt' (*Collected*, p. 399), he uses a less formal metre and an irregular pattern of rhymes to build up to a first vivid childhood realisation of the existence of cruelty, summary justice and the intolerance and very real threat of mob hysteria underneath the apparent veneer of adult civilisation, when it is felt that the existence of 'family' as a controlling social force is threatened by adultery. His parents draw back the curtain as a vengeful mob pursue a man who was 'wicked to his family'. ' "The rough song./Stang hunt. It means a man was wicked to/His family", was what my father said./Beneath my naked feet, unseen, unknown,/Trembled the first small shock of ice, of stone'.

The dark image of what lies outside the conventional family home and the uncompromising judgement on those who contravene moral codes, explained to the child as 'wicked to his family' is reinforced by the sounds which are conveyed by the 'scat' of the tin trays, the 'punishing' of the nails, the 'blare' of the torches and the sudden tremor of coldness as the naked feet touch the stone floor. In the background lies the assumption that the country activity of hunting animals, familiar to all the occupants of the town, can easily be transferred to hunting humans. This is the vicious, dark side of what would be presumed to be a stable society in a small rural town. The subject matter reflects on universal qualities of, and dilemmas in, human nature.

Causley himself commented of his poetry that 'Nothing I have ever written was intended as purely topographical poem...'<sup>40</sup> John Powell Ward quotes Samuel Johnson's emphasis on 'local poetry' initially 'with or without the meditative element' but which Powell Ward argues eventually moves beyond this to become part of the 'English-line'.<sup>41</sup> Wright points to Dewey's assertion<sup>42</sup> that the local is only the universal and 'upon that all art builds'. Causley's use of place does not make explicit attempts to translate the particular to a wider context. However, Hanke

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<sup>39</sup> Op. cit., Davie, (1998), p. xvii.

<sup>40</sup> Op. cit., Hurst, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> John Powell Ward, *The English Line: Poetry of the Unpoetic from Wordsworth to Larkin*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit., Wright, p. 3.

argues that Causley typifies Hardy's sentiment which, in a Cornish context, would describe the inhabitants of Cornwall, and presumably more specifically Launceston, as 'beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local should be really universal'.<sup>43</sup>

Speaking to Susan Hill of a fellow sailor from the town who was lost in World War Two, Causley described the dilemma of living in his small community after the war. 'Oh that was terrible, Susan, I knew him all my life and then I came home and he didn't and I had to pass his mother every day in Launceston High Street. I always wished I'd turned to stone'.<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to argue that Causley's poems are a 'surrogate for unearned emotion'.<sup>45</sup> Causley had no illusions of life before or after both world wars being an innocent type of rural pastoral idyll, however much he may have used formal, restrained and rational verse to portray it. His analysis of the wider human predicament behind seemingly local and unremarkable events hardly tallies with Duncan's description of 'Conservatives who present frozen and congealed realities because these are qualities which make them happy'.<sup>46</sup> The border between emotional security and personal insecurity was one which Causley inhabited all through his life, due both to the tension of his rootedness in Launceston with its emotional associations and demands, and his chronological positioning between two wars and the permanent effects that this occasioned.

### **On The Border: War and Peace**

It was war and his survival from it which took Causley beyond the physical border of Cornwall, the emotional stability of his childhood and adolescence, and which gave him the perspectives to articulate the psychological borders between war and peace. Hamilton suggests that Causley's generation grew up with the expectation of being killed in action.<sup>47</sup> Causley's birth date, 1917, provides the context for his statement that 'War is the very worst thing that can happen to

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<sup>43</sup> Michael Hanke, 'Causley and His Critics', in *Op. cit.*, Hanke, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Op. cit.*, Hill, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Op. cit.*, Sinclair, p. xiv.

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.*, Duncan, p. 101.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. cit.*, Hamilton, (1965), p. 2.

humanity'.<sup>48</sup> Running through his childhood, chronologically and emotionally, and on to the end of his life, were the effects of World War One in the illness and lingering death of his father from the effects of gas. In 'To My Father' (*Collected*, p. 410), written in 2000, he 'Hunches before me on a kitchen chair,/possessed by fearful coughing. Beats the floor/With his ash-stick, curses his lack of luck.' Neil Corcoran commented of Ted Hughes that war was inherited genetically from his father,<sup>49</sup> and the same could be said of Causley.

I can hardly remember my father at all; he was a soldier who died in 1924 finally — he was invalided home from France — and it was through reading poems of Wilfred Owen and Sassoon — and so forth that I got some kind of inkling as a very young man, as a schoolboy, as to what might have happened to my father and what the war might have been like for him. It always seems to have been a kind of backdrop to my life, right up to 1947, when the war was over.<sup>50</sup>

There was also the presence of permanently shell-shocked World War One veterans, such as Dick Lander of the poem of the same name, ridiculed and bullied in his home town of Launceston by Causley and his school friends. As with the illness of his father, expressed in poetry long after the war, this childhood memory, perhaps tinged with guilt in this case, remains to old age. 'At firework time we throw a few at Dick/Shout, "Here comes Kaiser Bill!" Dick stares us through/As if we're glass. We yell, "What did you do/In the Great War?" And skid into the dark'. ('Dick Lander' *Collected*, p. 344). Thus it is not surprising that Causley should begin to have a heightened perception of the effects of war from an early age and it is significant for the focus of his poetry after World War Two that this initial perception is based not on actual engagement with combat but with the effect of combat on survivors, a theme to which he returns again and again. Edward

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<sup>48</sup> Laurence Green, *All Cornwall Thunders at My Door: A Biography of Charles Causley*, (Sheffield: Cornovia, 2013), p. 198.

<sup>49</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, ed. by Tim Kendall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 583.

<sup>50</sup> Op. cit., Wilmer, p. 1.

Levy comments that, 'the First World War is as important to Causley as the Second. At any rate, lovelessness and loss are associated in his mind with both'.<sup>51</sup> This is a conclusion which may explain the 'more' in Causley's own words that, 'From childhood, then, it had been made perfectly clear to me that war was something more than the exciting fiction one read about in books or saw on films'.<sup>52</sup>

Causley's adolescence was marked by the sinister progress of fascism in the events of Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War and Munich. Both conservative visions of social and economic progress within an assumption of justice, order and a benevolent God, and liberal humanism before 1914, had hopes that their agendas would be reinvigorated and progressed after World War One. They were not to know they would be disappointed. Over the generation who grew up between the wars was a feeling of the inevitability of another conflict, liable to be fatal to any kind of belief in moral, social or political renewal as portrayed by Marxism or leftist agendas, as well as to personal survival. In addition to the possibility of individual death, very real to Causley through six years of service in the navy, there seemed to be no such likelihood that victory in World War Two, if it happened, would usher in the type of society that would resolve the social and political tensions which had characterised the Thirties, although Adam Piette argues that the entry of the Soviet Union into the war in 1941 refuelled 'hopes of radical reconstruction'<sup>53</sup> for those such as Causley on the political left.

Causley's father's example resolved him against the army, he choose the navy, despite his fear of the sea, because he thought he would be based at Plymouth and might be able to return home occasionally and because it might avoid as much direct action as possible.

The war had a catalytic effect on me as a writer...It was Hitler who pushed a subject under my nose...I decided, out of a mixture of ignorance and fright, to opt for the Navy. I wanted

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<sup>51</sup> Edward Levy, 'The Poetry of Charles Causley', in *Op. cit.*, Chambers, p. 58.

<sup>52</sup> Dana Gioia, *The Most Unfashionable Poet Alive: Charles Causley*, (online). Dana Gioia, updated 2009. Available from: <<http://www.danagioia.net/essays/ecausley.htm:1998>> (accessed 21 December 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Adam Piette, 'War Poetry in Britain', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War Two: Cambridge Companions Online*, ed. by Marina Mackay, (2014). Available from: <<http://www.dx.doi.org/?/10.1017/CCOL052187081X.009>> (accessed 01 January 2015), p. 16.

to avoid the Army. I thought of my father, who had served as a private soldier in France during the 1914-1918 war... I had read Sassoon, Blunden Graves, Owen.<sup>54</sup>

'The stress of war', comments John Press 'implies the ambiguity of all things',<sup>55</sup> and the advent of war provided Causley with a specifically ambiguous situation. It released him from the drudgery and confinement of the office job arranged for him by his mother when he left the local grammar school, providing a previously unimaginable opportunity to travel and leave the constrictions of his small, Cornish market town. Paradoxically, this liberation could only be achieved at great personal cost, danger and lasting emotional dislocation. The cataclysm of war for Causley was the freedom it gave him both to see his physical and emotional rootedness from a fresh perspective and to discover his future literary form, but then sending him back to this same rootedness haunted by the randomness and inevitability of death, loss and separation.

He was often seasick and homesick and yet admitted after the war that it was his service in the navy, with its restrictions on time, space and privacy, which prompted him to write poetry rather than plays or novels, and gave him his first subject matter. Piette uses Donald Bain's 'War Poet' to argue that for the writers of World War Two there were pressures 'to restrict representation to narrow experiences quickly jotted down...'<sup>56</sup> a sentiment which accords with Causley's statement that, 'Though I wrote only fragmentary notes for the next three years, the wartime experience was a catalytic one. I knew that at last I had found my first subject, as well as a form'.<sup>57</sup>

### **On The Border: Religion and Belief**

In this way, World War Two gave Causley the literary form of poetry through which to articulate experiences of both war and the peace he returned to. One of the legacies of that war was a renewing of the Christian narrative albeit from the non-realist position he had held since losing his faith in adolescence. The border between faith and doubt had already been crossed for Causley

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<sup>54</sup> Op. cit., Hamilton, (1965), p. 158.

<sup>55</sup> John Press, *A Map of Modern English Verse*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 235.

<sup>56</sup> Op. cit., Piette, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (2009).

by the time he was called up for service in World War Two. He does not appear to have suffered the negative and fearful experiences which a Calvinist nanny imposed on Betjeman, leaving him with a lifelong fear of death and judgment<sup>58</sup> or the Unitarian 'divisive dogmas on original sin, hell and damnation'<sup>59</sup> which were present in the formative years of T. S. Eliot. Commentators on Causley do not seem reluctant to categorise his poems as religious. He is 'a Christian poet in an agnostic age' claims Gioia.<sup>60</sup> Gioia also comments that the religious poem is one genre he is master of.<sup>61</sup> David Mason, following Gioia, judges that religious faith is one of the elements which make him unfashionable.<sup>62</sup>

This link between religion and lack of popularity and critical acclaim may be connected to the cultural assumption that, in the second half of the twentieth century, religion was to be perceived as only one of a series of meta narratives delivering only relative truth claims and unable to verify its central assertion that there is a reality and a transcendent being beyond human experience. As Hooker comments of the cultural background, 'contemporary religious poets were writing in a culture imbued with secular values'.<sup>63</sup> The fluidity of these characteristic values of the postmodern religious and aesthetic context were superficially not attuned to an apparently traditional, realist reading of Christian narrative and allusions, although close attention to this reading often reveals a combination of mythological perspective and realist doctrinal orthodoxy.

The dilemma for any poet making use of religious language and concepts in this cultural context is summarised theologically by Rowan Williams, 'Can the functions of classical theological language actively survive the denial of ontological reference beyond the speaker?'<sup>64</sup> and poetically by Edward Larrissy. 'The alienation of contemporary society has exacerbated the old

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<sup>58</sup> Kevin Gardner, *Faith and Doubt of John Betjeman: An Anthology of Betjeman's Religious Verse*, (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Cleo McNelly Kearns, 'Religion, Literature and Society in the Work of T. S. Eliot', in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by David Moody, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 87.

<sup>60</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (2009).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> David Mason, 'Causley's Wild Faith', *Able Muse*, (Summer 2009).

<sup>63</sup> Jeremy Hooker, *The Poetry of Place: Essays and Reviews 1970-1981*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *God and Reality: Essays on Christian Non-Realism*, ed. by Colin Crowder, (London: Mowbray, 1997), p. viii.

Romantic problem of how (or whether) to infuse a world of fascinating but chaotic sense data with transcendent meaning when one is deprived of agreed myths'.<sup>65</sup>

As with Geoffrey Hill, Causley was influenced by the 'response and rhythms of the Anglican church service'.<sup>66</sup> Causley would regard these as perfectly consistent with the 'common tongue' of the society in which he lived, in the sense that in a small, church going culture they were part of a regular weekly vocabulary and their influence was 'keyed deep in the traditions of a speaking community'.<sup>67</sup> The language and rhythms of the King James Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and Hymns Ancient and Modern sunk into his consciousness from regular exposure at a young and impressionable age, and influenced his vocabulary, imagery and metre.

However, any literary speculations on the validity of doctrine would have been considered dangerous and shocking and played no part in the Christian environment in which Causley grew up as a child in the 1920s and 30s in his small Cornish community. Traditional Anglicanism and respectable Methodism were the predominant influences on his close family and therefore his childhood. He explained that,

My mother was a Christian, and went to the same little church as my grandmother had cleaned. The Church kind of belonged to them. They used to bake the bread for Communion. I was taken every day. I absolutely loved the King James Version and all the prayers...And some of it might just have happened.<sup>68</sup>

What 'the some of it' is Causley never explained, but poems retelling the narrative of the Christian story, legends of ancient saints, and reflections on Christian symbols make a significant contribution to his poetry. In this poetry Causley sits on the border between human experience and activity and the great biblical themes of evil, redemption and love.

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Larrissy, *Reading Twentieth Century Poetry: The Language of Gender and Object*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> Vincent Sherry, *The Uncommon Tongue: The Poetry and Criticism of Geoffrey Hill*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> *Op. cit.*, Brown, p. 2.

## On The Border: Tradition and Modernity

'The activity of poetry' says Sean O'Brien<sup>69</sup> 'is a process not a time limited event'. Genres are not fixed in stone. Poets who are cast in genres are limited by their category. This is not the case with Causley. Both Schmidt and Gioia stress the centrality of narrative in Causley's work as a crucial element in his 'radically independent position among contemporary poets'.<sup>70</sup> Gioia remarks that 'He has endorsed the importance of narrative verse in an age which has called the very notion of poetic narrative into question'. It is his independence more so than his poetry which is radical. He has been described as an 'eccentric anti-modernist'.<sup>71</sup> The course of British poetry in the second half of the twentieth century included the controversies surrounding The Movement, what was perceived by Eric Mottram as the subsequent revival in British Poetry<sup>72</sup> and the various descriptive contexts such as pop and performance poetry which have been identified as part of the diversity of poetry in the 1980s and 1990s, described by David Kennedy<sup>73</sup> as a time when poetry became more pluralist and democratic 'in a period when society has become increasingly fragmented...'. The fact that Causley is not identified with any one of the simplified poetic groupings of the twentieth century illustrates the complexity of assessing the significance of his work over 50 years of publication. In his anthology of *British Poetry Since 1945*, Edward Lucie-Smith significantly makes no judgements about Causley's place in the development of British poetry in this period, placing him simply in the chronological category of 'Post War'.<sup>74</sup>

Born in 1917 and dying in 2003, in addition to social, economic and technological upheaval, Causley was writing in the aftermath of two world wars with the revelations of genocide which emerged from them and for much of his life during a Cold War which might at any time lead to nuclear annihilation. His apparent clarity, restraint and localism would seem an irrelevance to

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<sup>69</sup> Sean O'Brien 'Contemporary British Poetry', in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Poetry*, ed. by Neil Roberts, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 573.

<sup>70</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (1987), p. 28.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> Eric Mottram, 'British Poetry Revival,' in Op. cit., Hampson and Barry

<sup>73</sup> David Kennedy, *New Relations: The Refashioning of British Poetry 1980-1994*, (Bridgend: Seren, 1996), p. 252.

<sup>74</sup> *British Poetry Since 1945*, ed. by Edward Lucie-Smith, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 112.

those arguing that fragmentation, experimentation and obscurity within an explicitly universal application is the only possible authentic poetic reaction to his time. A superficial consideration of the background, content and style of this poetry would appear to align him directly with the criteria used by Al Alvarez to describe those poets who avoided 'wild, loose emotion,' and reflected by their style and content a lifestyle of decency, gentility and order.<sup>75</sup> The peculiar confines of a small agricultural Cornish town in the years after the First World War and his mother's struggle to provide for the family after the death of his father from the effects of this war, gave him a childhood which was grounded in the stability of family and community, which Alvarez saw as an impediment to experimentation and the expression of new experience.

Thus his apparently conservative, reflective and seemingly unspontaneous, carefully crafted use of form, tone and language, place him with The Movement. Thomas praises his economy of style but continues by commenting, 'Every adjective, every verb, conveys a complexity of emotion...'<sup>76</sup> However, Causley's range of work might gain Alvarez's approval when he claimed that the new poetry which progressed from The Movement would be characterised by the ability and willingness to face the full range of the poet's feelings and his full intelligence.<sup>77</sup> For much of his life, Causley's energy and emotions were caught up in the daily practicalities of a primary classroom. Here the backdrop of loss of innocence and the reality of death lurk behind the seemingly guileless activities. He transmits this in the regular rhyme, appropriate to the activity of the speaker, in the 1968 poem 'Conducting a Children's Choir' (*Collected*, p. 131), 'They hold before their faces masks of flowers/Their summer eyes anticipate the snow./In skin as yet untouched by ticking showers/There lies the simple statement of the crow'. He meets a former pupil with a terminal illness in 'Death of a Pupil' (*Collected*, p. 116), written in 1961, and sees the presence of death, familiar from his wartime experience 'Often, I say, I saw him at your gate,

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<sup>75</sup> Alfred Alvarez, *The New Poetry*, (London: Penguin, 1962), pp. 23, 25.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas D. M., 'Faithful Travelling', in *Op. cit.*, Chambers, p. 10.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Finch, 'British Poetry Since 1945: A View From 2001', *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of British Literature*, (2003). Available from: <<http://www.peterfinch.co.uk>> (accessed 16 April 2013).

/Noted well how he passed the time of day, /Gazed, with bright greed, at your young man's estate/ And how, in fear, I looked the other way'.

The immediacy of the articulation of his sense experiences, the disturbing nature of his imagery, and his ability to experiment within his own terms along with his willingness to look beyond British poetry in the translations he made of various continental poets including Lorca, move Causley towards the 1950s and 1960s disciplined experimentation, direct tone and imaginative energy of The Group. The expression of controlled emotional states through the persona of the author is typical of the 'confessional' poetry of the same era. Barry Newport considers that his 'breaking free from the tight patterns of his earlier work' has the effect that 'Language, and the increasingly personal experience it is translating, have become more closely related'.<sup>78</sup>

Causley was influenced by elements of a tradition of British poetry expressed in some specific major figures. His attachment to these elements of the tradition remained throughout his poetic career, possibly reinforced for him by his adolescent reading of First World War poetry when it articulated horror without the more extreme 'British surrealism and linguistic obscurity'<sup>79</sup> of the New Apocalyptics who were publishing in that adolescence during the 1930s and 1940s. Like William Blake, he came from a modest background, questioned organised religion and used images of lost childhood innocence. He shared the circumstances of a modest rural context and local attachment with John Clare and, with Hardy, foregrounded the tensions between vulnerability and security in the lives of communities in a world where modernity was fragmenting previous stability. His poetic journey has resonances with Romantic perspectives on the imagination and nature, with William Wordsworth's disillusion with the course of political upheaval in Europe and also with Wordsworth's agencies of memory, childhood and landscape to

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<sup>78</sup> Barry Newport, 'To A Poet Who Has Travelled' in *Op. cit.*, Chambers, p. 65.

<sup>79</sup> David Morley, *From the Apocalypse to The Movement: Poetry in English Since 1945* (online). University of Warwick, updated Nov 2006. Available from: <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/English/currentstudents/undergraduates/modules/fulllist/special/en331poetry1945/apocalypse>> (accessed 16 November 2014).

search for a resolution for these exterior tensions and the interior states of mind which arose from them. He could identify with Blunden as a survivor of war.

In the 1950s and 60s Causley corresponded with Sassoon whom he admired for the 'suggestion beyond the words' in his poetry and his refusal to 'remain caged within a single area of experience'.<sup>80</sup> Siegfried Sassoon had respect for the 'high spirits, verbal sparkle and colour' in Causley's ballads but warned him not to allow 'that sort of writing to run away with you, quietly moving in a different style shows what you can do...Live your poetry and it will emerge in due time and mature itself'.<sup>81</sup> Causley also had respect for W. H. Auden's realistic appraisal of the contemporary events of the 1930s whilst avoiding moral didacticism.<sup>82</sup>

Schmidt argues that Causley took A. E. Houseman's metres but little from Ezra Pound and Eliot and that it was his emphasis on narrative rather than fragmentation which moved him away from Modernism.<sup>83</sup> Causley's use of the ballad form to retell traditional stories and to express modern narrative, his frequent use of regular patterns of rhyme and metre and, even in his free verse, his use of unfragmented syntax suggests that he fits Duncan's description of poets who exhibit 'sly and malicious conservatism'<sup>84</sup> in which 'inane and artificially irresponsible tones were mixed with a conscious and discreet return to outdated forms fragrant of old money'<sup>85</sup> or, as David Kennedy puts it, 'the return of the repressed'.<sup>86</sup> Ballads are intended to be heard and not read and in reinvigorating and popularising this style of poetry Causley adds his own distinctive dimension to a genre of performance poetry which, with its universal human themes, relates to the human need to tell stories. In the ballad form, disjointed syntax would hinder the flow of the narrative and disrupt the opportunity to enter into the experience. The ballad form can cleanse, romanticise and distance experience because of its traditional folk song connotations, but in

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<sup>80</sup> University of Exeter *Special Collections*, (EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1: 4/1/52).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, (EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1: 26/1/55).

<sup>82</sup> John Blair, *The Poetic Art of W. H. Auden*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 12.

<sup>83</sup> Michael, Schmidt, *Lives of the Poets*, (New York: Vintage, 2000), pp. 879,880.

<sup>84</sup> *Op. cit.*, Duncan, p. 33.

<sup>85</sup> James Keery, 'The Zone of Thermal Death', *Jacket Magazine No 30*, ( July 2006). Available from: <<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/30/keery-zone.html,2006>> (accessed 23 April 2013).

<sup>86</sup> David Kennedy, 'British Poetry Never Was', *Jacket Magazine No 26*, ( October 2004). Available from: <<http://www.jacketmagazine.com/26/kennedy.html,2004>> (accessed 23 April 2013).

anonymous traditional ballads as in Causley's own, there is irony between the apparently attractive, imaginative world view and the often deadly message. Mason comments on the narrative properties of ballads that 'Stories may appear to be stable forms, especially once they are written down, but even the most traditional story forms invite anarchy in their openness to interpretation'.<sup>87</sup> In the 1953 poem 'Recruiting Drive' (*Collected*, p. 32), Causley challenges the accusation that the poetic discourse of this form is limited and cannot face up to the extremes of the age<sup>88</sup> precisely by weaving his own creativity into an expression of the timeless duplicity of the war machine.

By 2000, the twentieth century phenomenon of decensorship, referred to by John Sutherland as one of the major trends affecting the evolution of twentieth century literature,<sup>89</sup> would have given Causley the opportunity to express the effects of all these pressures with unrestrained imagery and vocabulary and with the possibility of angrily explicit language. The death of his mother and the end of his teaching career in the small local community had also removed other potentially inhibiting restraints, but he continued to avoid 'wild, loose emotion'.<sup>90</sup> Powell Ward criticises some of the poets from The Movement for lacking a sense of inner compulsion in the sense of avoiding communicating their own authentic experience<sup>91</sup> but Causley continued to 'search for the real'<sup>92</sup> however painful this may be. Causley achieved what Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville refer to generally as 'a characteristic and integral body of work, with its own field of interest and attention'.<sup>93</sup> His urgency of purpose<sup>94</sup> was based on the need to transmit the personal experience of his childhood, World War Two, his work as a primary teacher, traditional stories and a variety of locations, using clarity and integration of experience, thought and

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<sup>87</sup> Op. cit., Mason, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Sean O'Brien, *The Deregulated Muse*, (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth Century Literature*, ed. by Jenny Stringer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. xviii.

<sup>90</sup> Op. cit., Alvarez, p. 23.

<sup>91</sup> Op. cit., Powell Ward, p. 179.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>93</sup> *A Various Art*, ed. by Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville, (London: Palladin, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> George Watson, *British Literature Since 1945*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 144.

expression. He does not seek 'an alliance with popular culture'<sup>95</sup> and can be ironic but is rarely overtly judgemental, not using his poetry as 'a scapegoat shoved out in the place of morality'.<sup>96</sup> He has the expectation that 'realism and humane sympathy'<sup>97</sup> will not produce diminished outcomes but can express modern consciousness and in which protest, anger and a sense of injustice emerge not from violent syntax but from a reserved personality apprehending experience and trying to provide the language which will enable others to enter that experience.

Causley operated partly within a traditional concept of verse, but he also operated within wider parameters when he felt that the theme required a more flexible form. In 'Embryos' written in 1988, (*Collected*, p. 369), he effectively uses free verse to be self-referential, to chronicle his realistic assessment of where he is after a lifetime of teaching.

**REDACTED:** See 'Embryos 111', *Collected Poems*, p. 370.

The syntax is logical and grammatical yet the informality of the style reflects the tone of resignation, revealing the childhood and adolescent day dreams and the only too real nightmares of the war years. This is a skilful use of a loose structure and style to give the impression that somehow banality is the final word. Perhaps the realisation of this is so terrible that it needs to be disguised in the throw away attitude which the verse communicates so effectively.

But even within a more relaxed form, Causley's apparent spontaneity still does not articulate a loss of emotional control or a desire to experiment radically with form and style. His last poems continue to illustrate Waterman's contention that he was emotionally grounded away from modernism.<sup>98</sup> This reflects the structure of the society Causley lived in for all of his life which was remote from the disintegration, industrial decay and experimental lifestyles of more cosmopolitan contemporaries. As early as 1954 Sassoon had warned him 'you do well to keep clear of the

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<sup>95</sup> Op. cit., Sinclair, p. xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Op. cit., Davie, (1998), p. xiii.

<sup>98</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 2.

literary gang in London. One gains nothing by being mixed up in it'.<sup>99</sup> He could be criticised for not seeking out this fragmentation and alienation and including it in his poetry, but this would not have been authentic for him, and this does not negate the fact that the deeper undercurrents of human nature and its individual, local and global manifestations are part of his subject matter. He illustrates that the use of traditional forms does not have to imply that the variety of his type of poetic discourse 'is limited in terms of self-knowledge, history and the world'.<sup>100</sup>

Schmidt describes the twentieth century in poetry as one with no coherent pattern but set in the context of an empowering tradition.<sup>101</sup> The development of Causley's poetics in his own life bears witness to the power of this tradition to sustain a body of work which has been unjustifiably neglected and merits much greater critical inspection. The result of such a critical inspection will question the validity of those judgements which persist in equating Causley's mainly traditional form with a naïve simplicity. It will also suggest the influence of those poets inherited from the established canon, particularly Wordsworth, whose focus on the self in time provides reference points for so much of Causley's work centred on place and landscape. A framework for the neglected area of critical consideration of Causley the poet will be clarified by considering his poetry chronologically alongside the contention that he is 'on the border' in the five main chronological periods of his publications: through the borders between home and alienation, war and peace, religious doctrine and secular experience, and both tradition and modernity in his poetic genres.

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<sup>99</sup> Op. cit., University of Exeter, ( EUL MS 50a/PERS/1/18/1: 30/7/54).

<sup>100</sup> Op. cit., Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Op. cit., Schmidt, (1999), p. xxv.

## Period One: War and Peace 1951-1957

In his survey of Causley's life and work Malcolm Wright observes,

Today only some Causley scholars would ever describe him primarily as a war poet, but that he certainly was in his early writing days, and it was the war poems that eventually drew the attention of publishers.<sup>1</sup>

Desmond Graham comments that the lasting effect of World War One on poetry was that from the 1920s there was no expectation that poetry was primarily confined to previous romantic or pastoral conceptions of beauty or aesthetics or limited to traditional forms.<sup>2</sup> But by the outbreak of war in 1939, what had formerly been considered radical sentiments expressed in vivid and judgemental expressions of the horrors of combat as lived in trench warfare, had been definitively and finally employed as an imaginative poetic genre in the poetry arising from this war. Along with this the motivations of patriotism, protest, compassion and the quest for social change analysed by Jon Silkin<sup>3</sup> as characteristic of the progression of poetics in World War One, had been extensively exploited. The legacy of that war ensured that the heroic-romantic warrior and the realism of grimness and pity<sup>4</sup> had lost both their novelty and effect as modes of depicting war or its effects in poetry. Lorrie Goldensohn quotes Keith Douglas 'hell cannot be let loose twice'.<sup>5</sup>

In any case, the First World War categories of 'war poetry' were too limited for the coming conflict. Trying to reinvigorate these forms could not recreate the dramatic and devastating effect they first had in World War One, or depict the changed, global industrialised warfare of World War Two, where for many combatants killing took place at distance, and for many civilians death came from such a distance. World War Two poetry was to be based on experiences arising out of

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Wright, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry of the Second World War*, ed. by Desmond Graham, (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *War Poetry: An Introductory Reader*, ed. by Simon Featherstone, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> James Mersmann, *Out of the Vietnam Vortex: A Study of Poets and Poetry Against the War*, (USA, University Press of Kansas, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Lorrie Goldensohn, *Dismantling Glory: Twentieth Century Soldier Poetry*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 85.

war in a much wider context. This context for Causley was the paradox of a combatant who experienced no violent action and of a survivor whose relief at his own survival was never free from guilt when remembering those who did not survive. David Bromwich speaks of the 'discontinuity between the self and the world'<sup>6</sup> in the case of William Wordsworth after his experiences of the French Revolution. Writing in 1943 in 'Conversation in Gibraltar' (*Collected*, p. 17), in the midst of his naval service, Causley suggests he was pessimistic about the future before the war had even ended. 'We hold, in our pockets, no comfortable return/ tickets:/Only the future, gaping like some hideous fable'. Causley later described his inner imaginative poetic compulsion in these terms,

What affected me as much as anything during those wartime years was the fact that the companion who left with me for the Navy on that same day was later drowned in a convoy to northern Russia. From that moment, I found myself haunted by the words in the twenty-fourth chapter of St Matthew: 'Then shall be two in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left'.<sup>7</sup>

The emphasis in this quote on the 'taken' and the 'left' point to the consistent and enduring obsessions, the haunting, which runs through Causley's poetry. His poems after the war focus on the pain of separation, whether from the geographical rootedness of his physical and emotional stability in Cornwall, in the extremity of those 'taken' in death, and the guilt and isolation at personal survival as one of the 'left', all of which add up to a loss of innocent belief in a potentially positive view of human nature and social progress. Santanu Das argues that the emotional and poetic trajectory from innocence to disillusion caused directly by war is often a too simplistic analysis.<sup>8</sup> For Causley, the legacy of his childhood and adolescence in the illness and separation through death from his father and the melancholy and sinister atmosphere of the rise of fascism in the thirties had already influenced his imagination and psyche before the war came. The loss of

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<sup>6</sup> David Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., Hanke, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *The Cambridge Companion To The Poetry Of The First World War*, ed. by Santanu Das, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 17.

innocence was not solely due to events after 1939. But war service forced his poetic sensibility to cope with questions of the relationship between realism, imagination and violence when he reflects on the death of his friends, the 'taken' and the effect of guilt on his personal identity as one of the 'left', all culminating in a perspective on life and therefore poetry which was dislocated by the presence of war as a determining life experience. Causley commented that he wrote his earliest poems from wartime experiences. Some were elegies for lost comrades; others were studies of the disasters and humours that war strews round with terrible and obvious prodigality... As well as the inevitable wartime subjects of separation, love, death in far and lonely places, I have also been obsessed by the theme of lost innocence.<sup>9</sup>

It is these three preoccupations, separation, survival and loss of innocence, rather than the trenches, the wire and the mass graves of World War One,<sup>10</sup> which determine the selection of experience, the mediation of this through form and style and therefore the relationship in his poetry between the actuality of war and cultural expectations concerning its mythical and literary nature. Kate McLoughlin argues that a 'major reason for writing about war is that it is "cathartic", even curative' and discusses Shay's analysis that 'psychological recovery from such trauma is dependent upon the construction of a personal narrative of events that receives sympathetic hearing'.<sup>11</sup> Causley's use of ballad is a natural vehicle for narrative and the poems, even at a temporal distance from the war, can be seen as a continuing personal discourse in which he communicates his sorrow for lost friends and his own guilt and isolation, a personal mission to come to some kind of terms with these feelings, with similarity to Tim Kendall's assessment on the more extreme combative circumstances of Blunden, that a 'war poet who survives war is self-divided and self-haunted, death alone brings the peace of reconciliation'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., Hanke, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 323.

<sup>11</sup> Kate McLoughlin, 'War and Words' in *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing: Cambridge Companions Online*, ed. by Kate McLoughlin, (2014). Available from: <<http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521895682.003> > (accessed 10 April 2014), p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Kendall, *Modern War Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 83.

This discourse begins in 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon' (*Collected*, p. 2), which appeared in the 1951 collection *Farewell Aggie Weston*. Here Causley decided to select a mixture of historical and contemporary content and mediate it through a traditional ballad form to express the themes of separation, death and isolation, narrating the fate of Katharine and a World War Two casualty known by him, Jumper Cross. Both of these have been 'taken' away by impersonal international circumstances and separated from their roots, leading to death in a far-off place. A. Trevor Tolley claims that the use of ballads can cast back contemporary emotion into archetypal frameworks, 'dreams of fantasy where emotion is detailed and contemporary but direct'.<sup>13</sup> Here Causley reinvigorates a traditional poetic form to engage with war and its aftermath, illustrating his conviction that this can be done effectively as a vehicle to foreground the impersonal causes, personal trauma and deadly effects of mechanised warfare.

**REDACTED:** See 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon', *Collected Poems*, p. 2, v. 1.

The representation of the realities which Causley wishes to communicate is done without any unconventional syntax or extremely violent vocabulary but instead the 'grey' cathedral pervades the poem with a bulk and weight of hopelessness. Peterborough, where Causley did his teacher training after the war, houses the tomb of Katharine in the Cathedral. The narrator, who will later emerge as a personification of those 'left', begins by retreating to childhood as if his life has been frozen in time like the fen.

This reverie is interrupted by the dislocation of war into the child's subsequent life.

**REDACTED:** See 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon', *Collected Poems*, p. 2, v. 2.

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<sup>13</sup> A. Trevor Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 229.

Possibly the 'few charms' for Causley were apparent liberation from his previous confinements coupled with the opportunity to travel in World War Two. He suggests that war is now not only something which, unlike earlier wars, directly affects everyone, but it is also 'mechanised' even for combatants, so that the enemy is attacked at a distance with industrialised weaponry. Jumper himself is killed in verse three by a 'six- inch shell/Singing across the sky'. But the end result of the military machinery moves forward inexorably like an industrial process, 'you wake up and find yourself dead'.

The concept of being 'taken' linked by Causley to verses in Matthew's gospel, with its implications of geographical separation and then separation by death, is apparent in the fourth verse. Katharine has been 'torn out by the roots' from a home to which she can never return, her living breast is now a dead stone chest.

**REDACTED:** See 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon', *Collected Poems*, p. 2, v. 4.

As the narration progresses, the fen is no longer frozen, the river is running like time, and the condition of the narrator/survivor parallels that of Causley, surviving after the war to attend his college in Peterborough and visit the 'grey' cathedral and Katharine's tomb.

**REDACTED:** See 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon', *Collected Poems*, p. 2, v. 6.

He is unable to speculate on the positive potential of his future life, but is trapped in an imaginative vortex which turns automatically to the remembrance of those taken at a young age by the finality of death, and to being left with an overwhelming sense of isolation. The characters are based on actual people but are archetypal in their combined tragic fate and somehow sense of permanently being mythically somewhere, they are 'always out late' as the final verse

indicates. In contrast to what his life might have been, if the legacy of war had not left him as a survivor, his personal identity is overshadowed by negative emotion, 'watching the sky with a groan' because of the effects of the past. The 'taken' and the 'left' are united in the subject matter of the final verse.

In 'Song of The Dying Gunner AA1' (*Collected*, p. 6), from the 1951 poem of that name, the emphasis is on the 'taken' rather than the 'left'. The tone is already lightened by the prefix 'Song' in the title. The dying gunner has a 'mouth full of stars' and his blood is 'a twin branched scarlet tree' running away.

**REDACTED:** See 'Song of the Dying Gunner AA1', *Collected Poems*, p. 6, v. 1,4,2.

The pattern of full stops only at the end of each four line verse, and the second and fourth line rhymes give the irregular metre of the poem pace, with the internal rhyming of the third lines, 'done/gun', 'depend/weekend', 'neat/sheet', emphasising the rocking motion of a sea shanty. His body, like the rhyming pattern of the verse is 'wrapped up neat in a canvas sheet', an example of what Waterman describes as Causley's 'measured response to the brutality of war'.<sup>14</sup>

For Causley there is a finality about the fate of the dead, their separation from him and his loss, but it is not given any extraordinary symbolism of martyrdom or glory by being described in realistic detail. In his apparently privileged status as a survivor, Causley either cannot or will not use the context of war to chronicle death in violent detail, refusing to overtly use the private grief of the deaths of lost friends as imaginative constructs or in the cause of critical or martyrologist propaganda. The dying gunner speaks, but in the form and style of the poem, even with the inclusion of naval slang, the non-realism prevents the exploitation of the dead through second hand sentiment which could occur from a more direct description of the manner of his death.

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 122.

As in 'A Ballad for Katharine of Aragon' there is no attempt to materialise bodily experience. Kendall raises the question of how far violence in war poetry is an inspiration necessary to 'liberate' imagination.<sup>15</sup> For Causley it was the after effects of this violence which haunted and liberated his imagination and therefore his poetry for the rest of his life. Causley's selection of experience and the mediation of this through his poetry occasioned by these wartime experiences depict the personal haunting of the separation from the 'taken' and the isolation of the 'left' which form a personal perspective shared by many surviving combatants after the war. Violent realism is not a necessary condition for the context of death within his poetry because it is the end result, not the means of death, which apparently haunt him the most. Therefore, the dilemma of using violence to gain a realistically harrowing effect in his art with the attendant danger of indulgent voyeurism on the part of poet or reader, does not arise, and neither do the dangers of badly wrought imitations of the extreme violence depicted in some World War One poetry. One guilt which he did not provide himself the opportunity to suffer from was that of 'guilt at the imagination's succumbing to the temptations of violence...'<sup>16</sup>

Causley himself saw little action, 'War on the whole is a very boring process, except for about five minutes each year — I mean unless you're very, very unlucky, and I was very, very lucky in my experience.'<sup>17</sup> He was not prepared to use his imagination to invent 'realities' for effect. He uses what he does know from experience, the galley, the mess, the forrad gun, the Aggie Weston shore hostels, the tiddley suit and most ominously the canvas sheet, a recurring image in his poetry for the wrapping of a dead body. These convey a sense of authentic experience but he refuses to attempt to describe from imagination the explicit horror of violent death either by drowning or shell fire. He avoids physical degradations, reverting to more esoteric and in the case of the 1951 poem 'Convoy' (*Collected*, p. 13), and the later 'Rattler Morgan' (*Collected*, p. 18), Shakespearean pictures, where 'eyes are quarried by glittering fish' and 'fingers are washed to stone', to distance the reader from the physical realities, feeling that the horrors are too vast to be legitimately

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<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., Kendall, (2006), p. 247.

<sup>16</sup> Adam Piette, 'War Poetry in Britain', in Op. cit., Mackay, (accessed 01 January 2015), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., Wilmer, p. 1.

expressed, or that in a descriptive sense they can be taken for granted. Causley mediates them to give space for whatever moral reflection his imagery will prompt in the reader/listener. The references to death in the collections of 1951 and 1953 are insufficiently graphic to convey the horrors of naval warfare, but the priority is to focus the reader not on the physical details but the psychological disturbance of the realisation that the taken, however this happens, are gone. They 'shan't be home no more'. There won't be any more of life's ordinary events, Christmases or weekend excursions. Hence Causley reverts to the distancing technique of song and his preferred, predictable ballad form in elegies for his friends. As Waterman remarks,

Causley's war poems are not ostensibly angry or imbued with violent language, even though they stress the brutal finality of war and the ultimate effect its inflicted estrangements can have on the participants.<sup>18</sup>

The poetry that Causley writes which emerges from his engagement with war may have been poetically 'safe' because of what Linda Shires analyses as a 'Movement' aspiration that fragmentation and wartime dislocation of personality and the social order should be rectified by a rejection of early twentieth century modernism.<sup>19</sup> But 'A higher degree of craft', says Susan Gunbar, 'does not have to decrease a text's emotional effect'.<sup>20</sup> Causley's use of ballads and predominantly constrained rhyme and metre might imply that his poetry supports the contention that 'what is traditionally understood as poetry cannot survive the shock of contemporary events'<sup>21</sup> contrary to David Daiches's 1942 comment, in the midst of that war, that 'art is not to be put aside in times of crisis'.<sup>22</sup> Without using violent vocabulary or disjointed syntax, Causley skilfully uses his experience of war to create his early poetry, believing that traditional forms could communicate the truth of this experience and that the lifetime dislocating influence of the

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<sup>18</sup> Rory Waterman, 'Causley's War at Sea', in *Op. cit.*, Hanke, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Linda Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War*, (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 149.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Gunbar, *Poetry After Auschwitz: Remembering What One Never Knew*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 258.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, Kendall, (2006), p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> David Daiches, 'Poets and the War', *Poetry Magazine*, (1942), p. 208.

war could be authentically articulated. For Causley both the futility and pity of war are in personal loss and global loss of innocence, and these are his dominant themes.

Causley also distances the horror of war in a nautical sea shanty context in the ironically titled 1951 poem 'Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience' (*Collected*, p. 4), an account of the disintegration of innocent sensibility in which the nursery rhyme form and characters also distance the immediacy of effect, but in this instance to foreground the loss of innocence. The sailor who promises to return to the speaker situated on a white and innocent quay, with exotic, childish gifts has a red tongue and a kiss 'as strong as death'. He fails to return, the ship returns with a hole in the side and the disillusioned child has grown out of the gifts. 'O where are the other/girls and boys?/And why have you brought me/Children's toys'? Even without the nursery rhyme implication and despite his preoccupation with those who have been 'taken', Causley uses no explicit descriptions of violence as he narrates their deaths in his poems.

Along with the experience of death and the loss and separation which it brings, Causley's other preoccupation after the war is the loss of innocence arising from the deceit and destruction of war. This is more usually exemplified in anthologies in the 'Nursery Rhyme of Innocence and Experience'. But two years on from the publication of this and 'Song of the Dying Gunner AA1', the imagery of the seductive 'butcher birds' who 'sing, sing, sing' in the 'bleeding air' in 'Recruiting Drive' (*Collected*, p. 32), does illustrate Causley being explicit about the more general outcomes of war. 'Death spreads her dripping wings'. The faithless wife, Peace, runs off with the soldier, War, in the 'Ballad of the Faithless Wife' (*Collected*, p. 54), and ends up 'Dead on the diamond shore'.

Causley's most vivid comments on the universal process by which war turns humanity to deception, swallowing up both the possibility of uncorrupted life and the innocent victims of the resulting corruption, are articulated in 'Soldier's Chorus' (*Survivor's Leave*, p. 31), his most virulent poem about the death of innocence in war and one which could be described as the most transparent and ironic form of political protest. 'Soldier's Chorus' was first published in *Survivor's Leave* in 1953. The ballad form carries the action without detracting from the bitterness. Mother, a frequent presence in scenes depicting the departure of sons for war in Causley's poems, also a

characteristic of some World War One imagery, is exhorted to look out of the window and the door to see that the sergeant has taken two members of the family and is coming back for more. The narrator then goes through the rest of the family with advice for each one. The narrator tries to encourage the Father to 'fiddle my date' of (his son's) birth and commit fraud, the Sister to beware of rape, the Brother to avoid conscription by buying a farm where he can be safe in 'other manure'.

**REDACTED:** See 'Soldier's Chorus', *Survivor's Leave*, p. 31, v. 4.

The Wife is exhorted to 'abandon your mud pack/And call home the cunning crows' so that she looks her age and is less likely to be attractive to the soldiers.

**REDACTED:** See 'Soldier's Chorus', *Survivor's Leave*, p. 31, v. 7.

Everything about the situation is tainted with deception or the threat of violence and the consequences are terrible, inevitable and so out of control that they go beyond apportioning individual blame, the momentum of violence carries itself forward in the metre and the alliteration, the church 'goes up like the gasworks', the tower 'falls in flame', part of death's 'fan of fire'. The violence is described here but it is cosmic, not individual, as in 'Song of The Dying Gunner AA1' there is no description of individual degradation, the fate of the family in 'Soldier's Chorus' is never described.

**REDACTED:** See 'Soldier's Chorus', *Survivor's Leave*, p. 31, v. 8.

This final verse seems to be more reminiscent of First World War disillusion and protest and the explicit political and moral statement is out of character with the tone of the rest of Causley's work. 'Soldier's Chorus' is the one example which suggests what Parc describes as Nietzsche's

'critical history', history which judges and condemns.<sup>23</sup> It does not appear in the final *Collected Poems* of 2000, neither is it in Causley's own selection for the *Collected Poems* of 1975. Why this should be is a matter for speculation. Did he, or his publishers regard it as poetically 'bad' or too 'juvenile' or unrepresentative, or too direct in expression or subversive? Is the fact that 'Soldier's Chorus' disappears after 1953 due to Causley's wish to avoid using poetry to make persuasive moral judgements of which he was no longer convinced, as Peddie argues in discussing Auden's revisions.<sup>24</sup> Waterman suggests that 'Causley omitted it from his *Collected*, perhaps because the poem could be construed as questioning the justification for war against Hitler'.<sup>25</sup> This justification became apparent once the full extent of the actual and potential genocide of the Nazi regime was revealed in the post war decade.

The *Union St* collection of 1957, with many poems written after the war and already published in *Farewell Aggie Weston* and *Survivor's Leave*, includes a new poem 'Armistice Day' (*Collected*, p. 76), in which Causley specifically remembers three comrades who died, Starry, Oxo and Kitty. However, the descriptions of the clothes they were wearing in their naval persona when they drowned, a 'pusser's flannel', 'ducks' and a 'pneumonia suit', provide a symbolic barrier between the reader and any realistic detail of their drowning. The poet stands alone in Parliament Square remembering them while 'stiff sea-horses' stare into his eyes. There is no mention underneath the calm, conformist exterior of tears or the seething anger of 'Soldier's Chorus', the bitter criticism which might have surfaced on a formal occasion like Armistice Day, nor of the General 'Drying your crocodile smile for me', in another 1953 poem 'Rondel' (*Collected*, p. 42). By 1957 it is the issues of the responsibility of survival which preoccupy him rather than recrimination. In the setting of the British war cemetery at Bayeux he returns to World War One and meditates on voices from the dead advising him that he should 'Take our fortune of tears and live/like a

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<sup>23</sup> Cathy Parc, 'A Poet Laureate's Front Lines: How to Wage a War of Words for Peaceful Purposes', *Arts of War and Peace Review: Vol 1 No 2*, (Nov 2013). Available from: <<http://www.awpreview.univ-paris-diderot.fr/>> (accessed 15 April 2014), p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> Katharine Peddie, 'W. H. Auden's Revisions and the Responsibility of the Poet', *Arts of War and Peace Review: Vol 1 No 2*, (Nov 2013). Available from: <<http://www.awpreview.univ-paris-diderot.fr/>> (accessed 15 April 2014), p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 122.

spendthrift lover. All we ask/is the one gift you cannot give' ('At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux' *Collected*, p. 59). The separation, survival and loss of innocence which continue to haunt his poetic imagination long after both wars, make it unlikely that he will be able to spend this legacy of survival in a casual or light-hearted way. Waterman argues that 'the war poetry Causley wished to preserve reflects a measured and selfless response more like that associated with Edmund Blunden'.<sup>26</sup>

Blunden was also a survivor of war and felt guilt at surviving when so many others did not. 'As a survivor of the war Blunden had to learn to somehow live with his memories, something he never really achieved. He always felt that part of him was living in that time, unable to escape fully to the present.' It is perhaps this guilt that allowed the memories to return in such an intense way.<sup>27</sup> The very fact of Causley's survival gave him an opportunity for reflection after the war and this intensity of memory could not be shared by his World War Two contemporaries, Keith Douglas, Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis, caught up in fatal action, often regarded, mistakenly Piette believes, as the 'canon' of World War Two,<sup>28</sup> a critical device described by Philippa Lyon as putting the emphasis of the canon on 'combat construction'.<sup>29</sup> Causley did not have their direct experiences of combat and could not replicate either Douglas's photographic and according to Kendall, dispassionate depictions of horror,<sup>30</sup> or the poetic intensity witnessing to loss at sea in naval action which was achieved by Alan Ross. He did not foreground physical combat but the struggle to establish a psychological and emotional stability whilst living with the memories of the survivor.

Piette speaks of 'the struggle of the private imagination to maintain peacetime identities and dreams' in the midst of propaganda and the 'very great evil for all concerned' that is war.<sup>31</sup> In order to maintain these identities and dreams and live with the effects of, and express the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Homepage 'The Survivor's Ghosts', in *War Poetry* (online). Edmund Blunden, updated 2015. Available from: <<http://www.edmundblunden.org/>> (accessed 21 Dec 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Adam Piette, *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945*, (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Twentieth Century War Poetry: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism*, ed. by Philippa Lyon, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., Kendall, (2006), p. 159.

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Piette, (1995), p. 7.

consequences of that evil, Causley turned in the first instance to those traditional poetic forms which came naturally to him from the literary influences of his childhood. The authenticity of this decision resolves for him the potential tension between the actuality of life in wartime and after and the function of mythical and literary expressions of 'war poetry'.<sup>32</sup> It was his way of communicating truth, an honest rebuttal for him of the 'sense of lies, artificial dreams, fabricated emotions, public stories'<sup>33</sup> with which the war machine tried to infiltrate the imagination, not only during but following the two world wars, which some regarded as making up one tragic betrayal of twentieth century humanity.

It is significant that his 1953 collection is called *Survivor's Leave*. Survivor's leave is just that. You have survived an attack, you are given some leave, but you will return to your duties. Causley's life after the war was a kind of permanent survivor's leave, he may have survived the emotional effects of World War One in childhood and physical threats of death in World War Two, escaping without the total disintegration of his personality and getting on with life after war, but he was aware through the whole of his life that the fear of separation through death, guilt at survival and the loss of an innocent expectation of the essential benevolence of life, had invaded his sensibility and art. He realised this as early as 1953 that this would be permanently so and expressed it in 'Ballad of the Faithless Wife'.

**REDACTED:** See 'Ballad of the Faithless Wife', *Collected Poems*, p. 54, v, 5.

The cultural expectations on poets who were writing during and after World War Two were not clear either before or after the war. Speaking of poetry published during the war, Enright remarked that 'the wartime demand for war poets usually comes from those who don't want poetry at all.'<sup>34</sup> This implies that what was expected from poetry was a form of state inspired

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<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., Lyon, p. 162.

<sup>33</sup> Op. cit., Piette, (1995), p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Op. cit., Enright, p. xxviii.

propaganda or a private coping mechanism. Causley's poems were not published until well after the war and would not have answered the first of these demands anyway. Neither in the 1950s does he seem concerned to look back on the war with national pride, in Piette's words, to 'manufacture nostalgia' or create an after the event 'artificial memory system'.<sup>35</sup> Causley seeks through traditional forms such as sea shanties, ballads and traditional metre and rhyme to suggest how the war has profoundly influenced his own sense of emotional security and to mourn and remember his lost friends. In so doing poetically in the restrained and distancing strategies of these forms, he was not implicitly defending or promoting militarism or patriotism from the past into the future. His poems in the 1950s and beyond cannot be read as any justification for such attitudes.

Causley's contribution to any 'post-war memory system' is to express the resulting experience of dislocation after the war in traditional rather than Modernist style, but this does not mean that the memory system which emerges from *Union St* in 1957 does not have a radical message of the wastage of war. 'The after effects of the war are as important as the devastation that took place on the battlefield when considering the powerful and futile nature of war itself'.<sup>36</sup>

Causley had the courage to witness to the sense of loss which war brought to his whole life and personality. Kendall quotes Hill as urging the need to express the 'burden of experience'.<sup>37</sup> In relating the burden of his experience in poetry which allows an articulation and communication of the emotions of separation, guilt at survival and loss of innocence, Causley's testimony of war succeeds in creating a 'coherent image in the middle of destruction'<sup>38</sup> which address the human condition in the aftermath of war. McLoughlin, in her discussion of Kant's 'Analytic of the Sublime' sees 'successful' war representation as twofold, made up of 'all that the writer can convey and all

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<sup>35</sup> Op. cit., Piette, (1995), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit., <<http://www.edmundblunden.org/>> (accessed 21 December 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., Kendall, (2006), p. 248.

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit., Parc, p. 37.

that the reader can apprehend'.<sup>39</sup> This twofold representation is the essence of Causley's engagement with war in his poetry.

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<sup>39</sup> Op. cit., McLoughlin, (accessed 10 April 2014), p. 22.

## Period Two: Religion and Belief 1953-1961

By the 1950s, when Causley's poetry began to be published, following the horrors of World War Two, it appeared that 'the gospel of secular humanism seemed unworkable'<sup>1</sup> and the dilemma of the 'post-modern God space' remained.<sup>2</sup> However, Christian humanism could still provide a narrative to express universal human dilemmas as in Hill's appropriation of language but rejection of ritual<sup>3</sup> and his view that Christianity was still the 'central myth of Europe'.<sup>4</sup> Thus Davie was able to argue that religious experience remained valid as an aspect of poetry in the late twentieth century and that even though scripture references were old metaphors, they could be still relevant.<sup>5</sup> Green suggests that Causley's war experiences led him to doubt that humanity would use its free will to search for the redemption from the trauma of war and death which he had encountered with his father's death from First World War wounds, and in his own time in the navy in World War Two.<sup>6</sup> After a time of religious doubt in adolescence, the fears of wartime life at sea, and the loss of some close friends and fellow combatants, Causley reacts, not by exhibiting, as in Alvarez's criticism of *The Movement*, a deliberate 1950s attempt to draw back from the horror of two world wars and pretend that life could go on the same as ever,<sup>7</sup> but by using the Christian narrative of crucifixion to express his profound pessimism about the potential of human nature to move away from its destructive path.

Longley suggests 'Christianity shapes the vision and form even of poets who disown it, like Hardy'<sup>8</sup>. Causley said in 1983,

I don't consider myself a Christian. I was brought up in the Christian tradition and I absorbed the Christian culture...and I am grateful for that great gift of the Bible to my

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Blair, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> M. Wynn Thomas, 'R. S. Thomas and Modern Welsh Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century English Poetry*, ed. by Neil Corcoran, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Sherry, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> David Annwn, *Inhabited Voices: Myth and History in the Poetry of Geoffrey Hill, Seamus Heaney and George Mackay Brown*, (Frome: Bran's Head Books, 1984), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Davie, *Under Briggflatts: A History of Poetry in Great Britain*, (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Op. cit., Green, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> John Lucas, *Starting To Explain: Essays on Twentieth Century British and Irish Poetry*, (Nottingham: Trent, 2003), p. 332.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., Longley, (2004), p. 24.

imaginative process. I wouldn't be without that for anything. But organised religion has always made my blood run cold.<sup>9</sup>

Causley was well aware of the ambiguities of a faith based on love but twisted by humanity into violence and the potential for Christianity to initiate rather than mitigate cruelty. Andrew Brown describes Causley's contemplation of a life-size crucifixion in Burgos cathedral. ' "The legend is that they flayed a Moor to model the body", he said, with a shudder in his voice and hands'. The horror of the crime 'seemed to cancel out any truth in Christianity' is the implication that Brown derives from this autobiographical fragment.<sup>10</sup> Yet Causley felt able to use the Christian narrative to explore the nature and consequences of the rejection of the sacrificial love symbolised by the Christ figure, whose stories formed the narrative background of his own childhood and culture.

Given a childhood and culture in which he was exposed at school and church to the King James Bible, it is not surprising that the majority of Causley's religious allegories are derived from the Bible. They are mostly from New Testament stories. One exception is the 1961 poem 'Bible Story' (*Collected*, p. 107), based on the story of Elisha and the return to life of a dead boy. In an interview with Clive Wilmer in 1991, Causley admitted that,

the Old Testament stories have always fascinated me and when it's possible to marry them to a 20<sup>th</sup> century attitude...For example, the German poet Karen Gershon, Jewish poet, who came over here in the 1930s as a child and lost both her parents in the Holocaust — never saw them after she came over here in, I think it was 1938: she was first able to write about the Holocaust through the mesh of the Old Testament religious stories like Lot's wife, the Exodus and all that. Now that really is quite wonderful, I think, and it's a kind of continuing strand that poets have been able to latch on to and keep going.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Pearce 'Ontological Objectivity in Causley's "I Am The Great Sun" ', in *Op. cit.*, Hanke, p. 139.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, Brown, p. 2.

Later in the same interview he comments, 'I think it's very difficult to write what's called a religious poem in a 20<sup>th</sup> century context. But it is just possible and I certainly try to do so, but not always with very great success.'<sup>11</sup>

Illustrating this difficulty and a possible solution is 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel' (*Collected*, p. 45), published in 1953. The poet sees a broken and collapsed ornamental stone statue of an angel in the local park.

**REDACTED:** See 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel', *Collected Poems*, p. 45, v. 1.

The figure and location should suggest the agency, the angel, and the location, the park, of re-creation, not destruction. The angel has now literally fallen from this destiny and this fall is clogging up the park with blood, an image of the difficulty which Causley himself expressed regarding writing religious poetry in the 20th Century. Christianity has apparently colluded with two world wars and the prospect of nuclear annihilation. The resulting bloodbath has fatally damaged both its doctrinal credibility and popular practice. A poet who still sees value in the Christian narrative will need new perspectives on that narrative in order to re-establish its value in poetic discourse. The device of using a mysterious Christ-like figure as a symbol of humanity's rejection of the Christian message of love is one aspect of this new perspective.

**REDACTED:** See 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel', *Collected Poems*, p. 45, v. 3.

This very early poem introduces some of Causley's most characteristic symbolism, the sea and the winter. In the poem the 'sailing tree firing' links them with suggestions of Causley's experience of naval warfare just as the 'wounded breath', the 'bleeding' and the 'binding' hint at the crucifixion and wrapping of Christ's body. Despite the narrator reaching out by 'stretching', 'fetching', 'bringing' and 'shining', and offering to 'hold', 'bind', 'wash' and 'save', the response of the angel

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<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., Wilmer, p. 2.

is to spit and fire and finally to crawl away in a context reminiscent of the incarceration of a concentration camp.

**REDACTED:** See 'I Saw a Shot-Down Angel', *Collected Poems*, p. 45, v. 4,5.

The dating of this poem, both in terms of its proximity to Causley's war experiences and his admission that he lost his faith from the 1930s until the beginning of a 'kind of recovery' 20 years later, places this in his period of estrangement from doctrinal Christianity. It also coincides with his lack of faith that humanity, after a war which has provided horrific evidence of that humanity's capacity for inhumanity on an incomprehensible scale, will take from the Christian narrative the resolution of this through sacrificial love. Hence the bleak reversal of the role of the Christ figure, whose pain in this instance leads to a turning away from humanity rather than a rescuing of it. The narrator is left isolated and in the snow, one of Causley's frequent allusions to death, and the sinister crow, for Causley a harsh and indifferent indicator of such death, has been carefully waiting for the narrator to realise the isolation and despair of the pervading 'signature of murder' before flying off to the next, inevitable, 'gallows-tree'.

Having articulated the human pain of the transcendent, reconciling figure in 'I Saw a Shot-down Angel', in the poem 'I Am The Great Sun' (*Collected*, p. 57), Causley vividly articulates humanity's rejection of it. 'I Am The Great Sun', published in 1951, is prefaced by the inscription that it is based on a crucifix in Normandy dated 1632.

**REDACTED:** See 'I Am The Great Sun', *Collected Poems*, p.57.

The speaker is the Christ figure. Joseph Pearce comments on Causley's ontology as a conscious objectification in which he empathises perfectly with his subject to convey the ultimately

unknowable transcendent.<sup>12</sup> Causley's strategy for writing 'what's called' religious poetry is to make connections between the 20<sup>th</sup> Century context after World War Two and New Testament parables and allusions, in this case the great mystical statement of Christ's identification with God from John's Gospel, 'I Am'. He does this without any explicit referral back to doctrinal Christianity. The concept of the 'I am' here is not cited as a creedal statement affirming the divinity in humanity of Jesus or a basis for any realist assumptions about his nature and identity, but an assertion of the failure of the world after the war to learn from the catastrophe of the human experience of that war.

Referring to 'I Am The Great Sun' in his 2012 Christmas sermon at Canterbury Cathedral, Rowan Williams relates the poem to humanity's lack of honesty about itself and therefore a wilful misunderstanding of the nature and mission of Jesus,

If Jesus is strange and threatening, isn't that, (the New Testament certainly suggests), a sign of how far we've wandered from real humanity, real honesty about our weaknesses and limits? 'I am the great sun, but you do not see me' — the beginning of another wonderful poem by Charles Causley.<sup>13</sup>

Williams has understood the movement in the poem from the use of the symbolic Christian referent of the word made flesh to the implication of that revelation of divine humanity for human life and relationships. The first line of each verse 'I am the great sun', 'I am the truth', 'I am your counsel', are coupled with a failure to respectively see, believe and listen to the message of reconciliation, leading to the corollary of the failure to name and therefore experience life in the final two lines. The last lines of each verse spell out the implications of this, there is no obedience or prayer, as Williams hints, no recognition that humanity needs a vision beyond self-interest. The dove of peace is killed. The middle lines of each verse picture this dilemma in some

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<sup>12</sup> Op. cit., Pearce, p. 136.

<sup>13</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christmas Sermon 2012 Canterbury Cathedral*, (online). Rowan Williams, updated 2015. Available from: <<http://www.rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2772/2012>> (accessed 21 December 2014).

practical contexts, husbands, wives and children are abandoned, lovers are betrayed, captives are not freed. Significantly the victory of sacrificial love as portrayed in the Christ event is not affirmed, 'I am the victor but you do not cheer me'. The contrast between the positives of the 'I am' statements and the 'buts' leading to negatives of the second half of each verse, with the constant repetition of 'not' only serves to emphasise the disjunction with the 'me' of the speaker.

The 'I am' assertions are used again in the 1961 poem 'For an Ex-Far East Prisoner of War' (*Collected*, p. 100), where the Christ figure is portrayed as the returned prisoner, continually asserting 'I am'. He is the man who has the helmet of thorn, who is naked in a desert, 'five wounded' and with 'blood on his brow'. Causley brings in not only the physicality of the crucifixion but the image of the winter face, a face therefore inscribed with death. The dead comrades who cry to the ex-prisoner to be remembered make the reality of forgiveness almost impossible 'I am that man, long counselled to forget,/Facing a fearful victory, to forgive:' But more explicitly than in 'I Am the Great Sun', Causley makes a direct moral assertion with a specific Bible connotation, that the victory of forgiveness is the only way out of the cycle of destruction and death. At the end of the poem he asserts that the two words 'to forgive' should be seized and beaten 'like sword and ploughshare, into one'.

Causley continues to use the imagery of the physicality of the Christ figure, in particular in its crucified forms of nakedness, the thorns on the brow and the physical disfigurement of the five wounds, as central to another of his poems published in the sixties, 'Christ at the Cheesewring' (*Collected*, p. 112). This foregrounds both the rejected power of reconciling love and the Christ figure as a symbol of this rejection in a world which has experienced war, holocaust and an horrific preview of the effects of atomic annihilation.

**REDACTED:** See 'Christ at the Cheesewring', *Collected Poems*, p. 112, v. 1,2.

The location of the Cheesewring gives Causley both a physical context and a mythological background for the continuing struggle between the forces of power and the forces of vulnerability. The moor is a wicked place, in legend the Cheesewring is the site of the victory of the power of the giants and the vulnerability of a Celtic saint who smashes the stones and defeats them. The man whom the narrator meets not only has an eye which pierces with green jealousy of the so-far undamaged narrator, but also a disfigured and hardened skin. His burning back, nakedness, and cloak of smoke hint at the effects of incendiary bombs. The sky provides no heavenly security, it is failing.

Later in the poem, this victim is then mysteriously transformed to a figure of compassionate power. The harsh tone of the preceding verses where the majority of the adjectives denote violence and dislocation, the 'wicked moor', the 'smashed stones', the 'burning back', the 'ragged crows', the 'drowning day' and the sky which is successively 'failing', 'damaged' and 'swinging', is replaced by the softness of the 's' sounds and the more gentle sounding 'blessing with bread'.

**REDACTED:** See 'Christ at the Cheesewring', *Collected Poems*, p. 112, v. 9.

The action continues in the final two verses,

**REDACTED:** See 'Christ at the Cheesewring', *Collected Poems*, p. 112, v. 11,12.

The perspective now extends to cosmic dimensions. The narrator plucks the thorn from the figure and finally becomes part of this seemingly endless cycle of death, his own brow marked with the 'staring snow' and the 'gallows tree'.

The first line, 'As I walked on the wicked moor', has set the tone of a ballad or folk song from the beginning, a form appropriate to a mythical situation with a universal application. This is underlined by the regularity of the 8/6 metre and consistent rhyming of the second and fourth lines with the internal rhymes of each fourth syllable in the third lines. This order in the structure

is in contrast to the complexity of the subject matter, as the central figures in the poem whether being victim, narrator or Christ figure, participate in a modern equivalent of the struggle between the saints and the giants. It is the gallows tree which has the last word and is printed on the brow of the narrator. The cycle of global destruction without redemption continues. In other examples Causley makes use not only of the Christ figure but various characters from Christian narrative to make this point. Herod, the manifestation of nuclear energy in the 1961 poem 'Innocent's Song' (*Collected*, p. 83), comes walking out of the Christmas flame 'dancing and double talking'.

The elements of a definable and local geographical location, the physicality of bodily violence and the failure of the narrator to be offered any kind of redemption to the horror, are also present in the 1968 poem 'A Certain Man' (*Collected*, p. 151). A stranger, in this case significantly going *down* Ridgegrove Hill, is 'pinned by disaster to blood and granite' and his palms, his throat and his thighs bleed. 'Blood covers up his nakedness with death'. The narrator wants to know who he is and in a reversal of the events of the parable, it is the Good Samaritan who is now the victim and the narrator who has a sharpened hand and 'fingers red'. Causley, like Hill, 'reinvests the Christian message with modern dramas and ironies'.<sup>14</sup> Terry Wright contends that 'the freedom of Christian symbols to explore plurality of meaning makes them so much more rewarding for poetry than dogma'<sup>15</sup> and in 'I Saw a Shot- Down Angel', 'Christ at the Cheesewring' and 'A Certain Man', Causley uses this freedom to reverse the accepted interpretation of the crucifixion in his depiction of a Christ who turns away from humanity, a healer who needs healing himself and a Christ who can only offer the symbolic comfort of bread and wine, his own destroyed body, as humanity destroys itself. But Causley gives no direct and explicit explanations of his use of Christian narrative. 'The story poem or ballad, allows the poet to speak "without bias or sentimentality". It keeps the author from moralizing, but it "allows the incidents of the story to speak for themselves..."'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., Annwn, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Terry Wright, *Theology and Literature*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 152.

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (1987), p. 31.

In these poems, as in all his religious verse, Causley is not asking for acceptance of any doctrinal truth claims of his own, his 'parable poetics' after the war present the bleak situation identified by Terry Wright that contemporary poets struggle to accept the paradox of a fallen world and how Christ's suffering can put it right.<sup>17</sup> In a religious context Causley follows the restricted didacticism of Auden<sup>18</sup>, suspicious politically of dangerous totalitarianism, and rejects the direct communication of moral or supernatural truth as ineffective, aiming instead to lead the reader to a self-awareness of choice and consequence.<sup>19</sup> Interviewed on the radio and asked if he was a religious person he replied that he preferred to hope that he could describe himself as a person of principle.<sup>20</sup> This indeterminate attitude to the realist debate is illustrated by his attitude to prayer as quoted in Brown. He does pray, but prayer,

...is only an exercise in sorting yourself out. I have always liked Alice in Wonderland. She is always talking to herself to pull herself together, and I think prayer might be a bit like that.<sup>21</sup>

There is no attempt at religious dogma in Causley's poetry. Press re-iterates Davie's point; poetry is not a way of knowing but of apprehending the world.<sup>22</sup> For Causley, the poems are a means of pondering on how behaviour translates this apprehension into action. Inspired by his later life as a teacher, the influence of hymnody is put partly to a satirical use in 'On Being Asked to Write a School Hymn' (Collected, p. 255), published in 1975 and a parody of 'Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep' from Hymns Ancient and Modern. Beginning with the cries of anguish from the abattoir, which he could hear from his house, it moves significantly on from the 1960s poems by making an explicit reference to the possibility of transcendence but within humanity itself. 'God who does not dwell on high/In the wide, unwinking sky,/And whose quiet counsels start/Simply from the human heart', continuing with the moral imperative arising from the inspiration of such

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., Wright T, p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit., Blair, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> BBC *Desert Island Discs 1979*, (online). BBC, updated 2015. Available from: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/Radio4/features>> (accessed 16 December 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., Brown, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Op. cit., Press, p. 260.

counsels, 'Teach us strong and teach us true/What to say and what to do,/That we love as best we can/All thy creatures. Even man'. Causley echoes the argument of Don Cupitt, interpreting Kant and Wittgenstein. The function of religious truth is 'not to give us metaphysical information but to shape the way we live<sup>23</sup> with the corollary that, 'Religious truth is not speculative or descriptive, but practical'.<sup>24</sup>

Having moved through poems which foreground the non-doctrinal use of Christian narrative to articulate rejection of love through the symbolism of the Christ figure, and the capacity for moral authority to originate within the human heart, the next stage in the development of Causley's religious thinking as expressed in his poetry was to expand his concept of transcendence as located in nature and the arts. Later in life a personal inspiration for transcendence and immanence seen in the elements below, which he shared with this mother, returned to him. Causley claims that,

I lost my faith in the Thirties, but 20 years later, achieved the beginnings of a kind of recovery. At heart I knew that her faith was the same as mine. A forest, a church, an art gallery, a seascape, a concert hall, a river valley, a theatre, an expanse of moorland, all these were in one important respect the same to us both: temples of the spirit in which life and its creator were to be revered.<sup>25</sup>

Sebastian Barker claims that 'It early became axiomatic for Causley that death is redeemed by faith. It seems that, childhood and adolescent faith aside, war forced this conclusion on him, rather as it did David Jones'.<sup>26</sup> How this claim can be substantiated is not clear as his faith and any

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<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., Crowder, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God*, (London: SCM, 1980), p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Causley 'Slowly To Harbour', in Op. cit., Chambers, p. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Sebastian Barker, 'The Genuine Miracle of a Talismatic Celt', *Thumbscrew No 17*, (Winter 2000,2001). Available from: <<http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=12133>> (accessed 21 December 2014), p. 1.

sense of the redemption of death did not return until later in life and was linked, not to war, but to the illness and then death of his mother.

The ordered metre and rhymes of 'Hymn' (*Collected*, p. 257), which Causley wrote after this 'kind of recovery of faith', for a specific occasion in 1983, describe the temples of the spirit in nature and express the presence of a creator behind these temples, what Waterman describes as 'the Wordsworthian link between man and God through nature'.<sup>27</sup> This order conveys a sense of certainty and control and the description of nature as revealed in the waters, land, air and stone included in the overall Great Creator's vision, creates itself a tone of majesty and stateliness. 'Nature' remarks David Wright 'is seen by Romantics to be consoling or morally uplifting'<sup>28</sup> and this characteristic is evident in Causley's 'Hymn'. In addition to 'walking with holy dread' in verse one, verse two exhorts the reader 'Praise be to the makers given/ Praise him to the head of heaven:/Word within the word to shine/With the voice of the Divine'. The poem concludes with the lines 'That the arts of man may prove/An unalterable love/And, as through a crystal clear/God invisible draw near'. It has some echoes of comments on Jones that 'art should be a form of worship, and that worship itself is a form of art'.<sup>29</sup> 'A poem', Michael Hamburger asserts 'must depend on words even though it wants to transcend them'.<sup>30</sup> In his poetic diction within the later phase of his work, Causley illustrates Heidegger's argument that in a destitute time when the divine finds no place in ordinary language, poetry alone can enable man to dwell and to build.<sup>31</sup> When he refers specifically to God in formal language he tends to subscribe to Heidegger's consequent argument that 'everyday language', a 'forgotten and used up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer cannot find room for Him (God)'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> *The Penguin Book of English Romantic Verse*, ed. by David Wright, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. xv.

<sup>29</sup> Poetry Foundation, *David Jones*, (online). Poetry Foundation, updated 2015. Available from: <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-jones>> (accessed 18<sup>th</sup> Jun 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s*, (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Wright, T. p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

'Hymn' integrates a Newtonian view of the divinely ordered design of the universe with a Romantic perspective on the creativity of the imagination and the Romantic irresistible attraction of nature.<sup>33</sup> Causley is not concerned with speculating on the tension between the idealist realities of the imagination in opposition to the physical reality of matter. He is bringing the two into harmony as part of the expression of creation, behind which exists an invisible divinity linking with the Romantic perception of an insistence on subjective spiritual experience rather than organised, dogmatic expression of religious belief.<sup>34</sup>

Causley's expressed his attitude to his religious poetic journey from the 1960s to the 1980s in the introduction to *The Sun, Dancing*, an anthology of Christian verse which he edited in 1984. He writes,

...the range of religious verse produced over almost a thousand years tells us much about the subtly changing pattern of Christian belief. The inner strengths of that belief seem to me to be even more clearly demonstrated by its capacity to absorb and thrive on fresh attitudes and on excitingly varied interpretations of religious thought and experience.<sup>35</sup>

The 'fresh attitudes' and 'varied interpretations' which Causley's earlier poems express are those of non-realism within a vivid use of the Christian narrative, more specifically the crucifixion, and to a lesser extent, the birth narratives and parables. For him there is still an overarching formative narrative in a postmodern era and it emerges from the Biblical Christianity which permeated his childhood. His early poems are grounded in the human experience of the world after the war in the 1960s through a Christ figure who offers rejected love to that world. Eagleton's remark in the course of a discussion on Christianity relates well to Causley's poetic treatment of Christ. 'The central doctrine of Christianity, then, is not that God is a bastard. It is, in

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<sup>33</sup> Cecil Bowra, 'The Romantic Imagination', in *The Romantic Imagination: A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by John Spencer Hill, (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> *The Romanticism Handbook*, ed. by Sue Chaplin and Joel Faflak, (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> *The Sun, Dancing: Christian Verse* ed. by Charles Causley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 19.

the words of the late Dominican theologian, Herbert McCabe, that “if you don’t love you’re dead, and if you do, they’ll kill you” ’.<sup>36</sup>

Causley moves on to the possibility of the claims of that love being present in the human heart and its response and finally apprehended in nature and art. Also in the introduction to *The Sun, Dancing*, he suggests the importance of a variety of imaginative approaches to poems dealing with the matter of transcendence.

In speaking of man’s relationship with God, it was often assumed by the writer that an entirely elevated tone was demanded. Yet time and again, through the ages, the poets show us in fascinating variety how they ignored, accepted, or wrestled with this particular problem...<sup>37</sup>

These imaginative approaches and the wrestling and imaginative reality appear in the foregrounding of three main symbolic themes. These themes are the physical sufferings of a transcendent and yet immanent Christ figure in the crucifixion narratives and in versions of parables, the appropriating of the ‘I Am’ concept to relate to human conditions, and in later life the reverence for a creator who is apprehended in music, nature and art. The emphasis is on subjective human experience arising from war and latterly from nature, rather than objective doctrinal propositions. Like Hardy, Causley lost his faith as a young man, but he accepted the loss without needing to struggle to explain ‘how an Imminent Will pursues purposes which were at best indifferent to human needs’.<sup>38</sup> After his loss of faith the individual Christian experience<sup>39</sup> was not something which he found it necessary to search for in organised religion and even after his return to the presence of the transcendent in nature, Causley did not find this sense of the divine in traditional church ritual. In the themes and imagery of the poems linked to Christianity

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<sup>36</sup> Terry Eagleton, ‘Lunging-Flailing-Mispunching: Review of the God Delusion by Richard Dawkins’, *London Review of Books: Vol 28 No 20*, (19 October 2006), pp. 32-34.

<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., Causley, (1984), p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> John Lucas, *Modern English Poetry from Hardy to Hughes: A Critical Survey*, (London: Batsford, 1986), p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> Barry Spurr ‘Religion’, in *T. S. Eliot in Context*, ed. by Jason Harding, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 305.

and in exploring the possibilities of the transcendent, Causley is addressing precisely the problem of writing religious poetry in an age which is unused to looking for moral imperatives in ancient narratives, sceptical of any deity who could have allowed the devastation of human warfare, and cynical about the existence of any power claiming to be beyond humanity's experience.

Despite these difficulties, the importance of exploring and expressing religion in Causley's life is seen in the frequency with which many of his poems use religious material. His reputation and popularity as a religious poet, while they may not on close inspection seem to contradict Schmidt's argument that in the second half of the twentieth century 'religious verities are not only untenable but remote'<sup>40</sup> could counter Schmidt's view that by the 1970s they 'had not retained their imaginative reality'.<sup>41</sup> Brian John remarks in the course of a discussion on Charles Tomlinson's views, that 'the otherness of the world was ignored by The Movement who were not aware of a continuum outside themselves'<sup>42</sup> and that they failed to experience mystery profoundly. Even during the time of his loss of faith and relatively near to his war experiences, this does not apply to Causley. He made use of Christian allegory for much of his life and may not have appeared primarily, like Jones, to be 'looking for the sacred presence as a valid reality'<sup>43</sup> but found some kind of such presence later in life outside the parameters of organised religion.

Causley could be identified with criticism of The Movement poets in leaving an overall impression that 'God is good'.<sup>44</sup> However, even after the horrors of twentieth century warfare and genocide, he makes no attempt to rationalise how evil and suffering exist in the light of belief in a beneficent divinity. He leaves such speculation to his earlier poems foregrounding man's rejection of love when it is offered. The apparent contradiction of Causley's reluctance to commit

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<sup>40</sup> Op. cit., Schmidt, (1989), p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Brian John, *The World As Event: The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson*, (McGill: Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 52

<sup>43</sup> Kathleen Staudt, *At the Turn of a Civilisation: David Jones and Modern Poetics*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Op. cit., Alvarez, p. 25.

to religious affiliation with the common description of him as a 'religious' poet can be accounted for by Geoffrey Hartman's explanation of poetry's contribution to *Taming the Chaos*,

The Sacred has so inscribed itself in language that while it must be interpreted, it cannot be removed. One might speculate that what we call sacred is simply that which must be interpreted or re-interpreted. 'A Presence which is not to be put by'.<sup>45</sup>

What Gioia describes as Causley's 'restless, visionary Christianity'<sup>46</sup> and what for Mason is the essence of Causley's 'Wild Faith' in speaking of 'something human glimmered against the dark of annihilation'<sup>47</sup> make a significant contribution to the role of religious poetry after the war. In this seemingly infinite task, Causley gives his version of a 'Christian insight into the invisible meanings of reality'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Emerson R. Marks, *Taming the Chaos: English Poetic Diction Theory Since the Renaissance*, (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1998), p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (2009).

<sup>47</sup> Op. cit., Mason, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit., Davie, (1998), p. xvi.

### Period Three: Dwelling and Place 1968-1984

Throughout the years after World War Two, Causley is exploring the nature of his life as a survivor from within the life of Launceston, the town to which he returned and where he lived for the rest of his life. The sense of greyness and bleakness emanating from the combination of granite and slate is as elemental to life in his hometown of Launceston as a heartbeat and a physical manifestation of the potential negativity of isolation and confinement. Following his emphasis on the effects of war and the use of non-realist Christian narrative, Causley's poetry after the war, continues in the 60s, 70s and early 80s to find poetic inspiration from his human associations with the town, and specifically the Norman Castle, which he uses as an external feature to signify the oppressive psychological legacy of these years in the most significant poem of this period, published in 1984, 'On Launceston Castle' (*Collected*, p. 286). For this inspiration, Causley needed an emotional engagement with his surroundings. 'For myself, it is very necessary that the scene and setting of a poem should somehow fuse with the personal life, be at one with it'.<sup>1</sup>

The use of locations around the town to provide the poetic context for his feelings, intuitions and imagination and the central role of the Castle as a vantage point from which to view and evaluate the development of these has resonances with the Romantic emphasis on the creative impact of imagination on a sense of place, and in particular Wordsworth's meditations on the growth of the mind expressed from within the framework of his external environment. It was the townscape of Launceston itself which was a constant reminder of the death of Causley's father, from which he embarked on his war service and to which he returned following it. Launceston was therefore a literal reminder of wartime death, loss and separation, the end of innocence and the survivor's attempts to come to some kind of resolution to the life-long wrestling with the fragility of his sense of self after the war. Causley's external self may have found a degree of security in the familiarity of well-known settings but the internal terrors remained. The poems in

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Newport, p. 65.

*Underneath the water* (1968), *Figgie Hobbin* (1970), the 1975 *Collected and Secret Destinations* (1984), foreground this existential dilemma.

For Clare 'a landscape of limestone heath made up my being'<sup>2</sup> whilst Auden's limestone symbolised contexts of flux and inconstancy.<sup>3</sup> Causley's granite and the more domestic stone, slate, are unyielding and permanent. 'All Cornwall was underfoot, overhead, soft grey slates on roofs and scales on the outside of walls, hunks of quietly flashing granite all over the town'.<sup>4</sup> The small town Causley knew as a child, with its slate coated houses, is one which had gradually expanded beyond the medieval street plan clustering around the Norman Castle. Causley had an intimate connection with the settings of his Launceston poems, the world he supposes is actual, not ideal<sup>5</sup> yet expanded, as in Ronald Gaskell's reference to Wordsworth, by the 'immediacy and strength of his feelings for the landscape of his boyhood'.<sup>6</sup>

By returning to teach in his home town after service in the navy in the Second World War, Causley expressed an attachment to a physical location and a sense of historical identity which was not typical of the mobility and transience of the second half of the twentieth century. This stability could be interpreted as an expression of the Romantic fear of disconnection and subsequent desire for attachment<sup>7</sup> and the remoteness of the location as a tendency towards misanthropy.<sup>8</sup> Conversely Nicholas Roe argues that the decentred energies of Romantic culture flourished where 'distance from the metropolis becomes one measure of cultural vitality'.<sup>9</sup> If Causley's return to Launceston was a retreat or a decision based on disappointed expectations then it could have driven him, as E. P. Thompson remarks in the same context of Wordsworth, to 'fall back within the forms of paternalistic sensibility'.<sup>10</sup> However it seems to have given him a

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<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., Barrell, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Stan Smith, *W. H. Auden*, (Plymouth: Northcote, 1997), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Causley, 'A Poet Looks At Cornwall', *The Listener* : Vol LXX No 1788, (1963), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Tamplin 'As New As It Is Old', in Op. cit., Chambers, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Gaskell, *Wordsworth's Poem of the Mind: An Essay on The Prelude*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Fiona Stafford, *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>9</sup> *English Romantic Writers And The West Country*, ed. by Nicholas Roe, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), p. 167.

vision of new possibilities of expressing his life in his home town. 'Returning to Cornwall after the war, I saw its sights, heard its sounds and echoes, its forms of speech, as though I had been newly born'.<sup>11</sup>

The stability did provide Causley with a poetic rootedness as implied by David Herd's clarification of Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling'. That is, going beyond remaining in a place to articulating how this remaining is experienced through language voicing 'its original nearness to place'.<sup>12</sup> Heidegger argues<sup>13</sup> that such dwelling is characteristic of human experience, giving human beings significance as they inhabit spaces staying among things and locations.<sup>14</sup> This sense of presence and human identity bound up with human location<sup>15</sup> is fundamental to the setting of so many of Causley's poems in his home town of Launceston. Through childhood, adolescence, working life, and old age Causley 'knew' the town through more than just a sense of visual perception but in the context that Barrell ascribes to Clare,<sup>16</sup> an intuitive familiarity more than the content of the landscape or the needs of the people in it,<sup>17</sup> and that Skinner, in a Cartesian sense, ascribes to Niedecker. That is, what 'I am' in the interpretation of signals generated by surroundings through all the senses and the imagination, which can only arise from a prolonged physical and emotional contact with the life of a community within an environment.<sup>18</sup> Causley's poetic world is rooted in such a specific locality.

Stephen Gill and Jeremy Hooker remark in a more general context on the poetic potential of place, that it can provide a 'deep patterning of consciousness'.<sup>19</sup> Both before and after the war Launceston provided Causley with this. The title of the 1968 collection, *Underneath the Water*,

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<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., Summerfield, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> David Herd, 'Poetry and Voice: The Urge to Nowhere', *PN Review 197: Vol 37 No 3*, (Jan-Feb 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 215.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit., Barrell, p. 148.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Skinner 'Particular Attention: Niedecker's Natural Histories', in *Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and the Poetics of Place*, ed. by Elizabeth Willis, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008), p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 64.

indicates the focus of Causley's poetry as he reached the middle years of his life in the town. Place may have superficially provided a 'refuge or imagery' for his inner world since the war.<sup>20</sup> But beneath this superficial stability his world continued to be haunted by his 'survivor's leave' and the premonition of death. He uses the environment of the town and physical changes there to reflect on the emotional struggles of his life as a survivor and to seek some tentative location for his sense of self-identity within changes and struggles set against the background of a life spent in this restricted location. His perilous sense of security as a survivor of the war is constantly challenged, just as physical changes in Launceston accompanied and provided graphic parallels to this internal instability. Even immediately after the war Causley had recognised that, 'It was all changed, the horses gone, the coal yard closed, the tan yard not worked, gas came from Plymouth, Cornwall County Council had done something about the river.'<sup>21</sup>

Yet amidst the dissonance of stability and change, he can see the potential of his home town and his attachment to his locality as a resource for both description and meditation fired by his imagination.

A place is a people as well as a set of streets and squares. It is an ambience, an atmosphere, as well as a locality. It is an individual climate of life as well as a group of surfaces and images, smells and sounds, scents and flavours. It does not disclose its true self to the celebrant until he learns to interpret its signals by means of all the senses. Not only brain and heart are involved, but also the secret chemistry of the imagination.<sup>22</sup>

Causley's 'secret chemistry of the imagination' gives voice to the sensory images of 'smells and sounds, scents and flavours' as the town of Launceston provides the setting for the remainder of his life. In using the imagination to articulate 'how objects appear to the mind'<sup>23</sup> he employs actual and unremarkable locations in the town to contextualise and stimulate the imagery of his own mental states. Gaskell highlights the danger that the solitary mind might be more exposed to

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<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., Hooker, (1982), p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Causley, 'Gateway To Cornwall', *The Listener: Vol LV11 No 1449*, (1957), p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Bate Venning, *The Book of Launceston*, (Chesham: Barracuda, 1976), p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., Gaskell, p. 72.

the power of imagination to impose a version of reality on the world but that there is also the potential to heighten rather than distort.<sup>24</sup> In 'interpreting the signals by means of all the senses' from his various isolations, physical isolation in Cornwall, mental isolation as a survivor from the war and the emotional isolation of living alone with no close family after the death of his mother, Causley is not so much imposing a version of reality on his surroundings as using that reality for what John Beer describes in a Wordsworthian context as a stimulation to seek self-identification within those 'areas of his own inner nature which do not correspond with rational and qualitative measurement'<sup>25</sup> and which can be articulated through an 'imaginative universe related to human nature which is not a fantasy but a complement to accepted space and time'.<sup>26</sup> The long term effects of life as a survivor were certainly not 'fantasy' for Causley but his means of expressing them in the poetry of the 1970s are primarily in such an imaginative universe.

The first step in the construction of this is in foregrounding his return from the war. More than twenty years after his return to Launceston, Causley reflects on what that return as a survivor has cost him in emotional terms over those twenty years. 'After The Accident' (*Collected*, p. 152), published in 1968, begins with a returning wounded voice, emphasised by the snow which has covered his wounds, always an indicator of death in Causley's poems.

**REDACTED:** See 'After The Accident', *Collected Poems*, p. 152, v. i

The speaker experiences a kind of resurrection, 'he rose'. Significantly in the context of Causley's life as survivor, this return to life for the speaker is a return to the 'world of men', to the everyday physical and temporal existence which life after the war, with its lasting consequences of death, separation and loss of innocence. He tries to cover up his wounds, as Causley was to do in a

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> John Beer, *Wordsworth In Time*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

lifetime of such private experience of them. He is greeted in that world by those who had not expected his return.

**REDACTED:** See 'After The Accident', *Collected Poems*, p. 152, v. 2.

A conversation begins with those he encounters back in the 'world' and has obvious parallels with a returned Christ figure. There are explicit references throughout the poem to the narrative of crucifixion and resurrection in the smashed legs and side, the scars about the head, the blood at the wrists and the grave clothes. Causley's renunciation of the church, the Bride of Christ in some traditional Christian imagery, for a significant part of his life after the war, is alluded to in the mysterious loss of the Bride, at a time when celebrations of the return from the war, the wedding day, might be felt to be most appropriate. For the rest of the poem the speaker tries desperately to convince his sceptical hearers that he has recovered from the wounds. They are not convinced.

**REDACTED:** See 'After The Accident', *Collected Poems*, p. 152, v. 3,4,5,6.

The sense of physical wholeness is breached by the blood still running down the wrists as the observers point out. The emotional scars from the war, the fear of loss and separation through death and the end of an innocent belief in life originating from his wartime experiences, which have featured so largely in his earliest periods of writing, surface again in this later period, stunting his ability to achieve close relationships and revealing this sense of isolation. This isolation is personal in his emotional life, he has no human bride. The final two lines return to the wedding imagery and suggest that the Christian symbol of the church as Bride is one that at least provides some kind of narrative discourse, if not resolution, for his feelings of displacement and isolation. Only the Bride cares to feel the holes in the hand and feet.

'After The Accident' is located between the two mysterious dimensions of the 'world' he has come from and the 'world' he returns to. In other poems which continue the theme of his search for meaning against this background of the alienation and isolation of a survivor, Causley uses specific physical locations in Launceston itself to foreground his pre-occupation with the often hidden debilitating effects of war which persist in the title of the collection *Underneath the Water*. Going to the local hospital for an appointment in the 1968 poem 'Hospital' (*Collected*, p. 136), he feels that 'Hospital is the war again. /I left my clothes somewhere in town./Here I am innocent and good'. He has left his civilian clothes in the town and is in a state of innocence from before the war as he is checked by doctor, but then enters his naval experiences as he visualises the hospital ward as a warship's mess. The survivor's predicament is symbolised by the two old companions who appear as a pair suggesting that they are survival and death. 'Close by, two old companions stand,/Affectionate, attentive still./ They grasp my hand with self-same joy-/One dressed to cure, one dressed to kill'.

There are other examples, in this period of his life, of Causley using specific locations within the town to go beyond the visual stimulus to 'more complex ideas toward which this might lead' as Herbert Lindenberger describes in his discussion of philosophy in Wordsworth.<sup>27</sup> Paradoxically and yet characteristically, Causley does not hesitate to express these complex ideas, some hints of those conscious fears which are a legacy of the war, in the 1970 collection *Figgie Hobbin*, marketed as suitable for children. Causley was consistent in his opposition to such categorisations, insisting that for him there was no distinction between adult and children's poetry. So it is not surprising that in this 'children's' collection, adult complexity is not far away. In 'Green Man, Blue Man', (*Figgie Hobbin*, p. 34), Causley's articulation of local 'knowledge' is expanded beyond the purely visual as he identifies specific streets in Launceston with some of the forces that threaten his own internal stability. Using the stock beginning of many folk songs 'As I was walking', universalises the psychological fears which each of the men he meets symbolise for

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<sup>27</sup> Herbert Lindenberger, 'Images of Interaction in The Prelude', in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, Meyer Abrams and Stephen Gill, (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 662.

him. First is the green man, the archetype for primeval forces of nature against the self-control of civilisation. The green man is acceptable at a distance in the logically arranged space of the town Square, but advancing towards the speaker, becomes a 'nameless fear' which cannot be put exactly into words.

**REDACTED:** See 'Green Man, Blue Man', *Figgie Hobbin*, p. 34, v. 1.

The blue man then makes an appropriate appearance in Madford Lane, previous home of an eccentric character after whom a substantial historic house was named. The blue man is standing in the rain and his colour has undertones of anxiety and depression. He is invited in as a known quantity.

**REDACTED:** See 'Green Man, Blue Man', *Figgie Hobbin*, p. 34, v. 2.

In Landlake Wood an even more sinister figure appears, his grey aspect and invitation to converse giving the impression of death lurking in the forest.

**REDACTED:** See 'Green Man, Blue Man', *Figgie Hobbin*, p. 34, v. 3.

The writer then meets a purple man near Church Stile with whom he does speak. Causley, having spent his early childhood next to and attending an ancient church, in a very benign religious context, is not alarmed by this apparition.

**REDACTED:** See 'Green Man, Blue Man', *Figgie Hobbin*, p. 34, v. 4.

In the last verse it is night and the speaker cannot tell which is which of all these forces as they merge into one. His imagination has gone beyond the physical environment of the local streets.

The signals from those same streets and the associations nurtured in him by them from childhood, combine in a poem which is traditional in rhyme and metre and simple in vocabulary yet revealing of his continuing fears of powers beyond his control, nature, death and anxiety, running through his life as does the continuing dialogue which he has with Christianity as one possibility for providing a reconciling narrative for these.

The green man, attempting to draw the poet away from his ordered life of local conformity reappears, this time much nearer to 'home' in the garden of his house, in 'Green Man In The Garden' (*Collected*, p. 243). The green man suggests that he 'Leave your house and leave your land/And throw away the key'. In desperation he bolts the window and door and draws the blind. But he is unable to shake off this anarchic challenge to such security as he has managed to achieve, now moving nearer from the streets into his house. 'But when I softly turned the stair/As I went up to bed,/I saw the green man standing there./ "Sleep well, my friend", he said'.

This same figure of death, also one of the two companions from 'Hospital', reappears in the 1975 poem *Angel Hill* (*Collected*, p. 240). This is an actual hill leading down to Causley's cottage in Launceston. It is aptly named as the location for a poem in which a messenger from a transcendent dimension persistently reminds him of the inevitability of death. The sailor knocks on the poet's door and insists on reminding him of their wartime acquaintance. The poet vainly tries to deny this repeating 'No, never, said I' at the end of each verse.

**REDACTED:** See 'Angel Hill', *Collected Poems*, p. 240, v. 5.

In the final verse the sailor makes a sinister prediction. The typical folk song starter of the sailor who comes walking into the narrative, in this case down the hill, and the sea shanty ending as the sailor strolls away singing, conclude with a chilling warning.

**REDACTED:** See 'Angel Hill', *Collected Poems*, p. 240, v. 8.

'After The Accident', 'Green Man, Blue Man' and 'Angel Hill' have all suggested the fears which haunted Causley's consciousness after the war. From childhood, the potential of strangers who walked up and down hills to reveal the secret lives of others had impressed itself on his consciousness. As a child he had recognised the existence of hidden internal lives in others. Living on the side of another hill, Ridgemoor, gave him an endless source of inspiration.

From the living room window, one saw the hill sloping dramatically — almost impossibly - across the pane. What was presented, unmasked, to the viewer was a small stage-set peopled with characters pausing for breath on the way up, or walking — cautiously and with short steps — down. Unbelievably mysterious sherds and shreds of conversation spilled and splintered in our direction. It was the scene of my first glimpse below the surface and into the unguessed-at secret lives of other people.<sup>28</sup>

In these secret lives of others he suspected there were fears such as those which preyed on his own mind. This preoccupation is revealed in the title of the 1984 collection *Secret Destinations*, in which Causley turns to retrospection and recollecting impressions as he attempts to articulate his own secret life with the prospect of old age and death moving inexorably towards him. Almost thirty years after the war he turns to the journey of his conscious experiences of life in the town, sums up and puzzles over the outcome of his struggles with loss, separation and the end of innocence. These have been lived out against the background of the Castle, the great physical expression of conquest by the Normans, whose size and position dominated the lives of all who lived in the small town which had grown up around the mound and its Keep, just as the two world wars have dominated his life.

'On Launceston Castle' (*Collected*, p. 286), is one of the most significant poems in any consideration of Causley's use of his locality to combine both the textual placing of the verse in a physical location and what Chandler, referring to Wordsworth, describes as the 'unwritten text

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<sup>28</sup> Charles Causley 'A Kitchen in The Morning', in *Op. cit.*, Chambers, p. 96.

which comprises the mind itself', as if read through the lens of that second nature where the past survives into the present to become more than just history.<sup>29</sup> The 'present scene and the scenes remembered'<sup>30</sup> link memory with the subliminal, where in a sense space and time are irrelevant in themselves, but are the agents holding together past and present consciousness. In the 1984 poem 'On Launceston Castle' Causley is looking down from high up on the Castle Keep, a vantage point which would provide the ideal location for a sense of vastness and the sublime, a typical setting for the Romantic tradition of the mountain as the definitive place for visions, where the mind can confront nature, and an image for the ascent of life's journey to its resting place.<sup>31</sup>

**REDACTED:** See 'On Launceston Castle', *Collected Poems*, p. 286, v. 1.

But where Causley's poems, as in Wordsworth, do speak of the 'personal emotional charge of particular places'<sup>32</sup> there is no vivid impression of a Romantic sense of sublime or awe and terror in the vastness of nature as expressed in the landscape. Causley has climbed to the top of Launceston Castle, the effort of the climb, rather than being an experience of spiritual elevation, exhausts him, and his vision is drawn downwards and inwards, as he searches through the denseness of the cloud and rain for the key to the interpretation of his lifetime's daily experience of 'being' in this place. Lindenberger argues that in Romantic imagery fog may cut off the location from an earthly sphere before a higher vision is attained, and that a sense of solitude is a precursor for a visionary mood.<sup>33</sup> Causley's solitary resting place at the summit engenders only a sense of bewilderment and even the terror is muted and personal, primarily with a weariness of resignation. The regular use of enjambment in every second line moves the eye rapidly down in a parallel to the steep descent of the Castle mound. The tone is one of restrained rationality and

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<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., Chandler, p. 173.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup> Meyer Abrams, 'The Design of The Prelude: Wordsworth's Long Journey Home', in Op. cit., Wordsworth, Abrams and Gill, p. 593.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., Stafford, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Op. cit., Lindenberger, pp. 653,654.

sober reflection, more The Movement than Romantic, despite the dramatic location and heightened perspective. The subliminal forces are not dislocated from the rational. The wider context of the scene is the unyielding granite of the moor and the inevitable destination of the stream. Against these harsh elements are contrasted the gentler wood, water, rocks and vernacular clay, suggesting his writings slowly being washed away.

James Hefferman describes Tintern Abbey as the location for Wordsworth's 'dwelling place of memory' where the mind is 'above the flow of time'.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, Causley cannot escape the destructiveness of time. The memories stimulated by looking downward from the mound of the Keep do not provide a dwelling place, a place to be, which provide him with a 'spot in time' which could potentially transcend the fear of loss, separation and mortality which has haunted his past and present since the war. He is still struggling in his 'winded' state, unsuccessfully as he himself admits, to make sense of his meditation on the powerful perspective from the crown of the Castle.

**REDACTED:** See 'On Launceston Castle', *Collected Poems*, p. 286, v. 2,3,4.

From the Castle mound he can see the significant physical elements of his whole life, moor, granite, stream and woods spread out before him. These are set among the built environment which has featured in his life, the town hall, the quarry, the school, and the allotments. There is no move in the verse towards 'the imagination as a creative sensibility that alters the landscape...'<sup>35</sup> It remains as it is to external perception, but altered from what it was in Causley's youth by the passage of time which brings decay and change in various forms. The town's carousel of bells, which marked the regular passage of time from the Town Hall, has stopped as the peaceful dove and the bullying jackdaw vie for supremacy, the quarry is long dry and filled

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<sup>34</sup> James Hefferman, *The Re-creation of Landscape*, (London; Dartmouth College: University Press of New England, 1985), p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit., Gaskell, p. 100.

with brambles, the school he taught at is torn by ivy and lichen. There is natural decay around the allotments with symbols of death from nature, the poppy and the sinister valerian which 'bleed' by the 'lean lake-side'. Despite the blanket obscurity of the sky, from his vantage point he can see the decay of those features of his life which seemed once to indicate permanency and significance.

**REDACTED:** See 'On Launceston Castle', *Collected Poems*, p. 286, v. 5.

Having set the context in the first verse, the brief sentences of the following verses list these phenomena of change one after the other, effectively constructing a persistent atmosphere of decay. This is continued in the next verse where 'The shut pond slowly dies'. By the end of this verse the list has finished and the movement of the poem stops dramatically with the presence of the sun. This could be a healing and a turning point. The sun in Causley's poems usually indicates an intense indifference to the scenes it is witness to. Here there is the possibility that this indifference and hurt can be mended and turned into gold. But this potential resolution does not occur.

Given that there are some elements of change in the view over time, 'On Launceston Castle' is still a poetic context where in a Wordsworthian sense, 'The unchanging physical setting allows the Child and Man to confront each other'.<sup>36</sup> This is done through the 'spot of time' which allows Causley's imagination to see the physical and symbolic elements of the view from the top of the Keep as a fusion of his childhood significance and contemporary presence.

**REDACTED:** See 'On Launceston Castle', *Collected Poems*, p. 286, v. 6.

However for Causley this confrontation does not result in emotional healing as a significant outcome of moral reassurance rooted in landscape. Causley hints that the price paid for the security of familiarity may well be the constant presence of oppression. Metaphor, as Gaskell

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<sup>36</sup> John Purkis, *A Preface to Wordsworth*, (London: Longman, 1970), p. 109.

comments is a way of seeing and feeling in which similarity is expressed through dissimilars.<sup>37</sup> Causley still lacks confidence, he is still 'too unsure' to read the 'hard metaphor of the town', which is the dominating presence of the Castle, in juxtaposition with benign leaf and hard stone and the joy of 'summer play' in childhood contrasted with the inexorable progress of time. This progress is moving towards what he is unsure of and may or may not turn out to be a transcendent reality which will validate and resolve his struggle with all those insecurities which have permeated his life.

**REDACTED:** See 'On Launceston Castle', *Collected Poems*, p. 286, v. 7.

In this final verse, he admits that there is no restitution of the 'summer' of childhood assurance of immortality, when 'time was far away', no resolution of his fear of death and oblivion now that the passage of time is only too obviously leading to one outcome. Childhood remains a fable and the 'swift light', any sense of freshness of vision, has gone. There is no sense of his experience on the Castle leaving behind a lasting redemptive power. He is faced with the movement of unstoppable water, breaking free from the 'moored' wall and running from his birth place, therefore from the beginning of his life, to its final destination in the sea.

The physical height of his location has not provided a 'transition to guide the reader from an accustomed way of looking at things to transcendental reality...'<sup>38</sup> His isolation on the top of the Castle and the obscurity of the blanket of clouds and rain have not provided an imaginative vehicle for an interaction with a 'higher vision' or a 'new way of seeing things'.<sup>39</sup> The 'swift light' which might have indicated such a possibility has gone. Lindenberger argues that a landscape poet such as Clare 'keeps primarily to visual impressions' whereas 'Wordsworth, on the other

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<sup>37</sup> Op. cit., Gaskell, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit., Lindenberger, p. 658.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 653.

hand, represents the external world only in order to get beyond it...'<sup>40</sup> Causley cannot yet get beyond the puzzling metaphor of the town. The ingredients of the grandeur of nature and memory combined with this significant moment are all present, but this experience has for Causley none of the positive connotations associated with a new insight or possibility of this significant moment existing in eternal time as memory and nature combine. He is still obsessed by the incessant sense of time moving to a climax of oblivion.

Thus throughout the poetry of the 60s, 70s and 80s, the town and its Castle seem unable to transform these fears, merely to provide a chronological and physical location within which to express them. The dislocations in personality from childhood have caused an interruption in the Romantic sense of 'the natural development of the subliminal self'.<sup>41</sup> As he moves towards his next collection *A Field of Vision* (1988), Causley hints that he needs to broaden the focus of his vision as he has still not found in *Underneath the Water* and *Secret Destinations* a reconciliation with the place that nurtured him, which will provide what is described by Beer, speaking of Wordsworth, as the flourishing and developing of a 'resource for the psyche against the reminders of death in the world'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 662.

<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

#### **Period Four: Home and Landscape 1988-1992**

In 1988 Causley published a collection under the title *A Field of Vision*. This title suggests a widening of the sweep of his poetic perspective and subject matter from his previous work, beyond the ever present effects of two world wars, the loss of orthodox Christian faith and the specific inspiration of the town of Launceston itself. Apart from service in the navy and teacher training in Peterborough, he had, by 1988, lived in Launceston for seventy years. The collection, like the previous *Secret Destinations* (1984), includes some poems inspired by the travel he was able to undertake following his retirement from full time teaching and which caused him to reflect on absence from Cornwall as a signifier of attachment to his presence there. The poem 'Returning South' (Collected, p. 310), from the earlier 1984 *Secret Destinations*, ends as five days after he has left Cornwall and arriving on the other side of the world, Causley asks himself 'Dear Christ, what's this? Myself'. In *A Field of Vision* and those poems which he wrote for the 1992 *Collected*, Causley continues the search, moving from the trauma of his war experiences, without a traditional Christian faith and beyond the perspective of the whole town of Launceston itself, to try and discover a source of identity protected from the erosion of time, and of, yet beyond, the places where it originated. In his seventies, in *A Field of Vision* and the 1992 *Collected* Causley foregrounds the external visible elements of nature in landscape and of his 'home', physically his cottage, aware at this stage in his life that this exploration of 'home' signifying his conscious sense of self, is being undertaken against the one way destination of the passing of time, a transient and finite background to this search.

Causley is located chronologically in the largely urbanised and industrialised late 20<sup>th</sup> Century but this urbanisation and industrialisation had left his immediate Cornish environment relatively untouched. The foregrounding of both landscape and rural domesticity as elements of integrity rather than disintegration and alienation in a search for home and self, suggests some affinity with a linking of the security of rural simplicity, nature and identity, in which these combine to

locate 'home'. The landscape around Launceston comprises moors on three sides and the north Cornish coast not far on the other. The town is built on a hill with the Rivers Kensey and Inny running either around or through the valley beneath it. Circling the town lies the isolated and uninhabited combination of moor and granite, to the south the 'granite sponge of Bodmin Moor' and even more ominously the 'stiff granite sea of Bodmin Moor'.<sup>1</sup> The move towards oblivion and death expressed in the danger and movement of the sea, the wild anarchy of nature on the moor and the unyielding granite are recurring images in his poetry. As Simon Shama remarks, 'landscape is the work of the mind' and 'built up as much from the strata of memory as from layers of rock'.<sup>2</sup> The three elements individually, sea, moor and granite, are used by Causley to signify personal dislocations of fear, mortality and oblivion amidst the inevitably temporary human permanence of his dwelling in Launceston. And that dwelling itself, identified with both his cottage and therefore his lifelong rootedness in Launceston, has fears lurking behind the familiarity. Hooker highlights the temptations inherent in 'the loving contemplation of a home landscape' to 'sink' potential tensions.<sup>3</sup> For Causley this contemplation, rather than sinking tensions, brought them to the surface. Both nature and his dwelling place have negative associations hinting that he may well need to look beyond the temporal and physical for a place where he can ultimately 'be'.

Causley is writing within a postmodern philosophical climate in which any assertion of permanence rather than fluidity in identity and of reality outside time and space would be viewed as problematic. Speaking of identity, Robert Crawford argues that 'Identity is one of the central modern obsessions' and that 'Our obsession with the instability of the self has grown since the Enlightenment...'<sup>4</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century when Causley was publishing these two later collections, the cultural context of postmodernism would imply that the search to articulate a single definable identity would, in any case, end in a plurality of potentially

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Causley, 'In the Angle of the Waters', *The Listener: Vol 98 No 2587*, (1977), p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, (London: Fontana, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Hooker, (1982), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Crawford, *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth Century Poetry*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 2.

disintegrated selves rather than a unification of the personality. Crawford further argues, in speaking of poetic identity, that 'identity...always lives through and is determined by a "debateable land", a shifting dynamic border territory'.<sup>5</sup> Causley had previously expressed this unresolved internal state in poetic terms in the 1975 poem 'On the Border' (Collected, p. 245), leaving the search for identity unresolved and in a state of flux between the temporal and the possibility of the transcendent, 'No Man's Land was no man's land./It was the sea'. In 1988 and 1992 he is still trying to resolve whether he can locate within time and space a Wordsworthian concept of the 'continuity of the individual self and so its identity'<sup>6</sup> or whether this might only be imagined in a transcendent dimension.

Using the physical and domestic landscape as a vehicle and source of nourishment for his poetic attempt to encounter these questions in the exploration of this 'debateable land', poems written for *A Field of Vision* and also specifically for the 1992 *Collected*, foreground the elements of sea, moor and granite from the local landscape beyond the town and return to the town, but in the confined individual location of his home, the cottage Cyprus Well on the side of Ridgegrove Hill. In his discussion of the Post Enlightenment Imagination, Morse Peckham stresses the necessity of finding a relationship with 'this world, the world of senses, of ordinary human experience, not fantasies of an unreal world to which we may escape'.<sup>7</sup> These scenarios in *A Field of Vision* and the 1992 *Collected* have specific locations and historical associations which ground them in location and place them in the flux of the passing of time, both constituents of the shifting centre around which the search for a definitive answer to the question 'What's this? Myself' is set.

Causley 'organises his environment into a structure related to human experiences'.<sup>8</sup> This structure is based on the natural elements which form the wider backdrop to his cottage. The

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., Crawford, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Antony Easthope, *Wordsworth Now and Then*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Morse Peckham, 'A Post Enlightenment Imagination', in *Wordsworth: The Prelude A Casebook*, ed. by William Harvey and Richard Gravil, (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 217.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 153.

relationship with these two actual contexts, the vast landscape beyond and the restricted personal space within Cyprus Well, provide the starting point of Causley's imaginative inspiration to articulate a search for a sense of 'home', the roots of identity and the security of belonging. But accompanying this in each case is the paradox and tension of isolation as a necessity for privacy and creativity, also symptomatic of lack of human contact. As constructs in a search for belonging they are all ambiguous places in which to be situated because of their isolation. Fear rather than integration lurks in the intrusion of time past into time present as near to 'home' as the garden of his cottage. The house is named 'Sibard's Well', after a Saxon spring in the garden. For Causley this is not an opportunity for a comfortable nostalgia or a reassuring sense of history and continuity. In the 1988 poem 'Sibard's Well' (*Collected*, p. 383), Causley describes how in the early morning he hears a voice from the Saxon past.

**REDACTED:** See 'Sibard's Well', *Collected Poems*, p. 383, v. 1,2.

The well is also a fractured place and no escape from the fears of either death or judgement. It is buried in the garden, which may stop the present day cattle falling in, but in the 'small light', the 'quarter light', past and present are touched by the shadow of 'life's cold truth', the transitory and impermanent fate of human existence. The two verses are in a pattern of nine consistently eight metred lines suggesting the order, control and security of his house, but within the lines the rhymes are variously distributed. In 'Sibard's Well' the language of the water comes through the clay with the ominous message of transience and place provides the imagery for his inner world of fears but no refuge or sitting for the 'home' within which to build a stable sense of permanence or the reassurance of protected identity which will not be eroded by time.

Beyond his cottage, Causley looks to the sea and the moor in a 1988 poem, to provide the setting for 'Trethevy Quoit' (*Collected*, p. 391), an isolated landscape fixed in the rootedness of distant history, with an undertone of the passing of time and another challenge to the search for

the security of 'home'. Living in close proximity to the moors which form an isolating barrier between Launceston and the rest of Cornwall and Launceston and the rest of the country, Causley uses the significance of this location, a megalithic burial chamber, a communal grave, where various streams come together and the sea is never far away, to contrast the longevity of prehistoric stones on the moor and the transitory existence of those who pass by them, or live and work near them.

**REDACTED:** See 'Trethevy Quoit', *Collected Poems*, p. 391, v. 1.

He later describes that

**REDACTED:** See 'Trethevy Quoit', *Collected Poems*, p. 391, v. 2,3.

The stones are a puzzle, the 'bully blackbird' gloats over the transience of existence as modern machinery, significantly impotently housed in 'churchtown', an actual village, from where, like religion in the postmodern age, it can only stammer, fails to produce any form of consolation for the indifferent passing of time. The bullying blackbird insistently undermines any sense of comfort from the past and posits the ultimate question for the present and the future. 'Where is home?'

The question, 'where is home?' from 'Trethevy Quoit' can be asked in subjective physical and emotional terms as well as a quest for, rather than a presumption of, what Middleton describes as 'objective ontological stability'.<sup>9</sup> Causley here uses the rocks of the ancient Trethevy Quoit, in its setting of the sea on either side, and the presence of the buried in their 'dreamtime', as a vehicle for his seemingly unsuccessful search for this stability within his present life and in any sense of 'being' beyond it. Agamben describes 'the entry to the present in the archaeology of the past' within a present which we are incapable of living in.<sup>10</sup> He argues that dyschrony in the sense of

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<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., Middleton, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What Is An Apparatus?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 51.

combining two dimensions of time, does not have to mean living in another time or indulging in nostalgia for the past, but realising that chronological time can be transformed, 'the invisible light that the darkness of the present sheds as a shadow on the past'.<sup>11</sup> Causley's 'Trethevy Quoit' does cast the shadow from this invisible light of the present onto the past, it is in that sense 'fracture as meeting place',<sup>12</sup> but its transformation only returns him to the homelessness of the un-lived present where he is constantly searching for the resolution of 'home'. Agamben's definition of the contemporary is attention to this un-lived state<sup>13</sup> and engagement with the light which never finally arrives. Hence 'Where is home?' remains a question at the end of Trethevy Quoit.

Beyond the siting of Trethevy Quoit on the moor, is the sea. The sea is a shifting place, an unlikely location for any kind of stability and sense of 'home'. As a resolution to this search Causley is haunted by the possibility of the sea but finds no comfort in the presence of it as a consoling element as in Romantic connotations of signifying the ebb and flow of eternal being around the still centre of human consciousness. Cyprus Well was not Causley's birthplace but domestic settings link with the wider landscape in the two cottages where he lived as a very young child, which were at the bottom of another hill, in the valley beside the River Kensey. Bringing together his memories of living here, Causley recollects that he had a childhood fear of being literally swept away by water and drowning, originating in the precarious position of these two earliest homes in the valley, at threat of flooding from the nearby river.

The sea made a profound impression on me. I sensed it instantly as a sulky, dangerous, beautiful, unpredictable element. Just as it was pretending to be at its friendliest it could drag you under and kill you...I never forget the passage where Little Em'ly, on the beach at Yarmouth, says, 'Ah! But it's cruel. I have seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

pieces'. I was glad Launceston was an inland town. The thought of the sea knocking almost continuously at the door of one's house filled me with a profound unease.<sup>14</sup>

The encounter with the terror of the sea does not strengthen his imaginative capacity to resist the feelings of instability at the centre of his being. The ultimate destination of 'myself' or 'home' is not revealed or achieved through proximity to the sea, in fact it has once again been threatened. Water in his poetry, whether as streams or the sea, is a symbol of the greedy, relentless passage of time towards death and oblivion and is an enemy, devouring the possibility of any kind of definitive resolution of an indestructible sense of self. As an image it is also ambiguous. Water, Beer points out, is essential for life and the sea can be a source of renewal as well as the location of 'subconscious human processes'.<sup>15</sup> He also argues that fear can be a necessary stimulus to the power of the imagination,<sup>16</sup> and so it is with Causley and the sea.

In a poem from 1992, 'Birthday Photograph' (*Collected*, p. 390), Causley uses a precise occasion to express these fears in the context of a birthday photograph, taken on the beach, marking the passing of another year towards death, as at another step into old age, he watches the 'evening' sea.

**REDACTED:** See 'Birthday Photograph', *Collected Poems*, p. 390, v. 1,2,4,6,7.

The actual chronological event of the taking of the photograph on the beach is minutely detailed in the poem. In verse two the much younger photographer orders him to 'stay there'. But that is exactly what he cannot do. He is conscious here that despite the relatively safe distance at this stage of his life, of ten miles between his house and the shore, this turning of the tide is incessant. Speaking of Wordsworth, Beer remarks that the dislocation of time is more sinister than that of place,<sup>17</sup> and for Causley it is this dislocation of which the sea is a constant reminder. The sea may

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., Summerfield, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit., Beer, pp. 171,176.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 163.

have triggered his 'primary consciousness' but it has not provided him with the reassurance of 'deeper knowledge'<sup>18</sup> as a resource in the search for 'home'. As in other poems where he expresses the action of the sea, Causley employs lines of variable length which resemble the ebbing and flowing of the waves. The 's' sounds of sea and swims, add to the expression of movement and being swallowed up. The sea is tireless and the tide turns in his head, the emphasis on 't' articulating the relentlessness of time and moving to the climax of the final line. There is little sense of any grand, vast mystery in the sea or of the sublime as a positive force in the encounter with his existential search for identity. The only stillness in the poem is the sinister patience of time, militating against a resolution of the search.

Shifting between the perspective of the landscape as constituted by sea and the moor and the domestic setting of Ridgegrove Hill, Causley continues to seek the answer to the question 'Where is home?' in the actual physical location of his personal dwelling, Cyprus Well. In the 1968 poem 'Dockacre' (*Collected*, p. 140), he had already hinted the environment of his house was no protection against fears in present time or after death. He imagines the arrival at night of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century neighbour, Nicholas Herle, from the nearby Dockacre House, who was reputed to have murdered his wife. Causley explains that he and Nicholas are '...both of us suffering from the same/Malaise that evidently even death won't cure'. He imagines the handle of his bedroom door turning to flame as Nicholas arrives outside. His house is both the sanctuary which enables his privacy and welcome isolation and the location for his deepest fears.

The turning of a key in the lock of a door, as in the imagined arrival of Nicholas Herle in 'Dockacre' is a key image for Causley in articulating the entrance of such fears into the privacy of his mind. This turning of the key reoccurs in 'Dream Poem' (*Collected*, p. 381), from the 1992 collection. The title of this locates the speaker immediately in a transcendent state, a world beyond daily reality, from where the house as his innermost consciousness can be viewed from beyond ordinary time. Yet time and distortion are still present. The clock 'thuds' the mirror distorts. The house is both a source of alienation and familiarity. The lines beginning with 'A', 'A

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

thudding clock', 'A mirror', 'A round pane', 'A table', have a list like quality as the visitor checks off those items of particular significance which could be potentially a source of familiarity and comfort, not signifiers of disturbance.

**REDACTED:** See 'Dream House', *Collected Poems*, p. 381, v. 1,2,3.

A picture in the room, hanging above the fireplace, depicts huntsmen in winter. Alongside these suggestions of violence and death are fruit and wine. But the latter Eucharistic and redemptive image is not pursued and the exploration of the room again takes on an air of remorse. When the childhood book is introduced, the neutral itemising of familiar items ceases and the adjectives 'wasted' and 'lost' deny the ability of childhood to provide any permanent resource from the past to provide reassurances for the present. There is no returning to the consolations of childhood to resolve the coming disintegration and extinction of death, waiting only to turn the key and enter the room. Childhood is now in a 'far tongue', just as the Saxon voice in 'Sibard's Well' spoke in a 'far altered speech'.

**REDACTED:** See 'Dream House', *Collected Poems*, p. 381, v. 4.

'The one who will be standing there' is death, an embodiment of the reality of the impermanence of 'home' as symbolically located in the physical location and transcendent dreamlike state of waking early to the Saxon voice in 'Sibard's Well' and the house of the 'Dream Poem'.

Thus despite widening his 'Field of Vision' beyond the landscape of the town, which he foregrounded in *Underneath the Water* and *Secret Destinations*, neither the wider scope of moor and the sea nor the intimacy of his house have provided Causley with a place to 'be' as he approaches the end of his life. In *Secret Destinations* he had returned to Launceston Castle to try and find some integration of the elements of his life in this overwhelming icon of the town where he has lived for all of that life. In 1992, he returns to that location to express how one element of this being, the loss of the innocent vision of the essential goodness of life, represented in nature

and which he had in his childhood, has prevented him being at home within himself and which he will not return to until he is in 'Paradise' (*Collected*, p. 397), significantly beyond the boundaries of both time and space.

**REDACTED:** See 'Paradise', *Collected Poems*, p. 397, lines 1-14.

The nickname 'Paradise' was given to this small area of the Castle Green not by Causley alone but by all the children, 'WE CALLED it Paradise'. The wildness and obscurity of the 'weeds and wildflowers' which are 'out of sight' and make up this part of the Castle Green, far from being a threat, and in contrast to the oppressive role of the original guard-tower high above it, sustain its significance as a place of innocence. The fluidity of the opening four lines reinforce the impression of descending the steps from the high and extremely visible point of the Castle Keep inward to this place of secrecy, named before anyone's memory. Like innocence, it is only visible to God or the mad. This 'other land' in its stillness is the natural childhood self, a setting for the emotional and intuitive 'harmonizing and tranquilising glimpse of beauty' referred to in a Romantic context by Burke.<sup>19</sup> The location Paradise, as experienced in childhood and revisited in this poem, is a place where the mind is saved from 'the false damnation of naked reason'.<sup>20</sup> Causley is using childhood memory to establish the setting for a child's 'freshness of vision'.<sup>21</sup> The sense of stillness provides an origin for the creative impulse. Causley registers this as having been impressed on his consciousness in childhood.

**REDACTED:** See 'Paradise', *Collected Poems*, p. 397, lines 15-18.

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<sup>19</sup> Op. cit., Gill, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., Chandler, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Salversan, *The Landscape of Memory: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry*, (London: Arnold, 1965), p. 78.

In speaking of Wordsworth, Christopher Salversan equates the 'moral sense of loss with the loss of innocence and harmony'.<sup>22</sup> For Causley in the imagery of the poem, this innocence and harmony has been destroyed, symbolised by the state of Paradise 'today', when it is circumscribed on a plan. In 'Moor Hens' (*Collected*, p. 384), Causley had expressed the same connection between lost childhood and lost innocence against the background of Bate's Pond. 'Whose are the children, and who/Are the children who lived by the pond'? Playing in 'Paradise' as children, Causley and his friends have been 'making the world where they will live'<sup>23</sup> in a childhood reminiscent of Wordsworth's allusions, but this primary imagination cannot survive the harsh reality of the adult world, determined to destroy innocence and control being. When 'Paradise' is tamed, the children and the innocence have gone and the rational has extinguished the natural by establishing boundaries. Here there is criticism of any tendency to transform a natural place into a 'scene'. This rationalisation of the plan precludes the 'authentic habits and attendant feelings'<sup>24</sup> which, if left unrestricted by such artificial rationality, and in conjunction with the imaginative power of the past, along with the moral sentiment derived from historical rootedness, would provide Chandler's Wordsworthian trigger for the 'flash which reveals the invisible world'.<sup>25</sup>

Yet significantly, in contrast to 'Trethevy Quoit' and 'Dream Poem' there is a final hint in 'Paradise' of a transcendence which will supply a destination for the children and ultimately for himself. There is a question mark after 'Quite gone?' underlying the possibility of 'See you in Paradise'. There is no question mark after this latter statement. Hooker remarks that 'landscapes are not seen as finished but as becoming'.<sup>26</sup> Causley has not been entirely cut off from 'all sources of his former strength'.<sup>27</sup> The memory of children playing in Paradise has the potential to be an 'Instrument of associative and transforming power' of 'travelling forward in life by travelling back

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, Gaskell, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, Chandler, p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.*, Hooker, (1982), p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

to the beginning'.<sup>28</sup> This connection between past and future is an attempt to find identity, a 'string of signifiers' in which 'memory traces are always rewritten by the present act of remembering because they are caught up in fantasies projected into the future'.<sup>29</sup> Causley's *Paradise* can be seen as a fantasy but in Romantic terms he is still aspiring to a consciousness where space and time are irrelevant and the sinister implications of the dislocation of both space and time to the stability of identity, will be healed. In the poems from *A Field of Vision* and the 1992 *Collected*, Causley demonstrates Hooker's statement of 'a personal voice speaking from a poetic world based on an actual historical landscape but indelibly marked with personal experience'. But as Hooker goes on to argue, the personal is essentially the human<sup>30</sup> and the search which engages Causley in these later poems could well be seen as a unique but representative experience. Crawford is dubious about the possibilities of entering into the 'apparent intimacy within the poet's mind'.<sup>31</sup> In searching for home in these poems, Causley is creating a textual and poetic self, but it does not necessarily obscure the pain of this exploration. He is honest about the limitations of landscape and the intensely private location of his house to provide final locations for the ultimate nature and dwelling of his 'self'.

Speaking of the poetry of place, Causley explained in 1986 that,

Poems speak of a variety of places, and a variety of ways of being conscious of place, of a sense of being located: both of being where you want or have to be, and of being where all is not, alas, well. In an extended sense of the word we are also 'located' in a world of ideas, anxieties, delights, discoveries and so on, both privately and publicly.<sup>32</sup>

The structural security of the poems in Causley's *Field of Vision* and *Collected 1992* with their lack of experimentation and emotionally restrained tone provide a buffer against the threat of

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<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., Peckham, pp. 229,232.

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., Easthope, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., Hooker, (1982), p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Crawford, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., Summerfield, p. 13.

instability. The shift of his sense of identity from childhood to adulthood, apart from his war experience, remains significantly located with his emotional and physical roots in one location, the countryside of North Cornwall and the house where he lived all his adult life. He was located privately and publicly where he 'wanted to be' but a note of tension is introduced in the phrase 'had to be'. By not leaving his childhood environment the balance between nature and memory fed his poetic imagination. He had a stable set of background locations, a 'home', for his 'private and public ideas, anxieties, delights and discoveries'. Davie sees Hardy's influence on poets as 'locking them into a world of specific places at specific times'.<sup>33</sup> This is evidently so with Causley and accounts for his reputation as a 'Cornish' poet. His situation resembled the characteristics of Romantic inspiration in that his mind and character were what they were because of the environment in which he matured<sup>34</sup> and the physical elements in his personality were anchored to earth and linked to human society.<sup>35</sup> He does not attempt to generate any feeling of opposition between urban/rural/ centre/periphery or cosmopolitan communities. But Causley was consistently aware that 'all was not well' as he contemplated the passage of time, he was aware of the dangers of nostalgia and his poetry of place, whether town, landscape or cottage, is not subjected to this desire.

Roger Ebbatson argues that the landscape in its geographical and psychological perspectives can offer a key to human consciousness 'but it is a key available only through language of certain poetic density'.<sup>36</sup> Causley's language is dense in its alliterations and its precise and deliberately tight construction as he uses the landscape to embody what he chooses to reveal about his deepest identity. He does not use his imagination to create the picturesque but employs 'highly particularised details seen close to with loving familiarity'<sup>37</sup> to articulate an embodied reading of

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<sup>33</sup> Ian Brinton, *Contemporary Poetry: Poets and Poetry since 1990*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Op. cit., Chandler, p. xix.

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Roger Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England: Nation, Landscape and Literature, 1840-1920*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove and Steven Daniels, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 90.

the landscape of the physical environment in which he grew up. He is not removed from his spaces as he dwells in them and does not demarcate or appropriate objects for his self-contemplation.<sup>38</sup> He is in them and they speak to him as they are. This parochialism of being rooted in particular,<sup>39</sup> a preoccupation which as Schmidt comments is possible for Causley because of his particular historical and geographical location,<sup>40</sup> allows him as Williams Carlos Williams, to use his imagination not to avoid or merely evoke reality but to affirm it even when it is uncomfortable. Causley commented,

To live almost the whole of one's life anchored in the same spot presents, all the same, constant dangers and difficulties to the writer. It is a perpetual struggle, for instance, to try to see things as they are as well as how they were.<sup>41</sup>

Landscape and cottage did allow openings and promptings for Causley and there is a hint at the end of 'Paradise' that the hidden sources of strength and the fidelity of the past to the present could be ultimately resolved. This resolution of integrity could be described in Meyer Abrams reference to Wordsworth's union between the mind and the external which will find Paradise.<sup>42</sup> After *Field of Vision* and the 1992 *Collected*, the search for the origin of dwelling is still an aspiration and the statement 'Dear Christ, what's this? Myself', an unusually anguished cry from Causley, remains in the background. In the final *Collected 2000*, he will include some new poems moving from the external elements of landscape and house to memories of family and family relationships, to continue exploring this possibility

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<sup>38</sup> Ron Broglio and Robert Mitchell, *Romanticism and the New Deleuze :Wandering in the Landscape with Wordsworth and Deleuze*, (online). Romantic Circles Praxis, updated 2008. Available from: <<http://www.rc.umd.edu>> (accessed 16 November 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Edward Levy, 'The Poetry of Charles Causley' *PN Review 6: Vol 5 No 2*, (Jan-March 1979), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Op. cit., Schmidt, (2000 ), p. 880.

<sup>41</sup> Op. cit., Causley 'In the Angle of the Waters', (1977), p. 370.

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit., Abrams, p. 598.

## Period Five-Memory and Childhood 2000

By the year 2000, when the final *Collected Poems 1951-2000* was published, Causley was in his eighties. His life, spanning the years from 1917 to the end of the twentieth century, had included personal experience of the effects of two world wars, rapid and unprecedented changes in communications, travel and technology and major shifts in societal attitudes. Deference to authority and acceptance of social class, still prevalent in the early 1900s, had given way to expectations of personal autonomy rather than inherited conventions in morality, personal relationships and institutions such as marriage. His early childhood, particularly in a small, isolated market town, had been set in a context of rigid moral conventions, pre-determined social expectations and a popular poetic tradition of metred rhyme and verse, all of which he lived to see fragment, and which were not the prevailing expressions of culture by 2000. By 2000 he had lived through the carnage of two wars and the possibility of more cataclysmic annihilation seeming ever closer, mirrored culturally in the change from the rationality and empiricism of the modern into the relativism and flux of the postmodern.

Against this background the characteristics of innocent childhood, valued so highly in the poem 'Paradise', were difficult to locate and to recognise as credible ingredients in any enduring adult sense of identity. Through the dislocations of World War One and World War Two and the loss of his Christian faith, Causley had needed a physical and emotional 'home' as the origin and sustainer of his identity, a place of solitude and privacy from where he could write the poetry, based on childhood memory and adult experience filtered through his imagination, which was his primary mode of communicating the journey to reach the culmination of his own personal mystery. The need for 'home' was made even more acute by the historical era which encompassed his life.

In his previous collections, particularly *Union St* (1957), *Underneath the Water* (1968), and *Secret Destinations* (1984), Causley had wrestled with the significance for his identity of war, faith, the town of Launceston and the landscape around it. However, in these last poems he does not

foreground the effect of his own wartime experiences and the themes of loss of innocence, death, separation and humanity's rejection of love in the contexts of war and Christianity, which have featured in these earlier collections. Neither is he focusing on the town of Launceston, Cornwall itself or his travels abroad. The 2000 *Collected Poems* contains a small number of new poems in which Causley chooses to articulate the emotional displacements of his childhood as pivotal elements in his lifelong struggle to find some kind of final resolution to a life begun against a background of the personal and global tragedies of two world wars. Among Causley's final poems, those included only in the 2000 edition of his *Collected Poems 1951-2000*, there is a consistent preoccupation with the formative influences of his early childhood, specifically in the context of family relationships and their domestic locations. He is revisiting the family places and influences which he considers to have shaped his life and personality, these include the locations of Trusham, the village where the Causleys originated, the cottage of his birth in Launceston, and memories of the family members who peopled his childhood. Causley evaluates the implications of relationships from which his lifetime identity has been formed, and whose destiny he will soon replicate, as he waits and they 'beckon' to him to join them. He ponders on his part in the Causley inheritance from the past in the present and for the future.

In seeking to resolve this question there are many similarities with Wordsworthian preoccupations of autobiography, memory and childhood. The 'assurance of his predecessors'<sup>1</sup> may have given him a firm structure from which to begin, but it is a structure from which he is still questioning identity and belonging as his exploration continues through these final poems. As an adult he still feels an outcast and has not discovered where he 'belongs'. So he looks back to childhood where he may find the source of transcendence and recollected memory may provide the potential for 'the enduring and eternal within the realm of change and time'.<sup>2</sup> In the 2000 *Collected Poems* he is questioning how the present keeps faith with that past and if he can 'renew his conscious mind from hidden sources of strength' in these memories.<sup>3</sup> Time is now not just

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., Abrams, p. 588.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Gaskell, p. 1.

linear, experiences 'rise into it without distance'.<sup>4</sup> The memories do not result in a static relationship with the past. They are conveyed in his poems as both present in their time, significant through his life, and immanent at the time of writing. Gallie argues that for Wordsworth the 'mystery of man' was potentially revealed through childhood and the cult of memory.<sup>5</sup> In the concept of 'spots of time' in which childhood events were revisited under the stimulus of imagination illuminating and recreating both memory and the moments of remembering in the present, Wordsworth addressed the process of answering the problem of the 'true end of man'.<sup>6</sup> At this stage in his life Causley is seeking through some of his own 'spots of time' some resolution to his own 'true end', that is the meaning and significance of his life and the security of being at home both physically and within himself, the adult he has become so far and the childhood which nurtured him.

Causley's memories from childhood have, by 2000, been filtered through the years of dislocation after the wars, with the ever present fear of loss, death and separation and the end of innocence. As Abrams comments in the context of Romanticism, in the remembrance of things past the 'former self co-exists with the altered present self in a multiple awareness that Wordsworth calls two consciousnesses'.<sup>7</sup> Causley is seeking from the past the resource to establish a stable, functioning sense of present identity in which these tragedies have played an integral part. Frank Kermode states that 'The discipline of fear is as much a matter of fact as the discipline of love: it is founded on a sense of remoteness and estrangement, as the other upon identity and comfort'.<sup>8</sup> Without this sense of identity and belonging and some kind of resolution to these fears, Causley's feelings of remoteness and estrangement from his childhood and from his life in the present, remain. The composition of the specific 2000 poems so late in life indicates that until extreme old age rendered it impossible, the writing of poetry sustained him almost to

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<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., Gallie, p. 669.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 667.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., Abrams, p. 587.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Literary Fiction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 168.

the end of this life as one of his survival mechanisms and as a source of 'identity and comfort' in the face of the struggle with the 'remoteness and estrangement' of Kermode's analysis.

Memory is a key element in this survival mechanism. In the 2000 *Collected Poems* he turns to memories of childhood, its relationships and experiences. Antony Easthope comments 'The dynamic of identity and self-identification are within the process of memory'.<sup>9</sup> As Lorna Martens argues, John Locke's emphasis on memory as the primary source of identity was superseded in Causley's lifetime by Freudian assertions of the unreliability, selectivity and therefore partiality of conscious memory.<sup>10</sup> But as Martens also points out, the renewal of a past image in the mind and its translation into text does give it the possibility of existing as a kind of knowledge, however provisional, and one which can be studied.<sup>11</sup> The past images in the mind from childhood in these final poems can be studied to provide some kind of knowledge of Causley's apprehension of his self-identity, bringing together those recollections of memories which are the most significant to him as he approaches the end of his life. Modern psychoanalysis questions how far 'memories are fantasies chosen for their present relevance' which testify to 'unresolved issues'.<sup>12</sup> For Causley these unresolved issues are the death of his father when he was seven, the steady 'gaze' with which his long dead relations viewed him as they placed on him the burden of his father's absence, and the 'light' in which he now sees them.

Three of the 2000 poems, 'Ancestors', 'To My Father' and 'A Baptism', deal expressly with these preoccupations. These three poems appearing first in the 2000 *Collected Poems*, are written mainly but not entirely in the traditional four line stanzas so reminiscent of Causley's early ballads but with variations within them in metre and rhyme as narrative and reflection combine. They are examples of what Gallie, contrasts as the two opposing elements of 'spontaneous receptivity and

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<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., Easthope, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory: Childhood Recollections and Its Objects in Literary Modernism*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

response characteristic of childhood and on the other hand the self-mastery, the calm of mind, the conscientiousness of the mature artist'.<sup>13</sup>

For Causley in these poems it is not the *causing* of his father's death by any childish specious link of associations which is central issue. It is the burden of *guilt* which *arises* from his father's death. There was also the lifetime expectation such a loss put on the young child. His feelings of consequent isolation from loving relationships are intensified by the placing on him of the lifelong burden of his father's identity. In the 1984 poem 'Dora' (*Collected*, p. 280), he was given his father's Christian name. 'Aunt Dora /...never called me Charles. Instead, the name/My father went by: Charlie...' The expectation of taking his father's identity is recalled most strikingly in 'Ancestors' (*Collected*, p. 416), where Maggie

**REDACTED:** See 'Ancestors', *Collected Poems*, p. 416, v. 5,6,7.

The aunt and the mother stand together. Maggie has already hinted that he is only an invented person until he takes on the persona of his father and the holding of the gaze in the last line fixes permanently in the young child's consciousness that there is no self for him to be, he is always going to be overshadowed by the absence yet presence of his father. The significance of the final couplet as a highly significant 'spot in time', is highlighted not only by the rhyming of the end of line syllables, which repeat the 'say' and 'way' in the first two verses of the poem and with them are the only instances of rhyme in all seven verses, but also by the fact that they extend the verse beyond the four line pattern of the rest of the poem in order to stress the conclusion. This gaze is a moment in time remaining with Causley in his eighties and he has recognised its implication through his entire life. The burden of his father's absence continues to dislocate his sense of being at home in his own identity, it is hard to separate this from the person he is expected to be.

The 2000 poems foregrounding memories from childhood include in the search for his 'true end' this inability for him to escape identification with his father and also a sense of inadequacy at

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<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., Gallie, p. 665.

betraying his predecessors by not carrying on the family line. As early as the 1968 poem 'Trusham' (*Collected*, p. 135), another significant moment of memory occurs when the adult Causley is regaled on a visit to his predecessors' village by an old man who bluntly makes the point 'You never married, and you've got no child/ (I don't know what your dad would say to that)/And you the only one. It seems to me/That when you've gone, the name will just go scat '.

'All Causleys come from here ' Maggie says in the first line of 'Ancestors'. Causley's 'failure' to produce any children means there will be no more Causleys either in their home village of Trusham or Launceston, where Causley's parents settled as they began their married life. Causley spoke to Susan Hill<sup>14</sup> of his regret at not having married or having had children. On a visit to Ted and Sylvia Hughes in their Devon home he reflects that his legacy will be only words on paper in contrast to their two children in their cots. In 'Lord Mayor of London' published in 1992 (*Collected*, p. 397), his mother tries to reassure him when he reaches the age of fifty. '/I turn in the river's track/to discover/no more in my wake than a small-/holding of verse. "Be thankful," my mother said. "Things/might have been worse."' His mother's conclusion may well have been true but she seems oblivious to the fact that the paralysing effects of the lack of experience of a relationship with his father and the undermining of his capacity to develop an autonomous self-identity and therefore self-esteem in relationships, have robbed him of the opportunity to find out if this is so.

In the 2000 poem 'To My Father' (*Collected*, p. 410), the overwhelming consequences of his father's illness and death are again foregrounded. His aunts have the first word in explaining his father's death to the young child as a fault of external circumstances, not family weakness.

**REDACTED:** See 'To My Father', *Collected Poems*, p. 410, v. 1,4,5,6.

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., Hill, p. 1.

The poem moves through narrative and comment mostly in regular four line stanzas in iambic pentameter with the metre of the first verse reminiscent of the Trusham bells ringing changes. The ballad form moves along the narrative as childhood memories are recollected. These recollected memories are a confused jumble of consciousness. His father is breathless, his time is short, but he attempts to engage his son with 'normal' father/son activities, the visit to the fair, the pantomime, the point-to-point. The mother contributes an occasion of praise so that the child will realise his father was proud of him, trying to influence the way in which the adult Causley will look back on his father. 'To My Father' expresses the flow of memory and the child's impressions often through lines which progress with no punctuation to break the flow of lines within and between verses. However, the commas inside the lines often slow the speed inside the verses, giving snapshot pictures of the man who still strolls into Causley's dream consciousness seventy years later as memory and the present combine. Speaking of Wordsworth, Richard Onorato argues that 'to speak of visionary things is to use the imagination to evoke and recognise lost objects of love and wonder...'<sup>15</sup> Here Causley is evoking childhood memories of his father and in adulthood the pain of that loss surfaces in his dream.

**REDACTED:** See 'To My Father', *Collected Poems*, p. 410, v. 6,7.

After the laughter comes the defining imagery of Causley's seeking for and failing to find in this life a resolution to the trauma and effects of his father's death. The pleading in this poem is the nearest he gets to articulating strong emotion in addressing his father or his mother. It is not effective at this point in claiming his father's attention. Unlike the women, his father does not 'beckon' to him but keeps his face turned away. Even seventy years later the yearning for his father, expressed in all the childlike egoistical uses of 'I', 'I want', 'I speak', 'I know', is as strong as ever, and he is still obsessed by his father always being just ahead of him with the hope of the final prospect of him turning and seeing him face to face. Jonathan Wordsworth argues that a

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Onorato, 'The Prelude: Metaphors of Beginning and Where They Lead' in Op. cit., Wordsworth, Abrams and Gill, p. 624.

sense of desertion reinforces the need to feel part of a whole.<sup>16</sup> This sense of desertion weaving through his life from childhood onwards is overtly present in the pleading 'Wait for me, father. Wait'.

There is no persona, the 'I' of the text is the 'I' of the author who cannot, even in a combination of past memory and present dream reach his father and bring back together the family group which will locate him definitively as an identity within this family grouping. Causley had experienced a sense of desertion through family bereavement present in earliest childhood, reinforced through the loss of friends in his own experience of war. This childhood sense of desertion by the absent father, mirrored in World War Two losses, is by his own implication in the 1984 poem 'Uncle Stan' (*Collected*, p. 282), at the root of his own inability to build a close, loving relationship of his own beyond that with his mother. The significant consequences for Causley of his father's death were the absence of paternal love and a male figure within the family, affecting his own capacity for intimate relationships.

Earlier poems centred on the male uncles use their absence to hint at the absence of a paternal relationship arising from his father's death, which Causley felt stunted his capacity to relate deeply to others. In 'Uncle Stan' he writes '... Perhaps/The lure of eyes, quick with large love, is clue/to what I'll never know, and the bruised maps/Of other hearts will never lead me to'. This adds desperation to his pleas, he cannot feel at home as himself or part of any whole without the final encounter with his father.

By 2000, these dislocations of identity, expectation and barrenness are foreshadowed in the struggle he depicts in his earliest memory in 'A Baptism' (*Collected*, p. 409). The verse places detailed childhood memory inside a tight construction of short sentences. But these short and disciplined sentences are combined with occasional fluid movement from one line to the next. They reinforce an ordered sense of memories yet spilling out of his mind within the narrative framework.

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<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 79.

**REDACTED:** See 'A Baptism', *Collected Poems*, p. 409.

He has to be asked for this memory and it has to be 'hauled' up, implying that perhaps he would rather have kept it hidden. The two streams form an angle which encloses the house and the yard, they are both an image of infant consciousness and of existence enclosed by death. It is within this boundary that the toddler Causley begins his exploration of the life around him. The sun, as so often in Causley's verse, looks on the scene indifferently as it burns, creating an atmosphere of intensity of experience, and the water, an insistent image in his head, paralyses him. When someone turns the yard tap on him he is 'stranded, helpless in the drain' and has to 'squint through the blinding water'. It would be easy for the adults, his mother and aunt, to resolve the situation instantly on behalf of the child, but the resolution of the situation is more complicated than that.

From the very beginnings of his life, Causley 'strains' towards these women who merge into each other as a single influence, as they give him orders to help himself, approbation has to be earned. There is no sense of spontaneity in their relationship with him until he has arrived at their beckoning and then they laugh and cry at the same time, signifying an adult life is in the making and therefore that the journey towards adult human pain and eventual oblivion is beginning. 'Now you're a proper walking boy!' The Baptism of the title is a Baptism into this human condition. This is what they are beckoning him towards as they insist that he gets himself out of the clutches of the water, at least for the time being. Jonathan Wordsworth argues that in William Wordsworth, 'painful memories of happy childhood can be formative'.<sup>17</sup> Causley makes no direct comment from the present on this 'recreation of primal experience'<sup>18</sup> in which he is nearly drowned, but it is not difficult to see in his selective use of memory the origins of the development in his identity of a sense that each phase of life is likely to involve a struggle to create and maintain his independent sense of self, and the struggle will have to be undertaken

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit., Jonathan Wordsworth, (1979), p. 574.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 577.

essentially in isolation. This Baptism is a vital 'spot in time' in illuminating how he has had the strength to survive in the face of his own encounter with war, loss of traditional faith, emotional isolation and now the inevitable journey towards death.

The presence of women family members, who are possessed of some kind of as yet forbidden, prescient knowledge of life and death which they convey to each other as the puzzled child looks on, is a recurring theme in Causley's memories of the formative women in his childhood. These strong female characters fix Causley with piercing glances which seem to have a knowledge of, and the ability to enter into, his deepest consciousness. The dying Aunt Dora in the poem 'Dora' turned away from the child '... But her winter eye/Spoke every word that I had left unread'. In the 1992 poem 'Photograph' (*Collected*, p. 379), his grandmother '/Sees with unsparing eye the thread/Of broken words within my hand/And will not turn away her head'. And the mother and the aunt in 'Baptism', so often making one unit in his poetry, are the same two characters who in the 1992 poem 'Forbidden Games' (*Collected*, p. 399), tell the seven year old Causley of the death of his father when 'Each gives to each a blinded look'. The looks are uncompromising and the knowledge from which they originate not only articulates the process of life towards inevitable death, but somehow perceives the struggle of the child and later the poet, to express his lifetime yearning for a sense of autonomous identity in life and to cope with the terrors of the inevitability of death. The women appear at significant moments in childhood, bear messages, give instructions and surround his life with their influences providing at once a guiding presence and controlling background to his life. In 'Forbidden Games' he writes, 'A LIFETIME, and I see them still;/My aunt, my mother, silently/Held by the stove's unflinching eye' and of his Aunt Maggie he says in 'Ancestors', 'She was the one I loved the best of all./A lifetime, and I see her clear as light:'

Causley 'gather(s) passion from his mother's eye' and in the presence of his mother and aunts he sees them through a transcendent light which, as in William Wordsworth, allows 'their feelings to pass into his life'.<sup>19</sup> They have guided him morally and emotionally. They have struggled and had to be self-reliant in the face of poverty and early bereavements. They have faced the old age

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 582.

and inevitable death as he is now doing. Their influence has remained with him into the moment when his adult mind recollects these memories and he can articulate through his poetic imagination the effect of their 'gazing' on him and the 'light' which they have given him to see these things by. In the development of the moral capacity to sustain himself through his long life, many of the experiences in his external world throughout his life have been 'irradiated by the presence of his mother'<sup>20</sup> which in his case combines the influence of his grandmother and aunts, and passed into his self-consciousness.

This private family world and the public world of the two world wars merge together in their effect on Causley. Levy points to the connection between the world of 'human lovelessness and the enervating, isolating effect of that world on him personally',<sup>21</sup> a comment which has credible resonance for those living through the inhumanities and terrors of the twentieth century. Alongside the tendency for more rigid, undemonstrative restraint in family life before relationships were subject to modern psychoanalytic scrutiny, were the largely ignored and therefore unresolved effects of war on families such as Causley's who experienced the return of a wounded father figure. The sickness and early death of a father would not be unusual for children of Causley's generation, he was not atypical in that respect. Braybon, speaking of the effect of World War One, argues that,

Many women had to live with men who had been altered profoundly by their experiences, and who, by and large, found it impossible to talk about them...literary interpretations give us very little idea of what it was like for ordinary families who had sometimes seen little of their menfolk for years, and now had to watch them adjust again to 'normal' life, and the hard times of the 1920s.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., Levy, (1987), p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> Gail Braybon, 'Women and the War' in *The First World War in British History*, ed. by Stephen Constantine, Maurice Kirby and Mary Rose, (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 165.

Having experienced his father's return from World War One and his slow death from the effects of poisoned gas, Causley's contribution to such literary interpretation is the emphasis which comes across from his poetry on the role of the female members of the family in taking charge and control of both the practical and emotional sustaining and nurturing of family and home. Also the child would be subtly aware of the tensions beneath the surface between his parents, whose roles and expectations have been reversed, whose own emotional communication was affected by their very different wartime experiences and affected by the prospect of the inevitable death of one of them being only delayed.

Causley expresses admiration for his mother but is reticent about expressing any direct physical or emotional affection for his father or mother. This could be seen as the repression of feelings which came with the unresolved trauma of the effects of World Wars One and Two. The wholeness of the family unit is broken by his father's illness and death and stunted by stifling the articulation and recognition of the effects of this trauma. Causley does not record any resentment on the part of his mother at having to take on the unexpected role of head of the household, or the anger which his father may have felt due to his inability to take on the traditional male role and provide for and govern the family. In addition to the First World War traumas associated with his father's return, Causley had his own experiences after World War Two to contend with, which he expressed in his verse but which would have been difficult to communicate in any depth to his mother, a replica in psychological terms, of the lack of communication between his parents on the return of his father from combat.

Nevertheless, there is no overt anger in Causley's memories of childhood and the loss of his father, with the burdens of self-identity and continuity which it places on him. Larkin in 'Home Is So Sad' sees the emptiness of future time in the recollection of past time, but for Causley home and childhood are not so much sad as primarily states of desertion and bewilderment. There seems to be a continuation of resignation to the randomness of life and death with which the seven year old child, playing snakes and ladders, greeted the news of his father's death in 'Forbidden Games' 'And then I say to them, "I know" ./And give the dice another throw'.

Jeffrey Wainwright describes as characteristic of the 1950s and 60s 'confessional' poets that 'openness should reveal personal intensity and pain'.<sup>23</sup> Jenny Stringer's definition of 'great candour in the treatment of intimately autobiographical experiences and attitudes'<sup>24</sup> also seems to place Causley's later poems within this genre and he certainly exhibits the 'high degree of formal control' which Stringer also cites, even when he is pleading with the figure of his father.

Causley's poetry does hint, in his characteristically formal and mostly understated way, at the emotional currents which are going on beneath the surface of family circumstances. He is not portraying either his home or his childhood as idyllic. However, he restricts the expression of deep emotion to his own person without passing judgement on or exploring publicly, what were then fashionable Freudian and Jungian interpretations of parent and child relationships. This would have allowed strangers to intrude into personal matters and subverted the privacy of his home and childhood, a contradiction of his private and isolated temperament, an intrusion into his own dignity and that of his poetic subjects. It would be a break with the conventions of a reserved upbringing from which he showed no desire to, or was not able to, escape. There is a limit to his confessional analysis and the degree of intimacy which he will share. However, the lasting effect on him is articulated in the poems 'Ancestors', 'To My Father' and 'Trusham', all written for the 2000 *Collected Poems*.

Causley's final poems, although ostensibly leaving the earlier pre-occupations of survivor's guilt, the failure of the Christian narrative to convince humanity of the folly of rejecting love, and the imagery of both landscape and townscape to attempt to heal emotional and psychological scars, do nevertheless deal with these underlying preoccupations, but in the restricted context of specific reminiscences of family and home. Poems from the 2000 *Collected Poems*, the unresolved dream of the older child who can never live up to expectations of who he should be or catch his dead father up, aware in adulthood that he is literally the end of the line, and the Baptism of the toddler into a painful human struggle, describe the elements which Causley's memory in imagination indicates are the crucial elements of the journey towards a spiritual 'home', a new

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Wainwright, *Poetry: The Basics*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> Op. cit., Stringer, p. 136.

world, where the 'realities of life so cold'<sup>25</sup> beginning in childhood, as Abrams discusses in a Romantic context, are remembered and integrated positively into adult consciousness.

From 1951-2000, Causley has both looked back and interrogated his present. He can describe only through the medium of his poetry the conscious journey through war, Christianity, landscape and the town, and childhood memories, which his developing identity has taken. But it is in the poem which he chose to place last in the 2000 *Collected Poems* that these elemental components of his life come together to be resolved in the strange location and dreamlike experience of 'Eden Rock' (*Collected*, p. 421), which he had already written in 1988 and included in *Field of Vision*.

### **The Sense Of An Ending: 'I had not thought that it would be like this'.**

The choice of 'Eden Rock' as the final poem in the final *Collected Poems*, therefore displaced from chronological sequence, indicates its importance. 'Causley once told Tamplin that it was essential to "make sure the first and last poems are right"'.<sup>26</sup> The 'rightness' of this poem, which concludes his final collection is in its narrative of what Waterman describes as the final journey of poetic life from 'inherited environment to death and spiritual transcendence...'<sup>27</sup> It includes his preoccupations with the inherited environment, the sea and streams, through which he has expressed the flow of his consciousness towards an unknown destination, the sun looking on indifferently as events unfold. But it is also in 'Eden Rock' that the ultimate healing of his consciousness of guilt, loss, separations and issues of self-identity and continuity can be resolved. The title 'Eden Rock' suggests a context of innocence, with the permanence of the rock, in Romanticism a 'defence for the beauties of life which flourish in its shelter'<sup>28</sup> defying the flow of the sea and its sinister implications. At the same time it provides the location for a transcendent vision of a future and final reconciliation with all that has been implied in his life by his parents and his childhood. At the start they are waiting for him, they have not moved on beyond his ultimate reach.

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<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., Abrams, p. 595.

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., Waterman, (2014), p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Op. cit., Beer, p. 149.

**REDACTED:** See 'Eden Rock', *Collected Poems*, p. 421, v. 1.

This is innocence beyond the reach of war, his father is dressed in civilian clothes and accompanied by a terrier, a working dog appropriate to a countryman.

**REDACTED:** See 'Eden Rock', *Collected Poems*, p. 421, v. 2,3.

Even beyond Eden Rock there are domestic and realistic details from everyday life which authenticate the vision. The family is innocently enjoying a picnic together. They are significantly three, the father, the son and his mother.

**REDACTED:** See 'Eden Rock', *Collected Poems*, p. 421, v. 4.

As the sky whitens and purifies, an experience far beyond the comfortably domestic consciousness of temporal reality takes place. The sun, which has been used as an image of intense being, looking indifferently on both landscape and people in Causley's poems, becomes three suns as they are three individuals. His mother, usually able with the aunt and grandmother to fix a gaze on him, is under the influence of something far larger than their previous relationship and has to shade her eyes. She looks towards him over the stream which has so often been a symbol of terror and displacement but now has a path across it. And this is a prelude to the great final encounter. His father is untroubled by the momentous occasion and has no fear of the water. In temporal life he has been on the other bank far longer than his wife or his son. The spinning of the stone and the comma after leisurely create an atmosphere where time slows down. At the last his father turns and faces him as both parents 'beckon' to him.

**REDACTED:** See 'Eden Rock', *Collected Poems*, p. 421, v. 5.

This is the poem which Causley reads in a recording at the end of his life for the Poetry Archive. Both in the text and the reading in the Archive, the last line, separating his parents' words from his reaction, is enigmatic. Is it worse or better than he thought to be so near the crossing? How does it differ from his previous apprehension of it? At the end of his life has his poetic imagination provided him with the means and the expression to resolve the survivor's guilt from the war and the ever present hauntings of lost friends, separations and the approach of death, to a lifetime of taking on his father's role, failing to carry on the family line and the lack of any significantly close emotional relationships? Despite the questions which inevitably remain in the attempt at answers solely derived from the text, 'Eden Rock' is *the* poem which provides an affirmative answer to these latter questions and hints that 'See you in Paradise', from the 1992 poem, is within the reality of what he can imagine.

Gioia describes how in 'A Wedding Portrait' (*Collected*, p. 271), the final poem in the 1975 *Collected Poems*,

In a visionary moment Causley looks at his art to bridge the gap to time and restore his dead parents to him and his lost childhood self to them. The 1975 *Collected Poems* ends with the affirmation of poetry's power to triumph over death...<sup>29</sup>

But it is in 'Eden Rock' at the end of the 2000 *Collected Poems* that there is final wholeness through the transcendental and undivided family unit, portraying this triumph in poetry which is for Causley the ultimate autobiographical text. It is the poem which provides the context where the mixture of practical domesticity and mystical encounter are created within the visionary location. Hence it is to be expected as Causley insisted, that there was no need of any autobiography or biography. 'It was all in the poems'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (2009).

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit., Green, p. 3.

Tamplin comments of Causley, 'In his thought all men are islands sustained in being by their natural dignity and islanded because a man's central knowledge is his own and inalienable'.<sup>31</sup> 'Eden Rock' is a final affirmation of the validation of that inalienability but within the larger identity of a self which is unified in a larger, transcendent whole. As in old age he prepares to journey to the other bank, he realises the possibility of a redemptive outcome to his individual fears, isolation and struggles. Mainly due to his poetry these have not finally defeated his spirit through 50 years of emotional and poetic wrestling, traced through his collections with their varying foregrounding of war, the nature of Christianity and identity and relationships located in family and place. Speaking of William Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' Kermode comments,

Peculiar grace is the property not so much of grave livers, as of poems. Out of the intangible age and obscurity of the real world proceeds this extraordinary moment, with its complex perspectives of past and future.<sup>32</sup>

The extraordinary moment of the last words of 'Eden Rock', 'I had not thought that it would be like this' articulates not a final despair but the assurance of this grace. He has achieved the resolution of using his powers of imagination in his greatest poem, as in Onorato's comment on William Wordsworth, to 'deal with the fear of death as an incomprehensible journey...'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Op. cit., Tamplin, p. 48.

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit., Kermode, p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> Op. cit., Onorato, p. 624.

## Conclusion: We Saw What We Could See

**REDACTED:** See 'On The Border', *Collected Poems*, p. 245.

As of 2015, Causley's *Collected Poems 1951-2000* is of print, with no plans to reprint it.

Waterman's fear of Causley's survival solely in anthologies rather than as a poet with a body of work evaluated in his own right, seems to be justified. Does this validate Ricks's view in 1976 that,

his poetry embarks upon a task which is beyond its talents, true those these are, since it is beyond talent: to tap again the age-old sources which have become clogged, cracked, buried. But in Causley's poetry, the past each time becomes the pastiche time?<sup>1</sup>

This survey of Causley's work within the chronological framework which incorporates his main themes suggests not, supporting Schmidt's comments on the tension in Causley's work between the primitive character of his chosen forms and the sophistication and subtlety of the content<sup>2</sup> and echoed in Causley's assertion that 'The mere fact of a poem appearing simple in language and construction bears no relation whatever to the profundity of ideas it may contain'.<sup>3</sup> Causley's achievement in illustrating how lyrical and ballad forms of rhyme and metre can produce profound and popular poetry in a world after two world wars, combined with his later 'forms of greater substance and complexity'<sup>4</sup> constitute a lasting and significant contribution to poetics in the second half of the 20th Century. There is scope for future study to assess Causley in the wider context of literary theory, analysing his work in more specifically linguistic, moral, philosophical, political and sociological terms, adding further to an analysis of the trajectory and implications of his poetic career.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ricks, 'The New York Times Book Review' The New York Times Company, ( 11 Jan 1976), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Schmidt, *Modern British Poetry*, (London: Pan, 1979), p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Levy, (1979), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., Stringer, p. 119.

Gioia points out that critics often only concentrate on his early and predominantly ballad form and claim that he does not achieve 'the finest poetry' because of a lack of 'resonance of language'.<sup>5</sup> For Causley, order and discipline were positive elements in the release of his poetic imagination and these evaluations underestimate the connectivity and depth of his earlier more formal work and the development of his later work in which 'richness of description and a high degree of psychological naturalism'<sup>6</sup> continue to be present within freer forms of verse.

His poetry exhibits an independence from any established movements or groups alongside the ability to articulate in traditional form the long term personal dislocation arising from two world wars, the use of Christian narrative to portray the human condition in the aftermath of these catastrophes, the sense of both security and alienation provided by the physical and emotional attachment to one location, and the struggle for an enduring sense of self through childhood, family and memory.

However, Schmidt's assessment of Causley as a poet with his location and vocation naturally embedded in this place at this time and that 'even in exploring the possibilities of moral and allegorical dimensions, his field of vision is still limited with confining repercussions for his poetic style' suggests the factors which are at the root of his limitations.<sup>7</sup> The paradox in Causley's achievements lies in the inspiration yet restriction of his static physical and personal circumstances. Causley's life was permanently tied to Launceston and it could be argued that this was a physical restriction echoed by the confinements which the predominantly lyric style imposed on him.

There is also experiential ambiguity in the inspiration of a physical and emotional rootedness which provided stability and security but at the cost of inhibiting his capacity to break free from the associations it invoked and encounter experiences and therefore a perspective beyond its parameters. Lurking within his emotional life alongside this physical and geographical deprivation,

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., Gioia, (1987), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., Schmidt, (2000), p. 880.

is an element of what Quinney discusses as 'the poetics of disillusion and disappointment'.<sup>8</sup> The effects of two world wars had led to a disillusion which needed to search for new truths about the world, and which for a large part of his life inhibited the confident growth of a self which was able to be 'the spring of its own renewal'.<sup>9</sup> No-Man's land was always predominantly the sea. Throughout his life there were deep wounds of the betrayal of hope and innocence. In seeking to heal them through rootedness in one place, for most of his poetic life Causley was deprived of the imaginative inspiration to rise above a kind of resignation of how things are and illustrates Schmidt's 'perpetual sense of unease about how things might end'.<sup>10</sup>

His three elemental poems foreground both the bewilderment and ultimately the resolution of this condition. The bewilderment is articulated in the 1984 poem 'On Launceston Castle', the potential resolution of family, time and identity in 'Eden Rock' (1988), and the possibility of the eventual healing of transcendence in 'Paradise' (1992). These three poems position the key elements of his emotional life and its struggles expressed in his verse. Despite these struggles Causley eventually articulates a glimpse of 'Paradise' by the end of his poetic life and cannot be entirely described as Quinney's 'disappointed figure cut off from the progress of time'.<sup>11</sup>

That Causley prompted such popular acclaim in his life time indicated that his struggles, coupled with the ability to communicate the enjoyment of poetry in wider contexts of stories, legends and personal emotions in ways which engaged many people outside solely academic and critical spheres of influence, testify to his lasting significance and the resonance of both the language and form of his work as a unique and crucial voice in 20<sup>th</sup> Century poetics. Comments on Eric Prieto's *Literature, Poetry and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* are apt here.

There is, in the life of a person and in the history of a people, a convergence and integration of time and place, however tenuous, such that the significance of meaningful

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<sup>8</sup> Laura Quinney, *The Poetics of Disappointment: Wordsworth to Ashberry*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Op. cit., Quinney, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit., Schmidt, (2000), p. 880.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit., Quinney, p. 45.

time and place are requisite to the human character of life. The denial of either diminishes or eliminates, fully or marginally, human life and community.<sup>12</sup>

Causley's poetry refutes this denial. His poetry of place may exist mainly within a restricted geographical location and his own personal reactions to it, but as Mottram comments,

The human heart is local and finite, it has roots and if the intellect radiates from it according to its strengths, the reports if gathered at all, must be gathered at the centre to greater and greater distances.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Eric Prieto, *Literature, Poetry and the Postmodern Poetics of Place*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Eric Mottram, London: Writers Forum, (1974), p. 2.

APPENDIX: Causley's Poems in Anthologies 1951-2011

Date	Title	Editor(s)	Causley's Poems
1951	<i>Poems in Pamphlet: A New Anthology for 1951</i>	Erica Marx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Farewell, Aggie Weston</i> anthology</li> </ul>
1954	<i>New Poems 1954: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	Rex Warner, Christopher Hassell and Laurie. Lee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Like a Saucy Trooper in 'Strange Disorders'</li> </ul>
1955	<i>New Poems 1955: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	Patric Dickinson , John Hall and Erica Marx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ballad of Five Continents</li> </ul>
1956	<i>The Chatto Book of Modern Poetry 1915-1955</i>	Cecil Day Lewis and John Lehman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Seeing a Poet of the First World War on the Station at Abbeville</li> </ul>
1956	<i>New Poems 1956: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	Stephen Spender, Elizabeth Jennings and Dannie Abse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I Am The Great Sun</li> </ul>
1958	<i>New Poems 1958: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	Bonamy Dobree, Louis MacNeice and Philip Larkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ballad of Nosey Burt</li> </ul>
1961	<i>New Poems 1961: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	William Plommer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grave by the Sea</li> </ul>
1962	<i>Penguin Modern Poets 3 Barker, Bell, Causley</i>	George Barker, Martin Bell and Charles Causley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection from <i>Union St</i> (1957) and <i>Johnny Alleluia</i> (1961)</li> </ul>
1962	<i>New Poems 1962: A P.E.N. Anthology of Contemporary Poetry</i>	Patricia Beer, Ted Hughes and Vernon Scannell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Voyages of the Saintes-Maries</li> </ul>
1965	<i>The Poetry of War</i>	Ian Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song of the Dying Gunner in 'Simplify Me When I'm Dead'</li> <li>• Chief Petty Officer in 'Lessons of War'</li> </ul>
1965	<i>New Poems 1965: A P.E.N. Anthology</i>	C. V. Wedgewood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Short Life of Nevil Northey Burnard, Cornish Sculptor 1818-1878</li> </ul>
1965	<i>The Mid-Century: English Poetry 1940-1960</i>	David Wright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Seeing a Poet of the First World War on the Station at Abbeville</li> </ul>
1966	<i>The Terrible Rain: The War Poets 1939-1945:An Anthology</i>	Brian Gardner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting Drive</li> <li>• Song of the Dying Gunner</li> </ul>
1970	<i>Poems of the Sixties</i>	Frederick Finn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By St Thomas Water</li> <li>• Reservoir St</li> <li>• School at Four O' Clock</li> <li>• Death of a Poet</li> <li>• Lord Sycamore</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballad of the Bread Man</li> <li>• Immunity</li> <li>• Guy Fawkes Day</li> <li>• Grave by the Sea</li> </ul>
1970	<i>British Poetry Since 1945</i>	Edward Lucie-Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Friend Maloney in 'post-war'</li> </ul>
1973	<i>The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse</i>	Philip Larkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Petty Officer</li> <li>• Recruiting Drive</li> <li>• Betjeman 1984</li> <li>• Death of a Poet</li> </ul>
1973	<i>Poetry Dimension 1: A Living Record of the Poetry Year</i>	Robson J.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helpston</li> </ul>
1974	<i>The Faber Book of Comic Verse</i>	Michael Roberts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Betjeman 1984</li> </ul>
1975	<i>The Faber Book of Twentieth Century Verse</i>	John Heath-Stubbs and David Wright Also 1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Ballad For Katherine of Aragon</li> </ul>
1978	<i>The New Oxford Book of Light Verse</i>	Kingsley Amis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Betjeman 1984</li> </ul>
1980	<i>The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980</i>	Dennis Enright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the British War Cemetery, Bayeuz</li> <li>• For An Ex- Far East Prisoner of War</li> <li>• Loss of an Oil Tanker</li> <li>• Infant Song</li> <li>• Ten Types of Hospital Visitor</li> </ul>
1982	<i>The Rattle Bag</i>	Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballad of the Bread Man</li> <li>• Timothy Winters</li> </ul>
1983	<i>The Oxford Book of Narrative Verse</i>	Iona and Peter Opie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Song of Samuel Sweet</li> </ul>
1984	<i>The Oxford Book of War Poetry</i>	Jon Stallworthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armistice Day</li> <li>• At the British War Cemetery Bayeuz</li> </ul>
1989	<i>The Hutchinson Book of Post War British Poets</i>	Dannie Abse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ou Phrontis</li> <li>• Family Feeling</li> <li>• Timothy Winters</li> </ul>
1995	<i>Poetry of the Second World War: An International Anthology</i>	Desmond Graham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting Drive</li> <li>• Song of the Dying Gunner</li> </ul>
1996	<i>Emergency Kit: Poems for Strange Times</i>	Jo Shapcott and Matthew Sweeney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death of a Poet</li> </ul>
1998	<i>The Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland Since 1945</i>	Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Friend Maloney</li> <li>• Loss of an Oil Tanker</li> </ul>
2001	<i>Here to Eternity: An Anthology of Poetry</i>	Andrew Motion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the Border in 'Travel'</li> <li>• Rattler Morgan in 'War'</li> <li>• I am the song in 'Belief'</li> </ul>
2002	<i>Staying Alive</i>	Neil Astley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eden Rock</li> <li>• I Am the Song</li> </ul>

2004	<i>Being Alive</i>	Neil Astley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Forest of Tangle</li> </ul>
2004	<i>Second World War Poems</i>	Hugh Haughton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations in Gibraltar 1943</li> </ul>
2011	<i>The 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Poetry</i>	Michael Hulse and Simon Rae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rattler Morgan in 'War 1940-1945'</li> <li>• Ballad of the Breadman in 'Peace and Cold War 1946-1968'</li> </ul>

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